CENSORSHIP AND CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

POLITICAL CHANGE AND IDEOLOGICAL CONTROL IN POSTWAR SOCIALIST ROMANIA, 1945-1953

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Abstract

In this thesis, I aim to provide a fresh perspective on a traditional question, namely that of the thorny relationship between cultural production and political power. My subject is the Romanian communist state in the first postwar decade, a period during which it was striving to effect both political control and social change, and to a large extent looked to culture as a way of achieving these objectives. My focus is how the Romanian communist state's apparatus of media control operated during its formative period, and how it sought to calibrate and mediate the socialist cultural agenda. Specifically, the thesis will examine the roles, structures and processes of Romanian communist institutional censorship.

In most scholarship on Romanian communist history, censorship has been conceived and studied as one of the principal instruments of communist repressive power in the cultural sphere. I do not deny that that Romanian institutional-regulatory censorship, be it wielded by the censor's office, the Central Committee's Agitprop agency, or the secret police, played a *proscriptive* role. However, in this thesis I am interested more in how this censorship, when situated in and understood as part of wider formative cultural processes enacted by the new state (that might loosely be termed 'cultural revolution'), can also be understood as a necessary condition for the formation of the speaking socialist subject. In this way, I argue, in communist cultural production, censorship also – and perhaps more importantly – fulfilled a *productive* function in the project

to consolidate and legitimise the power of the new state, through the creation of new social norms and values and, ultimately, of new subjectivities.

In this thesis, I will be looking at the early postwar cultural construction from the perspective of the Party-state's cultural producers and regulators. Using extensive archival materials, I will focus on three model institutions of cultural revolution: the Romanian Communist Party's Agitprop agency, the censorial body, and the Radio Station. My aim is to analyse how a distinct socialist culture with its own system of production, regulation, distribution, and reception was institutionally established in postwar Romania, and thus demonstrate that the new state's cultural revolution was not only a coercive and disciplinary project but a constructive one as well.

To be sure, the communist state monopolized and directed the cultural sphere but, in opposition to traditional accounts, I maintain that it was not a domination based on destruction. As I shall show, the socialist culture did not emerge in a vacuum but drew on local traditions, institutional continuities and historical particularities, as much as on ideological improvisation and practical expediency. A close, empirically-based and theoretically-informed study of the evolving structures, processes and functions of censorship in this period offers us a new way of conceptualising and understanding Romanian communist state-building, political transition and social transformation.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS VI

ABBREVIATIONS IX

INTRODUCTION: A CULTURE OF CENSORSHIP? 1

THE REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCE OF THE POSTWAR PERIOD 7

HISTORIOGRAPHY AND SOCIALIST CULTURE 18

CULTURE, CENSORSHIP, AND STATE PRACTICES 26

SOURCES AND STRUCTURE 31

CHAPTER 1. BUILDING A CULTURAL STATE 39

DE-FASCIZATION, IDEOLOGICAL ADJUSTMENTS, AND EARLY POSTWAR RECONSTRUCTION 45

MAKING CULTURE ACCESSIBLE TO THE MASSES 69

CONCLUSION 82

CHAPTER 2. MODEL AND INSTRUMENT OF CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION: THE AGITPROP AND THE IMPOSITION OF A NEW CULTURAL ORDER IN POSTWAR ROMANIA 84

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS: "THEATRE AMIDST BAYONETS" 87

THE FORMATIVE EARLY POSTWAR YEARS 95

A LEADING ORGAN FOR CULTURAL CHANGE, 1948-53 103

AN ORDERED STATE CULTURE 109

IDEOLOGICAL SUPERVISION 118

CONCLUSION 128

CHAPTER 3. "COMRADES, WE ARE WELL ON OUR WAY TO TAKE CENSORSHIP TO A SUPERIOR LEVEL": THE AMBIGUITIES OF INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNIST CENSORSHIP 131

RITUALS OF CENSORSHIP: "FROM AN OLD PROPAGANDA TOOL TO A STATE BODY OF THE PROLETARIAN DICTATORSHIP" 134

HOW INSTITUTIONAL CENSORSHIP FUNCTIONED 141

MODES OF RESTRICTIVE CONTROL 155
PRODUCTIVE TEXTUAL PRACTICES 167
CONCLUSION 174

CHAPTER 4. THE CENSORS 177

BECOMING A CENSOR 181
BUILDING EXEMPLARY CENSORS: IOSIF ARDELEANU AND CORNELIU CODARCEA 191
EDUCATING CENSORS 204
CONCLUSION 216

CHAPTER 5. BROADCASTING SOCIALIST CULTURE: RADIO AND THE POLITICS OF CULTURE 219

INSTITUTIONALIZING RADIO 223
COMMUNIZATION THROUGH DE-FASCIZATION 229
RADIO PROGRAMMES AND THE MASTERING OF CULTURAL PROBLEMS 239
CENSORING THE RADIO 251
CONCLUSION 258

CONCLUSION: SOCIALIST CULTURE AS A COLLECTIVE WRITING 260

BIBLIOGRAPHY 268

ARCHIVAL SOURCES: 268
PERIODICALS 269
PRIMARY SOURCES: COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS 270
PRIMARY SOURCES: MEMOIRS, BROCHURES, THEORETICAL WORKS 271
SECONDARY SOURCES: MONOGRAPHS, ESSAYS, AND JOURNAL ARTICLES 275
ONLINE SOURCES: 296
DISCUSSIONS: 296

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Abbreviations

ACC	The Allied Control Commission (Comisia Aliată de Control)
Agitprop	Propaganda and Agitation Section of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (Secția Propagandă și Agitație a Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român)
AIOSRR	Arhiva de Istorie Orală a Societății Române de Radiodifuziune (The Oral History Archive of the Romanian Broadcasting Society)
ANR	Arhivele Naționale ale României (National Archive of Romania)
ARLUS	Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Relations with the Soviet Union (Asociația pentru)
CC	The Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român)
GCL	The General Confederation of Labour (Confederația Generală a Muncii)
GDPPM	General Directorate for Press and Printed Materials (Direcția Generală pentru Presă și Tipărituri, the censorship body)
MPN	Ministerul Propagandei Nationale (Ministry of Propaganda)
NDF	The National Democratic Front (Frontul)
NLP	The National Liberal Party (Partidul Național Liberal)
NPP	The National Peasant Party (Partidul Național Țărănesc)
RCP	Romanian Communist Party (Partidul Comunist Român)
TUAWJ	Trade Union of Artists, Writers, and Journalists (Uniunea Sindicatelor Artiștilor, Scriitorilor și Ziariștilor)

Introduction: A Culture of Censorship?

In Romania, as elsewhere in Eastern Europe, state censorship has been traditionally premised as a main tool of the Party-state for amassing power and legitimacy. Such assumptions still remain central to many accounts of communism produced by academics, journalists and politicians. Problematically enough, they have been entrenched in a binary metaphor which pits an official communist culture, purportedly the offspring of the censor's pencil, against an "authentic" thus alternative culture which retained the artistic "truth."[1] The division between "official" and "unofficial" culture is sometimes traded for a "censored" versus "uncensored" binary, but the overall picture remains the same. In one of the most extreme examples of this type of discourse, the report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania, established in 2006 by the Romanian president to "officially condemn" the communist regime, denounces the "criminal mission of extinguishing all traces of the Romanian creativity … It was a regime which looked to reduce the population to the condition of slaves, exploiting them pitilessly under the pretext of creating a utopian, egalitarian, and free society."[2] The report's stark condemnation of the 50 years of communist rule in Romania, served to legitimize the liberal post-1990 order. In casting the communist period as the moral inversion of the liberal order, the report mainly focuses on crime

[1] Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison. Artists under State Socialism* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), 69-70.
[2] Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrincu, and Cristian Vasile, *Comisia Prezidențială Pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România. Raport Final* (București: Humanitas, 2007), 491.

and repression while it eludes topics which could have undermined the narrative of collective victimhood.[3]

Needless to say, such interpretations which for long have institutionalized themselves as axiomatic after 1989 in Romania and across the Eastern Bloc have their lineage in the Cold War production of knowledge. They were produced outside the communist world, in contexts dominated by "antisocialist, nonsocialist, or post-socialist political, moral, and cultural agendas of truth."[4] Since its emergence, the analysis of the Romanian communist regime has been highly political. The stance adopted by most Western historiography and works of Romanian émigrés often converged in denouncing the supposed illegitimacy of the communist regime, in linking its endurance to Soviet support (or tanks), and in obsessively reading in domestic political machinations the reasoning for communist political power.[5]

The broad "regimes of knowledge" formed during the Cold War were often re-energized in the post-1989 historiography on state socialism. Reframed for the post-communist audience, the story combined historical self-victimization, a (re)production of an interwar mythology as a palliative to the "historical anomaly" of communism, and an insistent focus on the communist

[3] James Mark, *The Unfinished Revolution. Making Sense of the Communist Past in Central-Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 36-42.
[4] Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 6.
[5] For works by Romanian émigrés see Cretzianu Alexandre (ed.), *Captive Rumania. A Decade of Soviet Rule* (New York: Praeger, 1956) and Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Romania, 1944-1962* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964). For classic accounts of postwar Eastern Europe see Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East-European Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1950) and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc. Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

state's acquisition and deployment of "despotic" power.[6] Perhaps not unexpectedly, the emerging field of communist studies in Eastern Europe was dominated either by intellectuals formed before communism (who later suffered at the hands of communists) and academics linked to repressed families or social groups.

Not surprisingly, therefore, in the study of the cultural production and cultural policies the main interpretative effort has revolved around the clash between an a priori and ahistorical "free artistic spirit" and the state's attempts to domesticate it. Ideologically circumscribed to the liberal tradition of free speech and boosted by the Cold War moral binaries and polemics, communist cultural production appears as an effort of an illegitimate but power-thirsty state towards silencing and infantilizing its population. Other interpretations treat postwar culture just as an utilitarian form of political propaganda in support of the regime's ideological values.[7]

Such narratives might be successful in depicting political and personal dramas, but they are still incomplete. First and foremost, by reducing the communist cultural project to militant propaganda and Sovietization, these accounts neglect the distinctiveness of the socialist cultural production, in particular its new political and social means and aims, as well as its inclusiveness. Second, by conveniently construing the local culture as an anti-

[6] In the words of the one of the leading Romanian historians: "Communism quite simply knocked Romania off the normal path of evolution, totally overturning all its structures and values." See Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 31.

[7] See for example Cristian Vasile, *Politicile Culturale Comuniste în Timpul Regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* (București: Humanitas, 2011); Eugen Denize, Cezar Mâță, *România Comunistă. Statul si Propaganda, 1948-1953* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2005).

national Soviet emulation and negation of the West, these narratives present the communist culture as monolithic and incapable of change and evolution.

No wonder that censorship is always the arch structure of communist cultural construction in these approaches.[8] As a scholar of Romanian censorship argued, communist censorship was a "system which attempted to recreate reality and pervert the people's consciousness … through an enduring ideological bombardment."[9] Monotony, top-down imposed homogeneity, formulaic characterization, standardization, and political functionality, have often been described as structural features of the oppressive character of a totalitarian culture. The focus on the issue of cultural freedom has structured and reduced the analysis of the communist culture to clashes between producers and authorities, respectively to resistance to the Party-state. These views of communism and socialist subjectivity were also at the heart of political and cultural battles over resources and intellectual prestige.[10]

In this thesis, I aim to provide a fresh perspective on a traditional question, namely that of the thorny relationship between cultural production and political power. My focus is the Romanian communist state in the first postwar decade, a period during which it was striving to effect both political control and social change, and to a large extent looked to culture as a way of achieving these

[8] Bogdan Ficeac, *Cenzura Comunistă și Formarea "Omului Nou"* (București: Nemira, 1999); Adrian Marino, *Cenzura in Romania. Schiță Istorică Introductivă* (Craiova: Aius, 2000); Lidia Vianu, *Censorship in Romania* (Budapest: CEU Press, 1998); Radu Marin Mocanu, *Cazarma Scriitorilor (Documente)* (București: Libra, 1998). By the same authors see also *Cenzura a Murit, Trăiască Cenzorii!* (București: Ideea Europeana, 2008), *Cenzura Comunistă (documente)* (București: Albatros: 2001), and *Literatura Romană si Cenzura Comunistă (1969-1971)* (București: Albatros, 2003);

[9] Ficeac, 4.

[10] For a critique of post-communist anti-communism see Ciprian Șiulea et al., *Iluzia Anticomunismului. Lecturi Critice ale Raportului Tismăneanu* (Chișinău: Cartier, 2008) and Florin Poenaru, *Locuri Comune. Clasă, Anticomunism, Stânga* (Cluj-Napoca: Tact, 2017).

objectives. In critiquing conventional interpretations, the thesis will examine institutional censorship, that in most scholarship on Romanian communist history has been conceived and studied as one of the principal instruments of communist repressive power in the cultural sphere. I shall explore how the Romanian communist state's apparatus of media control operated, and how it sought to calibrate and mediate the socialist cultural agenda. I do not deny that that Romanian institutional-regulatory censorship, be it wielded by the censor's office, the Central Committee's Agitprop agency, or the secret police, played a *proscriptive* role. However, in this thesis I am interested more in how censorship, when situated in and understood as part of wider formative cultural processes enacted by the new state (that might loosely be termed 'cultural revolution'), can also be understood as a necessary condition for the formation of the speaking socialist subject. In this way, I argue, in communist cultural production, censorship also – and perhaps more importantly - fulfilled a *productive* function in the project to consolidate and legitimise the power of the new state, through the creation of new social norms and values and, ultimately, of new subjectivities.

By focussing my study on the first postwar decade, I wish to draw attention in particular to the institutional and ideological-cultural processes shaping the *formation* of the Romanian communist regime; in other words, this thesis undertakes a study of the role of cultural agencies in political transition and communist state-building, rather than in the consolidation and maintenance of power. In later years, the Romanian institutional censorship underwent a series of changes that lie outside the scope of this thesis. There was nevertheless an essential continuity to its purpose and self-definition, which was not merely

to repress and circumscribe cultural output, but also, as I note above and argue throughout the thesis, to direct the production of new knowledge, norms, values, and identities, to effect "cultural revolution". As I briefly discuss in Chapter Three, by the 1970s, when the Romanian state declared the transition to socialism to be complete, it was therefore logical to dissolve censorship. This the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu duly did.

I look at the early Romanian postwar cultural construction from the perspective of the Party-state's cultural producers and regulators. Using extensive archival materials, I will focus on three model institutions of cultural revolution: the Agitprop Department of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), the censorial body, and the Radio Station.[11] My aim is to analyse how a distinct socialist culture with its own system of production, regulation, distribution, and reception was institutionally established in postwar Romania, and thus demonstrate that the new state's cultural revolution was not only a coercive and disciplinary project but a constructive one as well. To be sure, the communist state monopolized and directed the cultural sphere but, in opposition to traditional accounts, I maintain that it was not a domination based on annihilation. As I shall show, the socialist culture did not emerge in a vacuum but drew on local traditions, institutional continuities and historical particularities, as much as on ideological improvisation and practical expediency.

[11] From 1948 to 1964 the local communist party functioned under the name of Romanian Workers' Party. In 1964 Nicolae Ceausescu, in an effort to identify the Party with the entire nation not only with the proletariat, returned to the old denomination, Romanian Communist Party. See George Schöpflin, "Romanian Nationalism," *Survey* 20 (1974): 77-104. For the sake of clarity, in this thesis I am using the "standard" name of Romanian Communist Party (RCP).

In particular, the Romanian communists' gradual seizure and reconfiguration of the means of cultural production and distribution were based on prewar institutional traditions. The communist authorities filtered and appropriated these traditions for new political ends. In so doing, they expanded their control over the state, invalidated the authority of the non-state actors, and used a deliberately highly politicized notion of culture as a means of social reconstruction.

The Revolutionary Experience of the Postwar Period

In an interview from the early 1980s, the literary critic Paul Georgescu, still vividly recounted the revolutionary energy unleashed by the overthrow of Marshall Ion Antonescu's military dictatorship in the 23 August 1944 coup:

> The summer of '44 was a wonder, it was one of those rare historical moments which makes one's life worth living … Regretfully, I find it now almost impossible to put into words for the younger generation the effervescence of that moment; and what I fear most is that they will never understand our self-assumed historical mission and what that summer of '44 meant for us in terms of enthusiasm, joy, dreams, in terms of everything …What can be more exciting and wonderful to a young person than taking part in a revolution?[12]

[12] Interview with Paul Georgescu in Mugur Florin, *Vârstele Rațiunii. Convorbiri cu Paul Georgescu* (București: Cartea Românească, 1982), 53.

Emil Dorian, a Jewish doctor, poet, and long-time communist supporter, struck a similar tone. For him, the collapse of the wartime dictatorship and the imminent defeat of Nazism in Europe, meant hope for a democratic reconstruction of the country. Dorian praised both the intelligentsia's capacity and moral duty to provide political leadership and welcomed "democratic intellectuals" to join the state apparatus, particularly the communist-controlled Ministry of Information. They had a duty to work in the state institutions because the existing staff was still tied to the interwar right-wing governments, and the working class required time to educate its own staff to take over these offices. Dorian chastised the intellectuals who argued against political participation and intellectuals "who sold their soul in instalments … [since] they do not have enough left of their soul to taste today's freedom. They can only fake liberty but they will never be able to enjoy it."[13]

Writing in the Christmas Eve edition of a local newspaper, a young democratic socialist literary critic and a future leading voice of the anti-communist emigration was driven by a similar sense of revolutionary urgency. In his metaphorical language the revolutionary new times marked the threshold of a much-awaited "kingdom of Earth":

> For the first time … we are free to talk not about the Kingdom of Heaven but about how to build such a Kingdom here on Earth. The Heaven has never been so remote, absent and disconnected from people … this is

[13] Dorian, *Cărțile au Rămas Neterminate. Jurnal 1945-1948* (București: Editura Compania, 2007), 192.

> because the people have started to figure out who they are, what they want, and what they need to do … today, there is a sense of overexcitement, indeed of joy, which make the people switch their attention from Heaven to Earth … we live in frantic times requiring people to seek redemption not in Heaven but here on Earth.[14]

The collapse of the wartime dictatorship aroused a wave of enthusiasm and great expectations for a democratic future of the country. People like Georgescu, Dorian, or Ierunca saw the postwar reconstruction and the new cultural order as a revolution. Revolutions, as Lynn Hunt wrote in the case of the French Revolution, are "first and foremost an experience,"[15] which are perceived by those who experience them as rupture, a time outside the time. The experience of the postwar revolutionary moment left an imprint on individuals, their personal relationship, and institutions. As it happens, some would grow disappointed with the turn of the political, friendships shattered, whilst institutions of the cultural revolution failed to bring the promised cultural liberation and rupture with the past. But, I argue, the postwar revolutionary experience bore a productive capacity in itself.

The end of communism and the general eclipse of utopias in the 21st century have largely extinguished the memory of the 1950s as a time of expectations and hopes. Instead, the public memory of communism was reduced

[14] Virgil Ierunca, "Împaratia Pământului," *Victoria,* 24 December 1944,1.
[15] Lynn Hunt, "The World He Have Gained: The Future of the French Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 1 (2003): 5-6.

to its totalitarian dimension. Today, the neoliberal regime of historicity constructs the idea that another type of society is possible as dangerous, irresponsible and carrying the risk of totalitarianism. As a consequence, the end of the Second World War is celebrated in the former Soviet Bloc not as a moment of liberation but as a moment which coincided with the beginning of a long period of Soviet oppression marked by captivity and failure. The past is revisited almost exclusively through the lens of nationalism. Victimhood dominates narrations of communism and, as Enzo Traverso noticed, "The memory of the Gulag erased that of the revolution … the remembrance of the victims seems unable to coexist with the recollection of their hopes, their struggles, of their conquests and their defeats."[16]

But in the aftermath of the war, state officials and broadly construed intellectuals became for a brief period of time enmeshed into a project of making a socialist Romania, an attempt which premised that culture will both fundamentally change people and lead to a new society. In this thesis I investigate this revolutionary experience at the level of the institutional cultural producers not as an inert and authoritative practice but as a dynamic and formative process for cultural practices and people. I look at the institutions of cultural revolution both as agents and sites of revolution. I further suggest that it was at the level of the daily institutional life that the experience of revolution and the aspirations to create a socialist cultural agenda met. In so doing, I attempt to bring the censorial bureaucracy and the encounters with different institutional censors at the centre of our thinking about the state socialism. Studying the state

[16] Enzo Traverso, *Leftwing Melancholia. Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 10.

from this perspective allows us to think the big – legitimacy, cultural construction – in the small (everyday interactions) and serves to historicize discussions which are often abstract.

The postwar transformation of the state would not be only sweeping in scope, but it would also have to be undertaken in a relatively quick period of time. By 1948 the rubble had been largely clean from cities, early postwar political pluralism came to an end, and economic centralized plans, as well as nationalization and collectivization projects signalled the beginning of an accelerated industrial socialist developmentalism. Circulation of culture and knowledge was crucial for the Party's broad transformative agenda. The industrialization of the country required trained workers to be mobilized around Party-led campaigns. Printed works, radio, film, speeches, arts, were all called to play a role in enlightenment and educational efforts, be they in organized contexts (schools and study-groups) or in individual undertakings.

Culture, cultural products, and knowledge in general were not neutral categories for the Party. They implied contextualization and selection, which were in itself ideological acts. But this also meant that besides the "true", Party sanctioned cultural products and knowledge, there was also false, misleading and mis-contextualized information and cultural products. As the building of a socialist state was seen as depending on the production and circulation of genuine culture, the question of who was to decide the difference between useful and corrupt culture and knowledge was particularly significant.

Yet the political nature of the cultural products and knowledge and the Party's hierarchical understanding of them, made the evaluation process

complex and bureaucratic. The RCP's Central Committee, Party's key figures, and non-Party specialists from state institutions all claimed various forms of authority. The built-in tension the communist party had to reconcile in governing society and culture was the continual tension between the Party and state/administrative institutions. After winning in the Civil War, Lenin envisaged the socialist governance as a system in which the Party's Central Committee decided over the general goals of socialist development, whilst the design and implementation of policies were delegated to a system of state institutions.[17] Similar to Lenin after the Revolution, the Romanian communists hoped that the creation of communist specialist cadres would overcome the tensions between the centralization of control and the specialized state apparatus. However, until this goal was fulfilled, a strong central control apparatus was required.

Investigating the process of censorship across cultural bureaucracy throws light on the veins which connected different bodies of the communist Party-state as well as on the tensions in the course of production and regulation of culture. I will be paying attention to three inter-related aspects of cultural production: the intentions of cultural producers and regulators, the conceptual language they used to understand their activity, and the material circumstances, especially the building of cadres. In so doing, I will trace the practices by which cultural institutions measured and expressed the values of cultural products, and how these practices were managed, implemented, and filtered in dialogues with tradition. All the institutions were designed to manage the cultural life by

[17] T.H. Rigby, *Lenin's Government: Sovnarkom 1917-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

creating hierarchies of cultural products that reflected socialist values whilst negotiating the changing, sometimes unexpected, turns in the state cultural agenda.

It was the Party's Central Committee's Agitprop which provided the ideological guidance. The activity of the all-powerful Agitprop is particularly important to highlight the regime's attempts to create spheres of valuation for the socialist cultural outputs. The establishment of the Agitprop in 1947, until then simply a coordinating committee for various agitational and propagandistic activities, signalled the introduction of the state planning in culture. The Agitprop possessed almost complete authority to monitor the entire cultural production and to make changes in staff and content they deemed necessary. It also set the rules surrounding the content of a socialist culture, coordinated the creative unions and the Ministry of Culture to implement socialist standards in culture and overseen a proper distribution and consumption of culture.

The expanded role of the Agitprop in directing cultural development exercised a structural form of censorship: through co-optation and sanctions it validated the authorized cultural forms and producers and ensured that the different positions in the cultural mechanism were occupied by trustworthy staff. But defining the cultural production as a space of socialist ideas was also a matter of establishing boundaries to fend off unwanted influences. The Party's aim to define and classify the negative influences and ideas led to the establishment of the censorial agency, the General Directorate for Press and Printed Materials (hereafter GDPPM) in May 1949. The GDPPM had a unique institutional position. Its charter gave the censorial agency regulatory powers

over printed materials and radio, but it also prevented the institution from venturing into questions of ideological definition. This hybrid identity made its jurisdiction often ambiguous in practice, as its leadership and the censors sometimes tried to expand its scope of activities by taking a more proactive role in ideological questions. They felt that a real ideological control could not be achieved only through regulation and supervision. As in practice the GDPPM answered primarily to Agitprop, the latter viewed the censorship's proactive approach as a failure to understand the ideological practice. In the communist Party-state organization it was only the Agitprop which had the right to question and calibrate the ideological content. The GDPPM's mission was more limited, to keep a proper balance between control and the need for production in the cultural system.

A good perspective to observe the emergence of the censorial hierarchies and the framing of cultural space as an object of socialist production is through the stories of conflict between censors and radio professionals over authority in programming decisions. Radio had been a key political and cultural question both for the interwar and wartime governments. Communist authorities held a similar utilitarian view of radio, but assigned it a different function – through quality socialist programmes it was expected to assist in the transformation of workers into socialists. The strict editorial control of the Party (through the Agitprop) and various forms of self-censorship originating in editors' commitment to prove themselves loyal to the socialist cause often rendered the censorship of GDPPM redundant.

Despite the officials' rhetoric of radical change, one can see continuities in terms of institutional structure, policies, practices, and sometimes in staff beyond 1945. The Party-led building of socialism was a search for modernity. But, as was the case with the other 20th century state-driven modernity projects, it mirrored, emulated, and engaged with other modern institutional arrangements. As the analysis of the state censorial body will show, the communist agency took over and only slightly expanded an institutional design already in place since 1926. Similar to its interwar counterpart, communist censorship was also centralized and hierarchical. However, the Party-state's exclusive administration of culture and media assigned to GDPPM firmer pre-publication powers and a more open ideological goal. The Radio Station also appropriated pre-1945 traditions and selectively filtered them in accordance with the new political aims. Whilst radio network reached an unprecedented level, many of the socialist programmes were built on the familiar interwar programmes. Indeed, the successive interwar and wartime reconfigurations of the Radio Station handed the RCP a powerful ready-made propaganda tool.

I also balance the analysis of the institutional relationships with an exploration of the revolution inside the state structures. In particular, I will trace the efforts to build socialism into institutional forms of cultural administration – the interpersonal relations among staff and a new sphere of workplace practices. By following individual cases of workers from the state censorship apparatus such as Iosif Ardeleanu and Corneliu Codarcea's I call into question the morally charged perspective – circumscribed to binaries such as indoctrination versus resistance or genuine belief versus cynicism – on the communist subject of the

1950s.[18] Neither society nor the individual were fixed in the 1950s, so I approach the personal identities as unsettled and in a constant dialogue with the (ideological) practices. The exploration of personal behaviours and biographies also enables a better understanding of the communist rule. Whilst the practice of Soviet Stalinism was quickly visible in institutions, the emerging socialist bureaucracy was largely left to its own devices in deciding how to "Sovietise" culture. As the case of Corneliu Codarcea will demonstrate, the task of promoting Sovietisation was often indigenized in the daily bureaucratic routine. The long-time serving censor chief, Iosif Ardeleanu, was under a political cloud due to his alleged collaboration with the interwar secret police and his poor record as a chief radio editor in the early postwar years. His assignment to the GDPPM in 1951 may be seen as a sign of his rehabilitation, however what really mattered was his education and general distrust of intelligentsia. These characteristics together with his obedience to the Agitprop made him a legitimate choice for the GDPPM. Individuals such as Ardeleanu or Matei Socor, the first communist director of the Radio Station, placed in key positions though the nomenklatura system, were also indicative to the Party's efforts to combine the central ideological guidance with the specific needs and practices of given institutions.

In the way it functioned, the Stalinist cultural industry focused more on the shaping and education of popular tastes than on their fulfilment, on making the cultural producers active participants in the construction of socialism rather than on accommodating their artistic visions and interests. Even before Stalin's

[18] For an excellent account of the liberal conceptual trap in treating the Stalinist subject see Anna Krylova, "The Tenacious Liberal Subject in Soviet Studies, *Kritika* 1, no. 1 (2000): 119-146.

death in 1953, in private diaries, some communist intellectuals expressed their frustration with the dogmatism and sometimes ineffectiveness of the postwar cultural project. For example, by 1951, the diarist Emil Dorian, mentioned few pages earlier, would give up hope of a democratic socialist culture. In his diary he would embrace despair and blame the Party's "bloody, intransigent in their dullness, cultural supervisors" for "doing nothing but weakening the role and place of the arts in the political struggle." Dorian ultimately retired from cultural life but in his diary he would continue to scorn and ridicule the top level cultural administrators ("the doctors of the revolution in culture") whilst predicting that "dogmatism" in the imposition of the Party-line would, in the end, "abolish culture".[19]

However, an exclusive focus on outcomes obscures the revolutionary experience of the early socialist cultural project. In order to understand the socialist culture, this thesis contends, we must recognize the early postwar period as a revolutionary period and chart continuities, rules of political behaviour, values, and expectations. In short, we need to understand the politics of the cultural project.

[19] Emil Dorian, *Cu Fir Negru de Arnici. Jurnal 1949-1958* (București: Editura Compania 2012), 74. By the same author see also *Cărțile au Rămas Neterminate* …; Lucia Demtrius, *Memorii* (București: Editura Albastros, 2005); Nina Cassian, *Memoria ca Zestre. Cartea I* (București: Editura Institutului Cultural Roman, 2003); Miron Radu Paraschivescu, *Jurnalul unui Cobai (1940-1954)* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1994).

Historiography and Socialist Culture

The early postwar period remains the most studied period in the history of the Soviet Bloc. Generations of scholars have sought to understand how the countries in the regions, within the span of a few years, had fallen under the communist influence. During the early Cold War years, Western scholars and East-Europeans émigrés portrayed the relationship between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as Sovietization, which they understood as the Soviet attempt to remodel politics and institutions in its own image.[20] Few scholars wrote about the socialist culture in the early stages of the Cold War and this was mainly because socialist culture was reduced to a political tool in the hands of the totalitarian East European communist parties. References to culture, when they occur, usually featured in chapters dedicated to anti-communist intellectuals in general surveys of Eastern Bloc.[21]

If the first Western scholars and émigrés focused on the captivity of Eastern Europe, the more recent scholarship seems fixated over the Soviet failures in the region.[22] After the collapse of communist regimes, a new strand

[20] See for example the classic accounts Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1950) and Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc, Unity and Conflict* (New York: Praeger, 1961). For accounts coming from East European émigrés see Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1953); Róbert Gábor, *The Bolshevization of the Hungarian Trade Union Movement, 1945-1951* (New York: National Committee for a Free Europe, 1952); Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania, 1944-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964); Cretzianu Alexandre (ed.), *Captive Rumania. A Decade of Soviet Rule* (New York: Praeger, 1956). In later surveys, Romanian émigrés pictured essentially the same image: Stephen Fisher-Galati, *The New Romania: From People's Democracy to Socialist Republic* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967) and Vlad Georgescu, *Politică și Istorie: Cazul Comuniștilor Români, 1944-1977* (München: Editura Jon Dumitru, 1981). Themselves a by-product of the Cold War, the official Romanian communist accounts of the early postwar period, proposed the opposite interpretation: the RCP liberated the country and the society was the greatest beneficiary. See for example Mihai Roller, *Probleme de Istorie: Contribuții la Lupta Pentru o Istorie Științifică a R.P.R.* (București: Editura PMR, 1951).

[21] See for example Cretzianu Alexandre (ed.), *Captive Rumania. A Decade of Soviet Rule.*

[22] Elidor Mëhili, *From Stalin to Mao. Albania and the Socialist World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017), 5.

of scholarship revived the Sovietization narrative. Although it relied on documents from local and Soviet archives to uncover Stalin's plans for the establishment of communist structures locally, it did little to overcome the "Sovietization from abroad" narrative. It meticulously reconstructed how Moscow masterminded the seizing of power in Eastern Europe but failed to engage with the local conditions and actors which aided the Sovietization.[23] In a classic account of Soviet power in East Germany, Norman Naimark concludes that the Soviets Bolshevized the zone "not because there was a plan to do so, but because that was the only way they knew how to organize society."[24] Peter Kenez has also explored Soviet efforts to use culture as a means of extending authority over Hungary and contended that the "Hungarian communists were imitating their Soviet masters and teachers. They used all the same instruments that the Soviet Communists have developed since the time of taking power in 1917."[25]

[23] Francesca Gori and Silvio Pons (eds.), *The Soviet Union and Europe in the Cold War, 1943-1953* (London: Macmillan, 1996); Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949* (Boulder: Westview, 1997); Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). Recent additions to the literature on Sovietization are Balazs Apor, Peter Apor, and E.A. Rees (eds.), *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period* (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2008), Vladimir Tismăneanu (ed.), *Stalinism Revisited. The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), and Peter Kenez, *Hungary from Nazis to Soviets: the Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). In Romania anti-communism was turned into public policy after 1990 and this determined a widespread revival of the Cold-War Sovietization paradigm. See Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (London: Hurst & Co., 1999); Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe Umerii lui Marx. O Introducere in Istoria Comunismului Românesc* (București: Curtea Veche, 2005); Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *Stalinizarea României. Republica Populară Română 1948-1950* (București: All, 2005).

[24] Naimark,

[25] Kenez, 180.

The great majority of Romanian scholars writing after 1989 still argue against seeing early postwar culture as a constructive cultural programme. The socialist culture is portrayed, in the most radical anti-communist castigation, as a "Red Holocaust,"[26] or as an "inauthentic," forced from abroad project which presumably replaced a prior "authentic" culture.[27] Some scholars even went as far as to argue that "the Soviet occupier sought both to brutally abolish the *ethnic soul* and to crush the spirituality of the ethical Romanian man."[28] Radical cultural change is similarly discarded as a "violation of human nature."[29] A celebrated literary scholar, argues that "in studying the atypical, unusual, and surprisingly literary production and [making sense] of those years of deep

[26] Ungheanu, *Holocaustutul Culturii Române,* 3.

[27] Ana Selejan, *Trădarea Intelectualilor. Reeducare și Prigoană* (București: Cartea Romanească, 2005; Ana Selejan, *Litaratura în Totalitarism, 1949-1951* (Sibiu: Thausib, 1995); Ana Selejan, *Litaratura in Totalitarism, 1952-1953* (Sibiu: Editura Thausib, 1995); Mioara Anton, Bogdan Crețu, Daniel Sandru (eds.), *Cuvintele Puterii. Literatură, intelectuali și ideologie în România Comunistă* (Iași: Institutul European, 2015; Mihai Pelin, *Deceniul Prăbușirilor (1940-1950). Viețile Pictorilor, Sculptorilor si Arhitecților Români Între Legionari si Staliniști* (București: Compania, 2005); Vasile Igna (ed.), *Subteranele Memoriei. Pagini din Rezistența Culturii in România, 1944-1954* (București: Universal Dalsi, 2001); Behring Eva, *Scriitori Români din Exil 1945-1989. O Perspectivă Istorico-Literară* (București: Fundația Culturală Română, 2001); Caravia Paul, *Gândirea Interzisă – Scrieri Cenzurate – România 1945-1989* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2000); Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe Umerii lui Marx. O Introducere in Istoria Comunismului Românesc* (București: Curtea Veche, 2005); Constantin Ilie, *Complicitatea Fertilă (Poeti Români 1950-1973)* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1994); Eugen Denize, Cezar Mâță, *Romania Comunistă. Statul si Propaganda, 1948-1953* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2005); Istrate Ion, *Panorama Romanul "Obsedantului Deceniu." O Radiografie Alfabetică* (Cluj-Napoca: Diamondia, 1995); Andi Mihalache, *Pe Urmele lui Marx. Studii despre Comunism si Consecințele Sale* (București: Alfa, 2005); Eugen Negrici, *Literatura Romană sub Comunism. Proza* (București: Editura Fundatiei Pro, 2006); Eugen Negrici, *Literatura Romană sub Comunism. Poezia* (București: Editura Fundatiei Pro, 2006); Ioan Opris, *Cercuri Culturale Disidente* (București: Univers Enciclopedic, 2001); Magda Cârneci, *Artele Plastice in România 1945-1989* (București: Editura Meridiane, 2000); Ungheanu Mihai, *Holocaustul Culturii Române. Ipoteze de Sociologie Literară (1944-1989)* (București: D.B.H., 1999); Cristian Tudor-Popescu, *Filmul Surd în România Mută. Politică și Propagandă în Filmul Românesc de Ficțiune, 1912-1989* (Iași: Polirom, 2011); Cristian Vasile, *Politicile Culturale Comuniste în Timpul Regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* (București: Humanitas, 2011); Octavian Lazăr Cosma, *Universul Muzicii Românesti. Uniunea Compozitorilor si Muzicologilor din România (1920-1995)* (București: Editura Muzicală a Uniunii Compozitorilor si Muzicologilor din Romania, 1995).

[28] Ilie Bădulescu, Mihai Ungheanu (eds.), *Enciclopedia Valorilor Reprimate. Războiul Împortiva Culturii Române (1944-1999), Vol. I* (București: Pro-Humanitate, 2000), 25.

[29] Sanda Cordoș, *Literatura între Revoluție si Reacțiune. Problema Crizei în Literatura Româna și Rusă a Secolului XX* (Cluj-Napoca: Biblioteca Apostrof, 1999), 146.

humiliation … one cannot use the traditional devices of the literary critique."[30] As a result, this scholarship dramatizes the struggles between the Soviet-backed communists and domestic actors and views communist culture almost exclusively from the perspective of nationalism. The analysis of communist cultural policies in binaries such as binaries legitimate/illegitimate, authentic/inauthentic has also offered a chance to former communist culture officials to intervene in the debate. They recast themselves as non-ideological and disciplined bureaucrats who, from the inside of the communist mechanism, defended the "legitimate" Romanian culture.[31] In the words of a former head of Agitprop's Literary Sector, "the political and cultural realities of 1944-1954 posed high challenges in carrying out day-to-day institutional work but ultimately we promoted *the Romanian literary values.*"[32]

However, instead of seeing Sovietization as a success or a failure, one may argue that the Soviet involvement in Eastern Europe can be approached as an open interaction with unexpected consequences. Scholarship on the Soviet relations with the Eastern Bloc has begun to extend beyond high politics and, in this shift, to question the utility of Sovietization paradigm. In his comparative analysis of higher education in Poland, Czechoslovakia and GDR, John Connelly undermined the Soviet hegemonic power abroad by demonstrating that

[30] Negrici, *Literatura Romană sub Comunism. Proza,* 11-15.
[31] Pavel Țugui, *Despre Lumea Cultural-Artistică in Secolul XX, vol. II* (București: Fundația Națională Pentru Știință si Artă, 2012); Pavel Țugui, *Amurgul Demiurgilor. Arghezi, Blaga, Călinescu* (București: Floarea Darurilor, 1998); Pavel Țugui, *Istoria si Limba Romană in Vremea lui Gheorghiu-Dej. Memoriile Unui Fost Șef de Secție a CC al PMR* (București: Editura Ion Cristoiu, 1999); Pavel Țugui, *Scriitori si Compozitori in Luptă cu Cenzura Comunistă* (București: Albatros, 2006); Toma Sorin, *Privind Inapoi. Amintirile Unui Fost Ziarist Comunist, Redactor-Sef al Scânteii din 1947 Până în 1960* (București: Compania, 2004); Dumitru Popescu, *Am fost și Cioplitor de Himere* (București: Expres, 1993); Mihai Beniuc, *Sub Patru Dictaturi. Memorii (1940-1975)* (București: Ion Cristoiu, 1999).
[32] Pavel Țugui, *Scriitori si Compozitori in Luptă cu Cenzura,* 5.

there were differences in local communist parties' acceptance and application of Soviet blueprint. There were limits to Stalinist power in Eastern Europe and also a certain degree of Soviet indifference towards the regions. Oftentimes local traditions and conditions prevailed over the ideological transfer from abroad.[33] In a recent study, Patryk Babiracki has shown how the Soviet and Polish low level officials used soft power, in the form of cultural relations between countries, as a tool to extend influence and forge transnational unity.[34]

As Rachel Applebaum argues in her study of Soviet-Czechoslovak transnational friendship during Cold War, the Soviet and Czechoslovak citizens were not connected only by political and military treaties, but by a vast network of cultural and interpersonal ties. Culturally, they shared a "common world."[35] In poor countries such as Albania, Elidor Mëhilli demonstrated, the Soviet template was productive and the socialist project "engendered a shared material and mental culture across national borders."[36]

As aptly demonstrated by this new scholarship, the Soviet Union's relations with its satellites in the Eastern Bloc were far complex than Cold War literature on "captivity" suggests. Further enhancing this argument, a growing literature on the cultural Cold War reveals how the communist regimes relied on culture to win over intellectuals from the West and to build legitimacy abroad.[37]

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[33] John Connelly, *Captive University. The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945-1956* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
[34] Patryk Babiracki, *Soviet Soft Power in Poland. Culture and the Making of Stalin's New Empire, 1943-1957* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015), 13-4.
[35] Rachel Applebaum, *Empire of Friends. Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019), 198.
[36] Mëhilli, 4.
[37] Giles Scott-Smith and Hans Krabbendam (eds.), *The Cultural Cold War in Western Europe, 1945-60* (London: Frank Cass, 2003) and Yale Richmond, *Cultural Exchange and the Cold War: Raising the Iron Curtain* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

To spread their political and cultural projects, illiberal regimes employed transnational contacts similar to those promoted by the Western world to spread liberalism and democracy.[38]

Studies examining communist power in Eastern Europe through the prism of everyday life have also challenged the notion of Soviet pervasive control and problematised the traditional binaries used to explain life under communism – state versus society, collaboration versus resistance. The literature exploring popular culture, sexuality, and consumption, housing, familial relations, labour relations, shows how the officials tried to fulfil consumerist desires and social welfare, and in return people participated in the regimes' propagandistic rituals.[39] As Mary Fulbrook has argued in the case of East Germany, it is difficult to separate the East German society form the East German state since they were so interconnected ("participatory dictatorship").[40]

By focusing on the role of culture in transnational interactions, scholars often neglect how socialist culture was constructed and the role it played locally. The vast majority of studies of culture in Eastern Europe still insist on the failures of the communists efforts to use culture. Most monographs deal

[38] Ana Antic, Johanna Conterio, and Dora Vargha, "Conclusion: Beyond Liberal Internationalism," *Contemporary European History* 25, no. 2 (May 2016): 371.
[39] Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker (eds.), *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (eds.), *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford: Berg, 2002); Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (eds.), *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Colin Divall (ed.), *Cultural Histories of Sociabilities, Spaces, and Mobilities* (London: Routledge, 2015); Josie McLellan, *Love in Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Steven E. Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).
[40] Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005).

primarily with achievements and developments in the artistic and intellectual realm (high culture) and focus on literature, painting, filmmaking, and theatre. They inquire about artists and their personal stories and sometimes touch upon questions of moral relativism and survival, and accommodation with the regime.[41] The socio-political context and the material conditions are usually neglected, and so are the state institutions which appear either absent or treated as an obstacle to be overcome by cultural producers.[42]

Another body of literature addresses postwar state cultural policies. By focusing on political resolutions, mandatory Party guidelines, and controversies between producers and Party officials, these studies examine the evolution of different artistic genres. In so doing, they regard the Party's resolutions and guidelines as indicative of the functioning of the system of cultural production and read them as "decisive breaks" or "turning points" in cultural production.[43]

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[41] See for example Caterina Preda (ed.), *The State Artist in Romania and Eastern Europe. The Role of Creative Unions* (București: Editura Universității București, 2017); David Thompkins, *Composing the Party Line: Music and Politics in Early Cold War Poland and East Germany* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2013); Esther von Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise and Participation in the GDR* (New York: Berghan Books, 2009); Elaine Kelly and Amy Wlodarski (eds.), *Art Outside the Lines: New Perspectives on GDR Art Culture* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011); Laura Bradley, *Cooperation and Conflict: GDR Theatre Censorship, 1961-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Marek Haltof, *Polish National Cinema* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002);

[42] Therefore many studies of culture focuses on the role of censorship: George Schöpflin (ed.), *Censorship and Political Communication in Eastern Europe* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1983); Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: Random House, 1984); Lidia Vianu, *Censorship in Romania* (Budapest: Central University Press, 1998). For the Romanian case see Ilie Rad (ed.), *Cenzura în România* (Cluj-Napoca: Tribuna, 2012). I discuss the literature on censorship in chapters 3 and 4.

[43] For Romania see Dan Cătănus (ed.), *Intelectuali Români in Arhivele Comunismului* (București: Nemira, 2006); Lucia Dragomir, *L'Union des Écrivans. Une Institution Transnationale à L'Est: l'Example Roumain* (Paris: Belin, 2007); Magda Cârneci, *Artele Plastice in România 1945-1989* (București: Editura Meridiane, 2000); Cristea Mihaela, *Reconstituiri Necesare: Ședința din 27 Iunie 1952 a Uniunilor de Creație din România* (Iasi: Polirom, 2005); Ioniță Marin, *Kiseleff 10. Fabrica de Scriitori* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2003); Radu Marin Mocanu, *Cazarma Scriitorilor (Documente)* (București: Libra, 1998); Valentin Silvestru, *Jurnalul de Drum al Unui Critic Teatral, 3 vol.* (București: Palimpsest: 2004-08); Filaret Acatrinei, *Radiodifuziunea Româna de la Înființare la Etatizare (1925-1948)* (București: Tritonic, 2005); Eugen Denize, *Istoria Societății Române de Radiodifuziune. Instaurarea si Consolidarea Comunismului (1944-1965)* (București: Societatea Româna de Radiodifuziune, 2000).

These studies tend to suffer from overgeneralization – they make use of specific cases to draw general conclusions about cultural policies.[44]

In sum, the scholarship on culture in early communist Eastern Europe is still fragmented. The bottom-up focus and the move beyond high politics have brought much needed nuance to our understanding of East European communism. However, in highlighting the experiences, perceptions, negotiations, and memories of those who lived under state socialism, this scholarship risks overlooking what the state set out to accomplish and what the socialist cultural construction was. In other words, the state appears from the perspective of its subjects, often an unproductive and heartless bureaucracy sustained by a network of cynical political interests. Making sense of the institutional history of cultural construction illuminates broader social processes, questions of material culture, and collective memory. Thus, to analyse the socialist culture by counter-posing it to "hard" notions like empirical reality, authenticity and authentic cultural realization, is problematic exactly because it eludes the question of how "authenticity" became part of the Stalinist cultural and ideological project. In other words, instead of pitting "ideology" ("culture") against "reality," we should look at the workings of ideology in what is "reality."

[44] The best studies of cultural policies in Romania are Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics. Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) and Ioana Toma-Macrea, *Privilighentia. Instituții Literare în Comunismul Românesc* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2009). For GDR see David Bathrick, *The Powers of Speech: The Politics of Culture in the GDR* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995); David Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-49* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1992) and Stephen Brockmann, *The Writer's State: Constructing the East-German Literature, 1945-1959* (New York: Camden House, 2015).

Culture, Censorship, and State Practices

This thesis sets out to uncover how early Romanian socialist culture operated to construct – ideologically and institutionally – the very notions of an "authentic" and "real" culture. I acknowledge that "culture" is a multifaceted concept which eludes definitive theorisation. For pragmatic reasons, in this thesis I use the term "culture" both as an actors' category (i.e. in the meanings mobilised and often contested at the time, which themselves form an object of my empirical analysis) and in its social definition.[45] By extension, I define "socialist culture" as a historically distinctive ensemble of ideological and institutional practices.

My research questions, therefore, concern which ideological and institutional practices constituted Romanian "socialist culture," how did they do so, and in what ways was this culture historically distinctive (and, by implication, in what ways did it manifest continuities with earlier Romanian non-socialist cultures or similarities to non-Romanian socialist cultures). In the communist official interpretation, culture had two major understandings. First, culture represented both a fertile terrain for social change and a tool of social engineering. But culture was also perceived to be the sum of all artistic and intellectual innovation: literature, film, arts, and various professional and amateur performances. When I refer to "cultural sphere" I mean the realm of public social life which revolves around the production and reception of a variety of intellectual cultural products. It is also important to recognize the

[45] It may be argued that defining culture as a site of signifying practices – as in the social definition of culture pursued by "cultural studies" – pays insufficient attention to the institutional conditions which articulate different fields of culture. This is arguably so because such interpretations rarely consider culture as a particular field of government, the particularities of state cultural politics and institutional conditions which shaped cultural construction. See Tony Bennett, "Putting Policy into Cultural Studies," in *Cultural Studies,* eds. Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Routledge, 1992), 23-4.

limitation of concepts such as “communist cultural policies” and “state control over culture” before December 1947 when the communists acquired full political power.

By focusing on meaning production in the socialist cultural project, the trans-institutional focus of the thesis allows to overcome the common division in studying culture, between texts and lived cultural practices. I ask a different question: instead of looking at how the state pressured the artists and cultural producers or whether they collaborated or rebelled, I am interested more in how the cultural products were shaped and made into socialist commodities in the postwar environment. In so doing, I am using a “fluid” version of culture, informed not by historiographical preconceptions but by historical actors’ own conceptualizations.

In a Romantic and moralistic tradition, the communists considered self-realisation through culture an end in itself. The RCP, strongly believed that a cultural socialist state would reverse the cultural dichotomy of high culture/mass culture under capitalism and provide people with equal and unalienable access to the totality of cultural production. This type of universal access to culture, they believed, would both civilize and transform a rural nation by redrawing the social and material relations of production, concurrently with reshaping the people’s political consciousness. In this sense, culture understood both in its lay (high culture) and broader sociological sense, was seen as a weapon of social change, a crucial tool for creating the new man. Thus, I argue, the communists’

engagement with policy issues has to be seen as central to their "practical" and highly political conception of culture.[46]

It was, however, in many respects an impoverished concept of culture, anchored in a mode of production determinism, which posited that the cultural sphere would just reproduce the economic relations. Agency was overwhelmed by structure, and it was assumed that how a cultural product was made determined what it could mean or what was it worth. In other words, in the early 1950s the authorities looked at the people as passive consumers of the cultural meanings encoded in the commodities provided by the Party-governed institutional bodies. But, needless to say, cultural meaning is always a site of contestation and struggle. This is all the more so in time of political crisis when, as Gramsci argued, the political and moral leadership cannot maintain authority through hegemony (not a direct rule over society but a moral and intellectual leadership). The latter is thus temporarily replaced by the coercive power of the state apparatus.[47] Coercive state powers, such as censorship, became necessary although not sufficient in the ideological processes forming cultural hegemony in the 1950s.

[46] In her fine study of cultural politics in Ceausescu's Romania, Katherine Verdery argues that hegemony, in the Gramscian cultural take – as a regularization of discursive productions and practices which pass as uncontested by the subjugated – was "wholly absent in East European socialism. Writing from and on Ceausescu's Romania, Verdery prefers the Weberian formulation of legitimacy which means "only the assent of a part of the population with the remainder *not* adhering to some alternative image of a possible social order". If there was an ideology in Ceausescu's Romania in position to claim hegemonic force, Verdery goes on, that ideology was national ideology. See Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 10.

[47] John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture. An Introduction,* 5th ed. (Harlow: Longman, 2008), 81.

Conventionally, censorship has been premised as originating mainly within the state apparatus. While positing the state as the major censoring subject, the liberal approach to censorship also regarded freedom of expression as a normative good in modern society. Had the state's despotic power been successfully restricted, such a liberal view asserts, individuals would have been protected from the effects of censorship.[48] Along these lines, scholars focussed on the disproportionate interventions of state institutions infringing upon individual liberties. Much of the academic work on censorship was thus dominated by reconstructions of the clashes between state regulative agencies and individual writers and cultural producers. Taking leads from the archives, historians and literary scholars investigated censorial practices in various historical periods by paying most attention to the instances when the authors resorted to "Aesopian" language to surpass the censor. However, framed in the binary beneficial/detrimental, the discussion about censorship only marginally engaged with the nature or consequences of censorship.[49]

By challenging the old liberal conceptualization of the censoring subject, "the new censorship" exposed the former's unsophisticated stance. But, even more importantly, it made the very idea of the censoring subject obsolete. While traditional histories of censorship tend to focus on the official suppression of speech, the new Foucauldian-inspired stream of scholarship calls for

[48] Of course, "freedom of speech" is itself a very problematic if not abstract construction, less an independent value than a "political prize, and if that prize has been captured by a politics opposed to yours, it can no longer be invoked in ways that further your purposes, for it is now an obstacle to those purposes". For a critical discussion of the term in the broad context of censorship see Stanley Fish, *There's No Such Thing AS Free Speech* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 102.

[49] Beate Müller, "Censorship and Cultural Regulation: Mapping the Territory," in *Censorship and Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age,* ed. Beate Müller (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 147-149.

transcending the limited field of state action. Thus, it urges us to view the deployment of power in the techniques and tactics of domination.[50] It persuasively argues that if the state has real power, that form of power is "micropower" rather than the power inculcated through state institutions.

How can all these re-theorizing efforts be applied to the study of communist regimes? Can we overlook the state and the importance of censorship for political mobilization? Similar to the traditional conception of the censoring subject holding that only a particular type of actor, namely the state, can be a censoring subject, the "totalitarian" school of communist studies links a perceived crisis of legitimacy with the state's brutal repression of free speech. Highly normative as it was, the "totalitarian" take on censorship operates within a liberal ideological presupposition, which saw censorship as compromising freedom of speech. The latter, in its turn, was assumed either a given or an attainable goal in any modern (liberal) democratic society.

However, what is still conspicuously missing from this picture, (de)centred on the victim of censorship, is not only the censor himself but also an understanding of the daily activity of the censorship body. My use of "censorship" throughout this thesis is dual. I see censorship as an act both imposed by external discrete agents (by the way of the sanctions of the GDPPM) and an act internalized in the form cultural norms (or superego, to use Freudian

[50] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 102. For theoretical studies on censorship see Robert C. Post (ed.), *Censorship and Silencing* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and Humanities, 1998); Richard Burt (ed.), *The Administration of Aesthetics. Censorship, Political Criticism, and the Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Judith Butler, *The Excitable Speech. A politics of the Performative* (London: Routledge, 1997).

terms).[51] Accordingly, I see the work of Agitprop and the radio editors' attempts to define a socialist programme as carrying an incorporated cultural (moral) kind of censorship. This manifestation of censorship is not necessarily coercive but an instrument of production and reproduction of social consensus. The censorship carried out by the censorial agency was to a great extent blunt interdictory, however, as we will see in the next chapters, in practices boundaries overlapped. I acknowledge the symbolic cultural level of censorship but I do not reduce censorial processes to it.

Sources and Structure

I relied on two archives for the bulk of my research for this thesis: the Romanian National Archives (Bucharest and the county division Mureș) and the Radio Station in Bucharest. Until fairly recently the National Archives did not allow access to the files of the RCP. But in recent years the restrictions had been lifted, although some collections and files, still uncatalogued, remain inaccessible. Regrettably, the files of the period 1945-1960 are largely uncatalogued, thus the access to the archival collections of the Radio Station is to a large extent restricted. The access policy in the case of both institutions depended on the post-1990 governments' political stance and priorities. In the turmoil of December 1989-January 1990, the archival collections pertaining to the branches of the Central Committee (the Agitprop among them) were removed

[51] I draw inspiration from Pierre Bourdieu's works *On the State. Lectures at the College de France, 1989-1992,* trans. by Davis Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity, 2014) and *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

from the Central Committee's Main Office and taken to a repository of the Romanian Army near Bucharest. Eventually the collections were transferred to the Romanian National Archives in the late 1990s, but, except for some well-connected researchers, the public was not permitted access before 2007. Intellectuals associated with the right leaning (and anti-communist) governments in power after 2004 lobbied for and finally managed to secure free access to the declassified RCP records.[52] At the Radio Station, financial constraints and bureaucratic negligence precluded a professional cataloguing of the archival collections. Post-communist ideology and its renewed interest in interwar culture (constructed as the moral and legitimate alternative to communism), turned the cataloguing of the interwar collections into a priority. If for the time span between 1948 and 1960 there are no catalogues whatsoever, other chronological periods of Romanian communism received more attention – mainly in cataloguing of the media sources (transcripts of the broadcasts, the official magazines of the Radio etc.).

For all their shortcomings, the archives contain sources vital for my thesis. The archival collections of the General Directorate for Press and Printing Materials, and of the Central Committee's Agitprop, Chancellery, and Organizational divisions, held by the Romanian National Archives offer rich evidence of meeting transcripts, periodical working plans and reports, memoranda, lectures given to the staff by Party seniors, disciplinary meetings and sanctions. Such evidence introduces the reader to the dynamics and negotiations of the communist officials' debates around culture, to how they

[52] Tismăneanu, Dobrincu and Vasile, *Comisia Prezidențială,* 626-30.

understood, established and regulated the socialist culture. They capture the material-institutional conditions which made culture both possible and necessary: how the Party's agencies organized cultural life, the key aspects of the state's cultural agenda and its means of dissemination.

For demonstrating the continuities, in terms of practice, between the communist censorial body and its interwar precursor agency, I relied on the archival collections of the Ministry of Propaganda, which included the Directorate for Press. In establishing the transition of personnel from one censorial agency to another, and hence the continuity in terms of staff, I also relied on the personnel records of the Ministry of Propaganda.

The enormous impact the radio had in the past is almost impossible to be remembered in our visual age.[53] This is not only because the radio's cultural power in the early and mid-20th century is now overshadowed by the television and the internet, but also because the sources pertaining to radio history are fragmented and difficult to access. The administration of the Radio Station did not leave extensive archival paperwork. Due to a combination of luck and the good-will of archivists from the Radio Station's repository, I was able to trace down important files for reconstructing how the Radio implemented socialist culture in practice and how institutional censorship was wielded for correcting possible misunderstandings in transmission. Limited as they are, the archival sources concerning the Radio Station's activity are thematically catalogued into transcripts of programmes, various financial and administrative acts, and

[53] Susan Douglas, *Listening In. Radio and the American Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 9-10.

sometimes transcripts of the Council of Administration. Yet, for all the gaps in the documentary records, the history of the Radio Station can still be written. In addition, the radio's magazine, *Secolul Radiofoniei,* provided a good description of the radio's social role. I tried to reconstruct the internal decisional mechanism and the ideological shaping of the programmes by relying on material from the Party's Central Committee and Chancellery archives, respectively from the censorial agency's archive. Chapter Six also benefited greatly from the wealth of interviews preserved in the oral archive of the Department for Oral History at the Radio Station.

To supplement these sources, I also read through biographies and autobiographies of cultural functionaries from various archival collections pertaining to the Central Committee. At the National Archives I relied especially on Colecția 53 which preserves personal files, mostly compiled by the Party's Verification Commission between 1948 and 1951.

In addition, I conducted several interviews with former cultural functionaries, but in a number of cases I was not able to record or receive their written consent. The official condemnation of the communist regime by the president Traian Băsescu in 2006 created a charged political environment. Anti-communist politicians were particularly strong critics of what they perceived as the "privileges" of the former high level communist officials and demanded state intervention to curb them. For instance, among the requests were that certain communist top officials would be put on trial and stripped of their special state pensions. Thus, many of the cultural officials whom I tried to interview (censors, editors, journalists) fearing public exposure, either turned

down my invitation, or accepted to talk to me, but on condition of anonymity. While these conversations have shaped my understanding of the structures and processes that I analyse in the thesis, I have therefore been unable to make formal or systematic use of the information and insights they conveyed.

Other primary sources I used include the daily, weekly, and monthly press from the period, and a variety of pamphlets, brochures, booklets, periodicals of the Writers' Union and the Radio Station, newsletters, resolutions of various artists' congresses, and books printed and published in the early postwar period.

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The thesis consists of six chapters, structured chronologically and institutionally. The first part of the thesis will explore how, hoping to transcend the contradictions and limitations of bourgeois culture and to cultivate a new type of person, the Romanian Communist Party sought to control and channel the economy of cultural production.

Following this Introduction, the second chapter introduces the reader to the effervescence, voluntarism, and hopes of the postwar cultural debates by sketching out how Romania gradually evolved from a generally free market of ideas to a Cold War battleground for ideological uniformity. The chapter pays

attention to how the communist or communist-led governments imposed order in postwar cultural life and institutionally made culture accessible to the masses.

In organizing the cultural state apparatus towards the manifest cultural agenda of the communist Party-state, the Agitprop agency of the RCP Central Committee was instrumental. Thus, Chapter Three is devoted to examining how Agitprop organized and coordinated state and Party cultural actors. Despite its massive aggregation of power in cultural matters, Agitprop was committed to a form of "pastoral power" which was far from being distinctively communist. Institutionally and historically it can be traced back to modern systems of governmentality and to the production of governable identities through the deployment of truth.

The second part of the thesis will analyse how the censorial agency operated within the logic of state cultural control. Chapter Four will show how after the war the official censorial body, building on previous interwar and wartime experience, embarked on an ambitious program to monitor and regulate the various media outlets and literary forums. Its "proscriptive" agenda, however, was complemented by a "productive" one, as the censorial agency's mission went beyond correction and standardization to the goal of educating the masses in the new orthodoxies and contributing to the creation of the communist "new man." Chapter Five develops this argument by inquiring into how communist censors, the "educators" were themselves socialized, trained and constituted into ethical subjects, social examples of the new man. Neither necessarily insincere, nor purely disinterested, the censors' work should itself be seen as part of learning the new cultural system and language. Given their

particular workplace environment, obviously necessitating not only absolute secrecy but also certain intellectual standards doubled by ideological awareness, the censors were not ordinary bureaucrats. Ideally, they were to harbour enthusiasm and work ethic to mirror in formulation the interpretative judgment of the Party elite. They worked in an institution with a leading role in the production of educated persons (the formation of subjectivities through the mediation of cultural consumption) but they themselves needed "cultural enlightenment" and the Party's guidance in learning how to "speak Bolshevik."

In the last chapter, the sixth, I explore how the Party's cultural agenda and its guarding mechanism, state censorship, calibrated the activity of the Radio Station, considered the most efficient medium through which the authoritative voice of the Party reached the population. It argues that the establishment of the communist Radio Station did not involve a collapse of the previous cultural order, but a selective appropriation and interpretation of the Radio's cultural tradition. Institutional censorship and censors acted as rather marginal instances of control.

The postwar cultural experiment, or the "obsessive decade," as it is critically referred in the bulk of the Romanian scholarly production, was a transient moment in the building of a local socialist culture. Relying on a highly politicized vision of culture (infused by Party-mindedness), canonical and highly didactic texts, and demanding popular participation in the act of artistic creation, the early postwar culture was in many regards formulaic and imposed from above. Even in many of its own practitioners' recollections – before and after the collapse of state socialism – this early stage is usually depicted in

anecdotal tones, as a failed aesthetic experiment devoid of any revolutionary romanticism. However, the early postwar culture also meant an unprecedented exposure of the working class to culture and the development of a nationwide institutional infrastructure. Over the next decades, the local socialist culture changed and evolved, but on the basis of an inclusive definition of culture formulated in the first postwar decade. In this thesis I aim to uncover the institutional organization of the socialist culture, how it worked in both its constructive and repressive dimensions, and its limitations in making culture a "hegemonic truth

Chapter 1. Building a Cultural State

When the Red Army approached the Eastern border of Romania in March 1944, the underground Romanian Communist Party (RCP) had perhaps the feeblest per capita membership of any country in the region.[54] It was, to a certain extent, the long-term effect of the hard anti-communist line pursued by the interwar authoritarian governments. They had banned the communist party, supressed left-wing political groups and organizations, and imprisoned and tortured communist militants. From 1924 to August 1944 the communist party was forced underground. Greater Romania emerged from the First World War not only larger, but also more ethnically diverse. Romania acquired Transylvania and Bukovina from Austria-Hungary, and Bessarabia from the Russian Empire. Whilst Romanians made up the largest ethnic group, in these territories they were joined by sizeable minorities. In the context of the Romanian state's aggressive nation-building policies, the RCP's defence of the Comintern line on the national question – self-determination, including national minorities' right to separation – curbed its potential appeal to the working class.[55] The feeling of historical justice and fulfilment on which the interwar nationalizing state was premised, constructed the RCP as illegitimate and harmful. The latter's militancy against both the political order and the post-First World War border

[54] The most optimistic accounts suggest no more than one thousand members. See Vladimir Tismăneau, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 87.
[55] Robert King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), 9-38.

settlement received considerable support from national minorities but was targeted by the authorities with great violence.

The coming of the war against the Soviet Union brought harsher anti-communist measures. With almost the entire underground Central Committee imprisoned and operating under increased levels of persecution, the Party's involvement in partisan and resistance movements was marginal.[56] The RCP expanded its participation in political life only after the Red Army reached the Eastern border of Romania, in March 1944. With the Red Army advancing on Romanian territory, the RCP played a central role in the overthrowing of Marshall Antonescu's dictatorship.[57] Clandestine talks with the National Liberal Party (NLP), the National Peasant Party (NPP), and the Socialist Democratic Party led to the creation of the National Democratic Bloc. In collaboration with King Michael, the bloc successfully conducted the 23 August coup which ousted Antonescu and pulled the country out of the Axis.[58]

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[56] Mihail Burcea, *"Apărând Oranduirea de Stat". Siguranța pe Urmele lui Gheorghe Crosneff in România Interbelică* (București: Editura Universității București, 2016), 33-45.
[57] Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (London: Hurst & Co., 1999), 33-36.
[58] The events of August 1944 sparked sharp debates in historiography. In Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej's times (1948-1965) the communist historiography approached the coup as exclusively a performance of the communist party. Later on, in the 1960s, after Nicolae Ceaușescu replaced Dej as the leader of the Party, the interpretations became more nuanced. Ceaușescu sought to consolidate his political power as a "national" leader and conveniently portrayed Dej as belonging to the "un-patriotic" communist forces which came to Romania in the aftermath of 23 August. The coup was reimagined as carried out by "patriotic forces" in collaboration with the communists, rather than by the RCP alone. On the other hand, non-communist historians credited the traditional parties with carrying out the coup and, by pointing out the negligible party membership and its negligible underground existence, dismissed the RCP's leadership claims as exaggerated and distorted. However, in hindsight, more important than establishing the importance of one side or another, is the fact that the RCP obtained political recognition and received ministries in the post-coup governments. See Michael Shafir, *Romania. Politics, Economics and Society. Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1985), 31-33.

After the coup, with the RCP now a recognized political force, developments unfolded in rapid succession. Romania realigned with the Allied Powers and on 12 September signed the Armistice Agreement in Moscow. By 6 March 1945, the date the first communist-led coalition assumed power, the RCP had already increased its presence and influence in the first post-23 August coalition governments.[59] But, more importantly, by capitalizing on the antifascist momentum, it emerged as the leading champion of the implementation of the Armistice Agreement and de-fascization. Over the following three years, the RCP would engage in pitched political and ideological battles with the opposition parties, NLP and NPP. With Soviet backing, the RCP became the senior partner in the National Democratic Front (NDF), a progressive alliance formed with the Social Democratic Party, The Ploughmen's Front, and The Union of the Magyar Working People in Romania.

The coalition government implemented two major democratic policies: an agrarian reform in the spring of 1945, and a parliamentary election in November 1946. During the elections, the opposition parties reported intimidation and harassment and widely accused the government of manipulating the results.[60] Choosing not to risk confrontation with Moscow, the Western powers tacitly agreed on the state of affairs and by late 1947 the communist-led government closed the gap on the opposition and proclaimed the popular republic.

[59] Most prominently, the PCR held the Ministry of Justice (Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu – the Party's foremost theoretician) and the Ministry of Transport (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej). See Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania, 1944-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 95-104.
[60] Virgiliu Țârău, *Alegeri fără Opțiune. Primele Srutinuri Parlamentare din Centrul si Estul Europei După Cel De-al Doilea Război Mondial* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2005).

At the same time, the Romanian state's institutions were mired in battles for administrative jurisdiction, as well as political and ideological supremacy. These clashes in the early postwar years have come to be seen in historiography as an unequal confrontation between the local Stalinists, fighting for the instauration of communism, and those who opposed them (the democratic forces represented by the old parliamentary parties). In this view, the cynical manoeuvring of the Soviet-backed RCP had the sole aim of capturing power. However, one can make the argument that although the intervention of the Red Army and Soviet officials proved decisive over the course of events, it was not yet sufficient. To be sure, although the Cold War-influenced interpretations connecting the presence of the Red Army, the abuses of the police and secret services, with the "maverick" plans designed in the communist Central Committee have their relevance in understanding the establishment of communism, they are severely incomplete.

In Eastern Europe, after the collapse of state socialism, the story of "Stalinization" largely duplicated the well-established patterns of the Western Cold War historiography. In trying to settle scores with the communist regime and to tell the "real" story of the communist takeovers, such stark binaries offered analytical comfort. The historian Norman Naimark finely captures the logic of domestic historiographical alignment with Western-style Cold War narratives:

> The historical model is transparent; a few Soviet puppets in each of the countries—encouraged by the NKVD and backed by the power and influence of the Red Army—successfully employed "salami tactics"

> (after the politics of Hungary's Mátyás Rákosi) to capture free societies, halt the growth of democracy, and stunt the development of economic prosperity throughout eastern Europe. Western-style Cold War historiography, suppressed for so long in the countries of east central Europe, has come to dominate perceptions of the past.[61]

Such accounts tend to emphasize the Soviet imposition of power over former sovereign states which resulted in the establishment of client states of the Soviet Union.[62] Conceptually, the (impassioned) debates around Sovietization have been delineated by two sets of dichotomies: homogeneity versus diversity in the "bloc", and Sovietization from abroad versus local factors.[63] Yet, the post-23 August period is far too complex to be read in simplistic assumptions such as "Stalinization of Eastern Europe," "imposition of communist controlled governments," "satellization," or "Soviet totalitarianism in Eastern Europe."[64]

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[61] Norman Naimark, "Revolution and Counterrevolution in Eastern Europe," in *The Crisis of Socialism in Europe*, eds. Christiane Lemke and Gary Marks (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 63.

[62] Jerzy Tomaszewski, The Socialist Regimes of East Central Europe: Their Establishment and Consolidation, I944-1967 (London: Routledge 1989). More recent works argues essentially among the same lines: Balász Apor, Peter Apor, and E.A. Rees, eds., *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspective on the Postwar Period* (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2008); Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianskii, eds., *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949* (Boulder: Westview, 1997); Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany. A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); Peter Kenez, *Hungary from Nazis to Soviets: the Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Richard Staar, *Poland, 1944-1962: The Sovietization of a Captive People* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1962); R.V. Burks, *The Dynamics of Communism in Eastern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961).

[63] Tarik Cyril Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv. A Borderland City Between Stalinists, Nazis and Nationalists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 6.

[64] Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*; Charles Gati, *The Bloc That Failed: Soviet-East European Relations in Transition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State* (London: Hurst, 1999).

The "import" model has provided the most popular interpretative frame. Therefore, the focus falls not on how the Soviet model was assimilated in local national contexts but on how it was imported. In other words, the discussion is more about how the Soviet style structures were transferred to Eastern Europe and less about how these structures were implemented and adapted in accordance with local conditions and traditions. It overlooks the complexity of postwar visions of reconstruction shaped by strong ideals of egalitarianism, public participation, social justice, and democratic citizenship, focusing instead on the struggle for the control of the state.

This chapter examines the early postwar formation and state administration of Romanian socialist culture. It argues that after 23 August 1944 the communist or communist-led governments reshaped culture by pursuing three main objectives: to impose order in cultural life, purge cultural production of fascist legacies, and make culture accessible to large audiences ("democratization of culture" in official terms). In so doing, they capitalized on the anti-fascist moment of reconstruction, assumed control over key positions in the cultural bureaucracy, and made use of the prewar and wartime institutional infrastructure. The communist cultural project of the 1950s was rooted in these early postwar developments.

De-Fascization, Ideological Adjustments, and Early Postwar Reconstruction

This section looks at how antifascism was turned into a cultural project in early postwar Romania. It argues that the RCP reduced postwar anti-fascism to a self-serving political instrument. It also elucidates how the RCP combined its agenda of cultural-political restructuring with attempts to restore prewar and wartime institutional practices. As we shall see, the RCP's preference for a top-down approach imposed on cultural institutions a centralized organizational structure which mirrored its own.

In the summer of 1945, a few months after the first communist-led government took office, Ana Pauker, the *de facto* leader of the Party, gave an interview to an American journalist in Bucharest. During the interview, the journalist was eager to know about the Party's long-term revolutionary objectives – the realisation of socialism – but Pauker offered rather cautious answers. She denied that the Party would push for nationalization and collectivization of agriculture and instead chose to focus on short-term, attainable through the parliamentary road, objectives: the land reform (accomplished in March 1945) and "the reconversion of industry to peace, the reconstruction of the country and de-fascization."[65]

[65] Arhivele Naționale ale României (hereafter ANR), Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație (hereafter Secția PA), file 61/1945, 1-4; transcript of an interview Ana Pauker gave to the American journalist Frank O'Brian. In an interview in the *Times* in 1946 Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej assured the reporter that nationalization did not feature in the government four-year program. (for the transcript of Dej's interview see ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 89/1946, 2-10).

Contrary to the prevailing accounts in the Romanian historiography, the RCP did not have an elaborate strategy to seize power.[66] Shaped by tactical necessities, the Party adopted a conciliatory position both in politics and culture. Ana Pauker and other communist leaders insisted that forcing a Soviet-style communism on Romania was unsuitable. In this regard Pauker articulated the Party leadership's concern with the level of political education of the population, considered to be still under the influence of Fascist ideas. To overcome what the Party's leaders perceived as "political immaturity," the population had to be first educated towards enjoying the benefits of a Soviet style system. De-fascization and the reconstruction – cultural, moral, economic, political – were posited to precede any socialist political experiment. "What we are doing today is what we must do … it is in accordance with our political situation … and it is not only that we are too weak for a dictatorship of the proletariat, it is because at the time being our aim is to mobilize all political forces against fascism," Ana Pauker asserted in her keynote speech at a national meeting with the supervisors in propaganda and agitation.[67]

These early political goals were couched in the language of democracy, democratization of culture, and national (patriotic) unity. In an environment expecting social reform, the RCP recast itself as moderate and patriotic. This translated into self-portrayals of the RCP as a natural successor of the historical

[66] To demonstrate that the Soviet planning for postwar Romania gave no indication of anticipating fundamental change, Alfred Rieber cites a document drawn up by I.M. Maiskii, the former Soviet ambassador to Great Britain and the head of the Commission of the Foreign Commissariat on the Restoration of Damages inflicted on the USSR by Nazi Germany. In one of his reports to Moscow, Maiskii emphasizes the importance of collaboration with the United States and Great Britain by avowing proletarian revolutions and securing peace for a period of 30 to 50 years. See Alfred Rieber, "The Crack in the Plaster: Crisis in Romania and the Origins of the Cold War," *The Journal of Modern History* 76, no. 1 (2004): 63-4.

[67] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 2/1945, 2-3; keynote speech of Ana Pauker at the meeting with the supervisors in propaganda and agitation.

characters in Romanian history who fought for social justice and national emancipation: "the communists are the children of the people (*fiii poporului*) and, after all, who, other than the mason who constructed it, could love his home more genuinely? Who could love his fatherland more than the people who adore it the most and work daily for its prosperity?"[68] A "proper" fatherland was free and democratic, values which, the communists claimed, could be defended only in collaboration with the Soviet Union: "We have a young democracy, the truly democratic political forces have only come to power on 6 March [1945] ... a country led by imperialistic forces is not a fatherland."[69]

As a "party of reconstruction," as opposed to a party of revolution, the RCP linked left-wing ideals with the nation and infused class with popular struggles. Although the scholarship has traditionally focused on political struggles around economic and social reconstruction, debates around the country's moral-cultural reconstruction were equally if not more important. Under the conditions of postwar reconstruction, the RCP leaders believed that the "cultural approach" was hugely consequential for creating a new socialist society: without the pursuit of a democratic ideal, no economic reconstruction could succeed, and no democracy could be possible without de-fascization and the involvement of the working-class. Reconstruction, as one of the Party

[68] Miron Constantinescu, *Despre Patrie si Patriotism* (București: Editura PMR, 1946), 3-4.
[69] Ibid., 6; Constantinescu, attempted to give a communist interpretation to "homeland" and "patriotism." "Homeland and patriotism, words so dear to all Romanians, have been soiled for decades and their core understanding has been perverted by the reactionaries." "Only those who can love the people and its national culture, deeply and for real, those who respect and love the culture of other peoples … between one's love for his own country and his love for other peoples' advancement there is no incompatibility but only harmony … the real patriotism goes hand in hand with internationalism, and internationalism is rooted in a strong attachment and love for the country."

leaders put it at the first Party conference after the war (October 1945), was a "matter of building and strengthening the democracy."[70]

The anti-fascist ideology offered an impetus for segments of the population to become involved in the communist movement and to be exposed to progressive ideas. For a country which, among the Reich's allies, provided the most military divisions for the attack on the Soviet Union, the issue of guilt was central. However, the RCP handled the issue of guilt with leniency. Responsible for the war disaster were the elites: King Carol who joined the Axis, Antonescu who turned the country into an annex of the Reich, and the political elites of the traditional parties who supported the military invasion of the Soviet Union.[71] Although the local fascist movement (*Miscarea Legionară*) had its own followers among workers, in the postwar "guilt" approach they were nothing but naïve and manipulated individuals.[72]

To confront and uproot the basis of the power of the dominant classes was to eliminate the roots of fascism, the communists claimed: "Maniu and Brătianu [the leaders of the opposition] portray themselves today as democrats … but their vision of democracy consists in the cheating and exploitation of the masses, they just want to prevent the masses from having an active role in

[70] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, 66/1946, 10; speech delivered by Constantin Pârvulescu at an Agitprop plenary session, 12 November 1945.
[71] Nicolae Moraru, *Vremuri Noui, Ţară Nouă* (București: Editura Scânteia, 1946), 1-5.
[72] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 61/1945, 2; the transcript of an interview Ana Pauker gave to the American journalist Frank O'Brian.

politics … they behave as they did during the war, they fight to defend their own selfish interests … we, the communists, fight for the people's interests."[73]

The Armistice Agreement, signed by Romania with the Allied Powers, placed the country under the control of the Allied Control Commission (ACC). These commissions were set up in all former Axis countries to oversee the amount of reparations the countries would be required to pay, the fulfilment of military obligations (assembling military divisions for the war against Nazi Germany), and the de-Nazification of the public life.[74]

The ACC, which largely answered to the Soviet High Command, assumed broad powers to decide in matters of domestic affairs. The Armistice required the Romanian government to collaborate with the Soviet High Command in the apprehension and trial of persons accused of war crimes (article 15). Romania also committed itself to removing the residues of fascism: to close down fascist organizations and organizations promoting an anti-Soviet line, to censor and remove newspapers, films, and fascist literature (article 16), and to clear the government and civil service of people with "anti-democratic" views.[75] Self-evidently, for the Soviet administration and Romanian communists, de-fascization meant more than a repudiation of the prewar political order. It was

[73] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 66/1945, 13-14; speech delivered by Constantin Pârvulescu to a popular gathering in the Black Sector in Bucharest (the sector was a territorial-administrative division of Bucharest).
[74] Peter Kenez, *Hungary from Nazis to Soviets: the Establishment of the Communist Regime in Hungary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 32-33.
[75] For the Armistice agreement see http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/rumania.asp, last accessed 14 November 2018).

conceived as a means of destroying the socio-economic bases of the former regime.[76]

In compliance with the Agreement, the Romanian government passed legislation to prosecute "war criminals". For example, a law regulating the purging of the state apparatus was passed in April 1945,[77] and had serious effects – more than 1,700 employees from the public sector were dismissed from their jobs by mid-1946.[78] The sweeps aimed at Nazi collaborators also led to trials, set up in accordance with the Armistice Convention.[79]

The bill for agrarian reform, passed on 23 March 1945, expropriated the landowners with land holdings over 50 hectares as well as those convicted of collaboration and war crimes.[80] While the magnitude of the land reform in terms of per capita distributed land had rather limited effects, it still enhanced the popularity of the communists.[81] Most importantly, through dismantling the large

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[76] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent. Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 238.

[77] The law stated that "all those who contributed to the instauration of and protected the dictatorial regimes" would be purged from public administration. (it referred to the period between King Carol II's proclamation of the royal dictatorship, February 1938, and 23 August 1944). See Monitorul Oficial, Decret-lege 217, 29 March, 1945.

[78] Liesbeth van de Grift, *Securing the Communist State. The Reconstruction of Coercive Institutions in the Soviet Zone of Germany and Romania, 1944-1948* (Lenham: Lexington Books, 2012), 115.

[79] People's courts were set up in Bucharest and Cluj in accordance with the article 14 of the Armistice Convention: "The Rumanian Government and High Command undertake to collaborate with the Allied (Soviet) High Command in the apprehension and trial of persons accused of war crimes" (for the terms of the Armistice agreement see http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/rumania.asp, last accessed 14 November 2018). The first famous trial was that of the "war criminals", as *Scânteia* labelled it (the trial ended with the sentencing to death of a group of generals of the Romanian Army on 23 March 1945), it was followed by the trial of "the journalists war criminals" (June 1945), and culminated in May 1946 with the trial of Marshal Antonescu and some of his closest collaborators (sentenced to death on 17 May 1946).

[80] Dumitru Șandru, *Reforma Agrară din 1945 in România* (București: Institutul Național Pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2005).

[81] The government also gained a popularity boost with the retaking of Northern Transylvania on 9 March (on 30 August 1940 at the Second Vienna Award, under a German and Italian arbitration, Northern Transylvania was given to Hungary). Under Soviet occupation since October 1944, Stalin used the Transylvanian question to pressure King Michael into accepting

land holdings and eliminating the large landowners as a political and social force, the RCP removed an important form of social control over the peasantry.[82]

In pursuing the reconstruction, the communists regarded the human and the material changes brought by the war as necessary conditions for a radical transformation. Not only did the reconstruction place the state at its forefront, but it also linked public interest with public ownership.[83] As Gheorghiu-Dej, the recently elected secretary-general of the Party, put it in late 1945, the state was "the axis around which the entire economy of the country will develop."[84]

The communists had the same broad approach to cultural issues. Asserting an organic continuity with prewar Romanian culture, in parallel with implementing an antifascist cultural renewal, the RCP made use of the already centralized state bureaucracy of culture. In their attempts to engage prominent intellectuals and artists, both communist and non-communist, in the construction of a democratic country, pragmatic rather than dogmatic ideological arguments prevailed.

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the pro-communist government led by Groza – see Florin Constantiniu, *PCR, Pătrășcanu si Transilvania* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2001), 73-78. Nevertheless, given the tremendous symbolic importance of Transylvania in the public Romanian sphere, the communists had the chance to portray the Western powers as inimical to Romanian interests. In September 1945 a common U.S., French and British resolution called for limited territorial revision of the Transylvanian border in favour of Hungary – see Holly Case, *Between States. The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea During World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 203.

[82] Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege. The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 65.

[83] "After the First World War Romania financed the reconstruction borrowing money from the foreign capital … Today we strive to reconstruct our country with our resources". See the RCP's Central Committee report at the first national conference of the RCP in October 1945 delivered by Gheorghiu-Dej in "Raportul Politic al C.C. Prezentat de Tovarășul Gheorghiu-Dej la Conferința Națională a PCR," *Scânteia,* 3 November, 1945, 1.

[84] "Problemele Reconstrucției in Discuția Conferinței Generale a Partidului Comunist din România," *Scânteia,* 21 October, 1948, 2.

To renovate cultural life, the government first had to control it. Through de-fascization the communists sought to assert control over the cultural sphere by implementing retributive punishment and attempting to give established cultural institutions a more "democratic" character.

After the defeat of the Antonescu regime in the 23 August 1944 coup, the new national unity government promptly abolished the Ministry of Propaganda. Since its establishment in 1939 the Ministry had been instrumental in the control of press and cultural production. Its abolition therefore symbolically stated the democratic commitment of the new government.[85] "The democratic regime which came to power on 23 August will enforce a coordinated political control over the public sphere but it will not rely on propagandistic means characteristic of dictatorial regimes," the text of the law scrapping the Ministry read.

But only a few months later, in March 1945, the Ministry was reinstated by the first communist-led government. Against the opposition parties' strong resistance – they stressed that the re-establishment of the Ministry revealed the RCP's dictatorial aspirations – the communists defended the move by underscoring the "crucial" role of the Ministry in the de-fascization of the country. Petre Constantinescu-Iasi, a leading communist in the interwar underground movement now appointed Minister of Propaganda was, of course, aware of the problematic genealogy of the Ministry. But he still defended its reinstatement on the grounds that the Ministry would be a means not a political

[85] See Decree-Law no. 462 for the Disbanding of the Minister of National Propaganda, *Monitorul Oficial,* part I, no. 218, 21 September 1944.

end. By providing the people with access to cultural products and by contributing to the democratization of political communication, Constantinescu-Iasi stressed, the ministry would supersede the "rationale of the old dictatorial ministry … and will be a tool for the de-fascization of our public opinion."[86] Antifascism was to be more restorative than revolutionary.

The purging of the cultural institutions and censorship soon emerged as two prime responsibilities of the Ministry of Propaganda (from March 1946, renamed the Ministry of Information). The Ministry oversaw the production of all forms of printed matter, newspapers, books, posters, plans of publishing operations, etc. The printing presses were prohibited from producing any printed matter without permission granted by censors, whilst all the materials intended for broadcast, films to be shown, theatres' repertoires, art galleries and museums also required permission. Such forms of control were replicated in the provinces through branch divisions headed by cultural counsellors.

However, the Ministry of Propaganda still did not have a full mandate in cultural issues. It answered to the ACC and had to implement its directives. The ACC gave the final approval for the evaluations of printed matters and cultural products undertaken by the Ministry, used its powers to evaluate the press for compliance with the Armistice Agreement, and coordinated the allocation of printing resources such as the newsprint paper (often in favour of the newspapers closed to the NDF).[87]

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[86] See "Decret-lege pentru Înființarea Ministerului Propagandei Naționale," *Monitorul Oficial*, part I, no. 69, 24 March 1945.

[87] Arhivele Naționale ale României Mureș Branch (hereafter ANRMS), Fond Ministerul Informațiilor (hereafter MI), file VIII/1946, 84-85; memorandum sent by the Ministry of Propaganda to the Mureș Prefecture, May 1945.

In order to comply with the Armistice Agreement, the authorities adopted laws which barred from public life and revoked the journalistic and writing licences of those who had collaborated with the military dictatorship and endorsed fascist ideas. Publications failing to cut ties with those convicted on the basis of de-fascization laws faced the revocation of their licences.[88] Additionally, the legislation supressed "legionary, fascist, Hitlerite, chauvinistic, racist topics, as well as those harmful to the relations of Romania with the United Nations."[89]

Rekindling the publishing process was first a matter of purging the book stock of fascist literature. The process of book removal commenced with works published between 1918 and 23 August 1944, but soon covered the early postwar years too (up to 1948).[90] The Directorate for De-Fascization within the Ministry of Propaganda coordinated the purges until 1949 when, after the second disbanding of the Ministry, the newly established General Directorate for Press and Printed Materials took over.[91] Needless to say, de-fascization policies and book purges were often indecisive, confusing, and flexible. The ACC, however, closely supervised the purges and interfered when it considered that the Romanian authorities mishandled the operation. For example, when the officials of the Ministry of Propaganda conducted purges at the Timisoara Public Library, removing only 300 out of more than 100,000 works, the ACC dismissed the

[88] Decree-law no. 271, *Monitorul Oficial*, 29 March, 1945.
[89] Decree-law no. 102, *Monitorul Oficial*, 4 May, 1945; see also *Publicații Scoase din Circulație Până în 1 August 1945* (București, 1945).
[90] See *Publicații Scoase din Circulație Până în 1 Mai 1948* (București, 1948).
[91] Liliana Corobca, *Controlul Cărții. Cenzura Literaturii în Regimul Comunist* (București: Cartea Românească, 2014), 22-23.

outcome as "unsatisfactory," criticized the Ministry's commission for "superficiality," and demanded a new evaluation of the library's collections.[92]

In this institutional realignment, the handling of the licence system and the distribution of newsprint paper by the Ministry of Information and ACC frequently favoured the pro-communist media. The opposition media outlets' attacks on communist policies were often and loosely interpreted as "threatening the public order" or "attacks on the Soviet Union." Failures to comply with the authorities' guidelines were punishable by fines, temporary bans, confiscation of the edition, in whole or parts, the reduction of newsprint paper quota, or actual prosecution.

The communist printers' unions, under the protection of the Ministry of Propaganda, also carried out forms of popular justice directed against the opposition's publications. Notably influential in the large printing shops in the country, they refused to print newspaper editions which in their interpretation deliberately misled the audience or threatened the democratic reconstruction of the country. For example, during the controversial elections of 1946, the printers turned down issues critical of the government's electoral manifesto and editions accusing the government of electoral fraud.[93]

By restoring the Ministry of Propaganda, the government also re-activated earlier forms of cultural administration. For example, in the city of Târgu-Mures (in the province of Transylvania), the two cinema theatres

[92] ANRMS, Fond MI, file VII/1946, 73; report sent by the ACC to the Ministry of Propaganda, June 1946.
[93] The American diplomat B. Berry highlights these aspects in one of his letters to Washington in February 1945. See Zonner Radulescu, Daniela Bușe, and Beatrice Marinescu, *Instaurarea Totalitarismului Comunist in România, 1944-1948* (București: Cavallioti, 2002), 70.

reopened on 25 June 1945 on the basis of licences granted by the Hungarian wartime authorities. The local cultural counsellors of the Ministry pressed hard to establish influence over the cinemas: they elaborated guidelines to forbid the cinemas from scheduling exclusively Hungarian films, conducted purges of film collections, and requested the administrators to run Soviet films at least once a week.[94]

Only two censors checked the newspapers, theatre performances, museums, art galleries, street posters, libraries and cinemas. In pursuing their tasks, they were less interested in supressing and punishing than in expanding the reach of state sanctioned culture. Characteristically, even when they came across "weak artistic performances which resembled the spirit of the past,"they did not simply turn them down. Acting together with the cultural counsellors, they provided guidelines to "improve the performance into one keeping up with the new democratic times."[95] But when the media outlets failed to "correctly reflect the political events," the Ministry and its censors resorted to established methods: like a few years previously, they required publishers to incorporate centrally distributed news reports, or to modify or supress "problematic" lines, and, occasionally, they imposed temporary bans on the "offending" newspapers.[96]

[94] ANRMS, Fond MI, file II/1946-47, 28; report sent to Bucharest by the Mureș branch of the Ministry of Information, May 1946.
[95] ANRMS, Fond MI, file II/1946-47; report of the local censor, July 1946.
[96] ANR, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Naționale (hereafter MPN), file VI/1946, 45. For example, the official newspapers of the National Liberal party, *Viitorul* (The Future), and of the National Peasant Party, *Dreptatea* (The Justice) were closed down on 1 March 1945, but they would be restored a year later.

Under the scrutiny of the ACC, the Ministry of Propaganda elected an advisory board to assist in the "democratization of the press and culture." Designed to bring together representatives from across the political spectrum, in reality it served to widen the RCP's influence in cultural matters.[97] Intra-institutional battles were primarily fought over the staffing of positions opened by the anti-fascist purges. While reshaping the structure of the Ministry with "democratic elements", the advisory board worked in close collaboration with the RCP's Central Committee. All matters of general significance required the approval of the advisory board.[98]

Local RCP cultural departments were likewise instructed to cooperate with the Ministry on issues of film, art, music, and newspaper publishing. Leading Party intellectuals lent their voices to the campaign for restructuring the cultural bureaucracy. For example, Matei Socor, one of the country's leading conductors and future head of the Radio Station, campaigned for the opening of a state opera in the city of Timișoara.[99] However, in appointing the director of the Opera, the communist party faced the resistance of the social-democrats who, through the Minister of Arts, lobbied for the appointment of their own candidate. In the end communist influence in the Ministry of Propaganda and the ACC secured the approval of the Timișoara opera house and the appointment of a pro-communist director.

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[97] Mihaela Teodor, *Anatomia Cenzurii. Comunizarea Presei din România, 1944-1947* (Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2012), 58-9.
[98] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, file 52/1945, 1-26; minute of a meeting between representatives of the Ministry of Propaganda and members of RCP's CC, 23 June 1945.
[99] ANR, CC al PCR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 23/1946, 1-2; memorandum sent by the Committee for Arts and Culture from the Central Section for Political Education to the Central Committee of RCP.

The communists opposed the social-democrats' nominee on the grounds of his alleged involvement with the Legionary Movement, which had led to his recent dismissal from the Bucharest Opera. The RCP maintained that if the appointment had gone ahead the pro-social role of the Opera would have been undermined: "we wanted to create a genuine popular opera, to promote popular talents and to enable the access of the working class … if headed by a proper director the Opera would tour factories and villages … but the directorship of Anca Barbu [the nominee of the social-democrats] would simply compromise the cultural mission of the Opera."[100] Their reply made clear once again that the democratization of culture and de-fascization were connected imperatives.

The ability of the RCP to mobilize an anti-fascist language fused with a "civilizational" rhetoric was key to winning over the intellectuals. Its main rhetorical strategy consisted in denouncing the intellectuals and cultural producers considered uncommitted to de-fascization and democratization. Public references to socialism or the affirmation of Marxist-Leninist principles were supressed since they threatened to undermine the Party's "parliamentary road" rhetoric. Labelled as "sentimental" and "deceptive", such references were dismissed as "bad ideological behaviours". For example, in December 1944, the RCP's Timisoara branch brought a local choir to perform the Internationale at the Christmas celebrations. But the local authorities' choice was castigated by the Bucharest office as "inappropriate" and "excessive."[101] Another local branch was subject to similar criticism when it only hoisted communist red flags at a

[100] ANR, CC al PCR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 23/1946, 4-5; report of the Committee for Arts and Culture from the Central Section for Political Education, 5 May 1946.
[101] ANR, Fond Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 1/1945, 99; report of Fenia Rudenco at the first national conference on propaganda.

celebration. The flags themselves were of course permitted, what attracted criticism was the "error" of not pairing them with Romanian national flags.[102]

When, for example, the Society of Romanian Writers was restructured, it similarly employed de-fascization to advocate for a more socially inclusive culture in the service of a "renewed national culture." Its members underwent a screening process which resulted in the expulsion of members singled out as politically or artistically deficient. The Society's board expressed its support for the NDF political programme and launched the concept of the "intellectual worker" to recast the cultural producer as a "a social fighter, an enlightener, and a leader (*călăuzitor*) of the nation, who has to take up a new role in a new world."[103]

De-fascization and democratization of culture legitimized each other in a nexus in which one can read off the claims of the RCP's early postwar agenda: extending the social inclusiveness of culture and the centralizing of cultural administration. In constructing a culture inspired by emancipatory ideals, the intellectuals and cultural bureaucracy were expected to combine forces with the people. Thus the RCP committed much of its energy to familiarize the public with its own understanding of the political role of art.

First of all, as we have seen, culture and the arts were inscribed in the general rhetoric of anti-fascism, democratic reconstruction, and national unity. By remodelling the institutional channels of cultural administration, the RCP made culture central to the education of the people in the spirit of the new

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ana Selejan, *Tradarea Intelectualilor,* 56-57.

democratic values. The Party welcomed both intellectuals with solid anti-fascist credentials and those ready to find political redemption by participating in the new cultural project. "We would be naïve, or overconfident, to assume that with 23 August things suddenly changed,"[104] Lucretiu Pătrășcanu , the Party's leading Marxist theoretician asserted in a public speech in December 1945. The "errors of the past must be corrected," Pătrășcanu insisted, "and they must be corrected by the intellectuals themselves … in our times of deep transformation, the intellectuals who have not yet understood the political developments must give up their old [political] prejudices and get a grip on reality."[105]

A new democratic art functioned as a mirror image of progress. The broad appeal of the interwar and wartime right-wing conservative and fascist ideologies to local intellectuals was explained by the RCP as a manifestation of "ideological inconsistency."[106] But, it was presumed, since in history cultural progress had always come in times of democratic achievements, the intellectuals had no alternative but to align themselves with the new times: "The artist can no longer stand aside, he must choose! He must choose between a free and dynamic, shaped by independent people world … [a] world coalesced by their love for progress, and an old world … which is vanishing," Marcel Breslașu, the head of the Trade Union of Artists, Writers, and Journalists (TUAWJ) asserted in his keynote address to the second congress of the union.[107] The only legitimate and moral option for an intellectual was to fight for the reconstruction of the country

[104] Lucretiu Pătrășcanu, *Poziția Partidului Comunist Român Fata de Intelectuali. Cuvântare Ținuta Duminică 9 Decembrie 1945 in Sala "Scala"* (București: Editura Partidului Comunist Român, 1946), 6.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Problemele Intelectualității Românești* (București: Editura PMR, 1946), 12.
[107] Marcel Breslașu, "Congresul Uniunii Noastre," *Contemporanul,* 17 October, 1947.

and de-fascization: "the book must be both the working tool and the combat weapon."[108]

The shift in emphasis on the social role of the author was consolidated by the RCP's support for artists, including both political protection and economic incentives. Although many artists belonged to professional associations prior to the Second World War, the communist party did not favour a reorganization within the old institutional frameworks. The associations were reorganized and subsumed to a Trade Union of Artists, Writers, and Journalists, established in the autumn of 1945.[109] Benefitting from strong connections with the communist-managed sphere of the government, the trade union dealt with the social problems of its members, awarded grants for artistic creation, and organized professional debates.

Members of the union received special treatment and benefits. In conditions of extreme scarcity, the officials offered free or discounted houses to artists, better ration cards, paid vacations, or financial support for artistic creation. Such material benefits, a Party report argued, stimulated creativity and were well received by the intellectual community. The "intense cheering of comrade Pătrășcanu when he attended a meeting at the Romanian Writers' Society," the same report argued, illustrated this support.[110] The communist authorities also supported the construction of a new house for the Romanian Writers' Society, considered by the Society "long overdue."[111] In 1947, when a

[108] Ibid.
[109] The Jewish communist writers were the first to unionize in early September 1944.
[110] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 22/1946, 2; report of the Section for Political Education, 3 May 1946.
[111] Ibid., 3-4.

new intellectual property law was adopted, the union celebrated it as a success upholding the new state-artist relationship. In the words of one of the most vocal public intellectuals of the period, Gala Galaction, the law marked "the first genuine shield for our culture."[112]

The special privileges and material incentives granted to the "progressive" cultural producers increased the role of the state in culture. But it simultaneously undermined the idea of private patronage. For example, in early 1947 a new law regulating the activity of theatre companies requested that private theatre companies have a minimum of 10 artists employed, adjust pricing policy in accordance with state regulations, and coordinate the scheduling of performances with the state theatres'.[113] For George Călinescu, the most renowned literary critic of the time, that indicated a manifestation of "modern times":

> In the past it was the Church which commissioned important artworks to artists … The state has hardly assumed the role of commissioner until recently … however in order to improve artists' lives we have to interest them in state commissioned works… our democratic regime should not be less generous than the secular and religious-inspired princes … if our democratic state will involve the artist in state run projects he will grow to adapt to the people's spirit, he will give up his tendency to social isolation.[114]

[112] Gala Galaction, "Gala Galaction Despre Noua Lege a Drepturilor de Autor," *Contemporanul,* 7 February, 1947.
[113] Alexandru Kiritescu, "O Noua Lege a Teatrelor," *Contemporanul,* 21 February, 1947.
[114] George Călinescu, "Artistul și Timpul Său," *Contemporanul,* 15 October, 1946.

A book launch event for a collective poetry volume honouring historical figures of working-class heroes was characteristic for the symbolic language of the times. Overturning the customary protocol, the authors did not hold a book signing session. Instead, at the end of the event, the authors queued up to have their own book signed by the head of the Confederation.[115]

The sense that the old cultural order had lost its grip was widespread. While the RCP tried to press towards a cultural standard from above (through state institutions and creative unions), intellectuals from both left and right attempted to establish it from below. In the first postwar years the intellectuals fought for defining a new standard in culture (a cultural-democratic renewal) mainly in cultural publications associated with the political parties.

Ongoing press "campaigns" set the ground for debating ideas of moral responsibility, questions of humanitarian culture, as well as broader questions linked to the status of the public intellectual. In so doing, they questioned the common sense of the prewar cultural order. For the fragmented Romanian left these debates marked an important step into the mainstream of culture and cultural politics.

The first cultural campaign, launched in the autumn of 1944, centred on the topic of "culture for the masses and against the writer's ivory tower." A subsequent campaign one year later took aim at the anti-communist

[115] Emil Dorian, *Cărțile au Rămas Neterminate. Jurnal, 1945-1948* (București: Compania, 2006), 174.

"treasonous" intellectuals (the "treason of intellectuals"). In the most fiercely fought campaign, which started in 1946, the opposition intellectuals continued their criticism of the official narrative of the "democratization of culture." For such critical voices, Romania had reached a profound "cultural crisis." The last campaign unfolded in 1947 and focused on the "antirealistic" currents in art", "bourgeois formalism," "decadence," and "art for art's sake." At a time when the political regime was assuming manifest control of public sphere, the campaign was more vitriolic and univocally proclaimed the superiority of socialist realism by parroting the Zhdanovist principles – a socialist consciousness will raise the power of the nation, but the process of achieving it was hindered by intellectuals suffering from various ideological afflictions.[116]

The communist vision of culture generated an ongoing tension between its highly politicized practices and the concurrent promises of intellectual freedom. If the Romanian radical left called for a rethinking of national culture, the non-Marxist intellectuals believed that the nation and its culture were in the midst of a deep crisis. The non-communist intellectuals (mainly liberals and members of the NPP) read the early postwar political developments as carrying decisive implications for the future of the country. Articles with titles such as "The Crisis of the Romanian Culture," "The Crisis of the Human Being," or "A Moral Chaos" took the front page of the non-communist media. They argued that part of the tensions and radicalism of the time arose ocurred because of its transitional character. Unlike communist intellectuals who linked the democratization of culture to universal participation and transformed economic

[116] Ana Selejan, *Trădarea Intelectualilor. România in Timpul Primului Război Cultural, 1944-1948* (Sibiu: Trans Pres, 1992), 55.

conditions, the non-communist intellectuals asked for increased vigilance (they emphasized the moral and political dimensions of the crisis).

The non-communist intellectuals went on to call for sharp criticism of the communist "progressive cultural policies", which they regarded as just an attempt to politicize the cultural sphere. In the words of Ion Caraion, "to save the freedom of culture today is to save the people who make culture … for saving the people who make culture we have to save their individual liberty."[117] Other voices went as far as to argue that the crisis was indeed an existential "crisis of the human being."[118] They pointed to the moral demise of the intellectuals now being seduced by socialist ideals: "[this is the] opportunism of the people involved in culture … [who] previously were on the right, but today have moved to the left."[119] These indications of crisis, the anti-communist critics believed, were the consequences of a forced politicization of cultural life: "the creator of culture is no longer pursuing intellectual duties but he is now a political man, and this confusion has resulted in a lamentable outcome."[120]

By relying on their "traditional" formulations – national traditions, patriotism, progressive character of culture – the communist intellectuals summarily dismissed the allegations. Nicolae Moraru, later one of the Party's foremost ideologues in literature, blasted the idea of the cultural crisis: "the Romanian intellectuals in their great majority have opted for democracy, for progress… If we have a problem today, we have a problem with how writing,

[117] Ion Caraion, "Criza Culturii Romanești," *Jurnalul de Dimineață,* 31 October, 1946.
[118] Ion Caraion, "Criza Omului," *Jurnalul de Dimineață,* 19 December, 1946.
[119] Calin Popovici, "Intre Confuziune si Cultura," *Jurnalul de Dimineață,* 31 October, 1946.
[120] Mircea Alexandru Petrescu, "Criza Culturii Romane," *Jurnalul de Dimineață,* 14 November, 1946.

[theatre] plays, singing, are performed, and not a problem with an imaginary crisis … Are we undergoing a crisis? No, not at all. There are the labour pains … [at a time when] the structure of society undergoes convulsions and upheavals."[121]

Miron Radu Paraschivescu, a rising young poet, charged his opponents with contradiction. One could not be free to say that he was not free, unless he was indeed free: "the crisis of culture and liberty does not pertain to our regime, but it is the symptom of those who brag about it in the newspapers. They are poorly intellectually equipped and non-liberated souls."[122] Paraschivescu showed little tolerance for the liberal ideals of "liberty" and "free speech": "liberty, which is a modern political concept, has nothing to do with the organic development of a culture … a manipulative cliché which persists for decades now is that of the crisis of the modern man."[123] The interwar liberal democracy, he contended, failed to offer viable solutions to social problems, and as a consequence it lacked the postwar years' legitimacy: "it is not the salvation of the individual which should concern us, but the "culture of the individual."[124] Living in the intensity of the moment left no room for individual salvation: "we are writing as we feel, and we feel in the limits of the age."[125]

In this manner, communist intellectuals distinguished between their plans to politicize culture and the previous authoritarian experiments. They rebuked the interwar governments for self-servingly turning culture into an

[121] Nicolae Moraru, "Criza Culturii Romanesti," *Contemporanul,* 11 October, 1946.
[122] Miron Radu Paraschivescu, "Plansul Maimuțelor Sau Unde e Criza," *Contemporanul,* 31 December, 1946.
[123] Adrian Marino, "Criza Omului," *Națiunea,* 13 January, 1947.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Geo Dumitrescu, "Pleodoarie la Criza Culturii," *Revista Literară,* 3 August, 1947.

unethical political instrument, but they also connected the advancement of culture with a decidedly politicized definition of the "cultural." It would have been impossible for the communist intellectuals to take a different stance. The experiences of the Second World War offered promising possibilities for radical experimentation in rethinking the meaning, organization, and orientation of culture. As Bradley Abrams convincingly argued, the experience of 1938 to 1945 "reconfigured social hierarchies, reorganized economies, reshuffled political allegiances, caused a reevaluation of both foreign and domestic political priorities, triggered a rethinking of the meaning of the nations involved, and catalyzed forces aiming at the fundamental restructuring of the states of the region."[126]

Transforming the cultural life meant order and planning under the supervision of state agencies. But it was neither as radical a reconstruction as the communists suggested, nor as destructive of local traditions as the Cold War accounts of the immediate postwar period imply. In the postwar period, the communist-led government conducted a selective cultural reconstruction. It relied on prewar and wartime institutional infrastructure and practices, but attached them through de-fascization to new political ends in the postwar reconstruction. Culture and the arts became state projects.

The advent of the Cold War put a halt to democratic initiatives and experiments both in Eastern Europe.[127] The Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the founding of Cominform, and the anti-communism in the West drastically

[126] Bradley Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of The Nation. Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 10.
[127] Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy. The History of the Left in Europe 1850-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 307.

altered the political environment. Since 1947, stricter Soviet oversight (in the name of Soviet security interests) translated into an enhanced conformism in politics and culture and marked a split in "national" culture. By the summer of 1947, power became centralized almost exclusively in the hands of the RCP, legal opposition was disbanded by autumn, non-communists were excluded from office, civil liberties and constitutional guarantees supressed, while the public sphere turned into a greatly regulated one.[128] The RCP gave up the democratic political culture of the anti-fascist ideal, and the adoption of Soviet socialist-realism would make even some of its most faithful members question the political course.

The unsettled political context, both domestic and foreign, and the popular expectations behind a vision of reconstruction based on ideals of democratic citizenship and social justice, had a wide influence on the political positioning of the RCP. In the meantime, the membership growth was spectacular – from barely 1,000 members in August 1944 it subsequently increased to 30,000 in June 1945, to reach 1,060,000 in February 1948.[129] In November 1946, the RCP scored an overwhelming victory in the first general elections after the war.[130] The widespread fraud in the elections was a clear indication that the Western Allies would not bail out the opposition, but also marked the end of the collaborative atmosphere of postwar anti-fascism. The

[128] Ghița Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania, 1944-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 126-47.
[129] Stelian Tănase, *Elite si Societate. Guvernarea Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, 1948-1965* (București: Humanitas, 1998), 50; Stephen Fisher-Galati, *Twentieth Century Rumania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 75.
[130] Virgiliu Țârău, *Alegeri Fără Opțiune. Primele Scrutinuri Parlamentare din Centrul si Estul Europei După Cel De-Al Doilea Război Mondial* (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon, 2005).

RCP moved towards annihilating the major opposition parties (NPP and NLP) and after late 1946 genuine pluralism was rare.

As this section has argued, in order to win over undecided intellectuals, the Party concentrated its efforts on establishing itself as the only proponent of real democracy and democratization of culture. It centred less on class struggle, but rather stressed human progress and the struggle between the forces of progress and its reactionary opponents.[131] The government imposed strict supervision through de-fascization but it also allocated generous material resources. In so doing, it turned the status of cultural producer into an aspiring commodity and prompted many undecided intellectuals to come close to the Party.

Making Culture Accessible to the Masses

To bring culture to the masses was more than a civic duty of the cultural producer, it was indeed a political necessity. "Our attitude towards culture is not a conjectural one, but derives from the structure of democracy and from the history of the working-class movement," Gheorghiu-Dej stated in late 1946.[132] Culture was seen as the imperative and indispensable road to an educated and egalitarian society. It would enable the creative energies of the people.[133] Hence, in the words of the most celebrated poet of the time, A. Toma, "our mission is

[131] The first effort to unite all creative "democratic" intellectuals and those keen to work for the "goodwill of democratic reconstruction" was made in October 1945 at the founding congress of the Trade Union of the Artists, Writers, and Journalists.
[132] Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Problemele Intelectualității,* 5.
[133] Miron Radu Paraschivescu, "Sensul Unic al Culturii," *Scânteia,* 18 August, 1946.

to de-toxify people's souls from racial and chauvinistic prejudices, mysticism, obscurantism, defeatism, bad mindsets … we have to be those who lead the working class in factories, mines, at blast furnaces, and in agricultural fields … in the material reconstruction of the country which indeed is at the core of the spiritual and cultural reconstruction."[134]

In the same terms, the second congress of the Trade Union of Artists, Writers, and Journalists opened with the welcome address of Gheorghe Apostol, the head of The General Confederation of Labour, who called on cultural producers to: "open wide the gates of culture … so that the working class would sense the fusion of intellectual and physical labour."[135] Following Apostol's opening speech, the head of Agitprop, Iosif Chișinevski, offered the first public glimpse into the war mentality which came with the Party's endorsement of the "two-camps thinking": "the artist should talk for the people and should answer the people's questions. But the decadent bourgeois culture and art no longer have any answers to these questions … to be able to express himself artistically, the artist must express a great idea, a truth … today the battle is between the truthfulness of the artistic creation and the falsehood mistakenly taken as artistic inspiration."[136]

In contrast to the period 1944-46, the links with Soviet socialist-realism had been by now proclaimed, whilst Andrei Zhdanov's "two camps" view of the world had been officially institutionalized in the RCP's ideological stance.

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[134] A. Toma, "Probleme Actuale ale Culturii Românești," *Contemporanul,* 11 November, 1946.
[135] Quoted in Geo Dumitrescu, "Congresul Uniunii Sindicatelor de Artiști, Scriitori si Ziaristi," *Revista Literară,* 12 October, 1947.
[136] Iosif Chișinevski's speech at the second congress of the Union of the Trade Unions of Artists, Writers and Journalists. See Geo Dumitrescu, "Reportaj de la Congresul Uniunii Sindicatelor de Artisti, Scriitori si Ziaristi," *Revista Literara,* 21 October, 1947.

Speaking at the founding meeting of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) in September 1947, Zhdanov maintained that since the conclusion of the war two camps had emerged in the world. He argued that an imperialist and antidemocratic camp, which functioned as an appendix of American capital, was opposed by an antiimperialist and democratic camp, whose goals were progress and democracy.[137] In addition to political and economic motives, the "Western aggression" had equally important cultural-ideological underpinnings. The cultural rift delineated two camps in culture: one pursuing the ideal of a democratic culture (the Soviet culture) and a decadent bourgeois imperialistic culture.

Therefore, by 1949-50 the hostility towards the "West" reached a new peak across the Eastern Bloc. The RCP regarded the local "ideological weaknesses" such as "bourgeois nationalism" and (rootless) "cosmopolitanism" as an ideological transgression and thus a "Western imperialist" threat to national culture. The putative benefits of "proletarian internationalism" stood in contrast to cosmopolitanism. In a famous pamphlet entitled "Against the Bourgeois Cosmopolitanism and Objectivism in Social Science" (1949), the Party's chief ideologue, Leonte Răutu defined the "spirit of internationalism" as inextricably linked to genuine patriotism and love for the Soviet Union. The love for the motherland did not exclude but was related to a feeling of love for other peoples: "if the admiration for other people is the basis of internationalism then

[137] David Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945-49* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1992), 250-1.

you cannot be internationalist without showing love to your own people."[138] After all, bourgeois nationalism was the flip-side of cosmopolitanism.

For Răutu, the Second World War was indicative of the symbiotic relationship between bourgeois nationalism and cosmopolitanism – while the political power was in the hands of the ultra-nationalist elites, the country was a satellite of the Reich. The victory of the Soviet Union restored the country's "national dignity and independence", whilst, Răutu went on, the new policies introduced by the RCP eliminated economic dependence on foreign capital.[139]

1948 set in motion political processes that fundamentally altered the "bourgeois nature" of the state. In April 1948, a new constitution was passed, in June the decree for the nationalization of industry came into force, whilst a new education law instituted free education.[140] The Romanian Academy, the highest intellectual tribune of the country, was turned into a state institution under the Council of Ministers with a primary "role in the material and cultural upbringing of the people."[141] The cultural sector became connected to the state more than ever. In June the Ministry of Information merged with the Ministry of Arts and the resulting Ministry of Arts and Information governed an impressive network of cultural sites: houses of culture, printing presses, the Radio Station, cinemas, literary and musical productions, museums, public exhibitions, and artistic education.[142] The fight against the "mercantilist spirit in theatre" came to an end

[138] Leonte Răutu, *Împotriva Cosmopolitismului si Obiectivismului Burghez in Științele Sociale* (București: Partidul Muncitoresc Roman, 1949), 25.
[139] Ibid., 31-32.
[140] Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *Stalinizarea României. Republica Populară Română 1948-1950* (București: All, 2005).
[141] Decree-Law no. 62 for the Restructuring of the Ministry of Information and Cultural Institutions, *Monitorul Oficial*, 8 June, 1948.
[142] Ibid.

with the abolition of all private theatres.[143] The publishing market was re-organized in February 1948, and although the private publishers were not entirely banned, the publications had to be pre-approved by the Ministry of Arts and Information.[144] The state publishing sector gained prominence after a Publishing House for Literature and Arts and national centre for book distribution were established to coordinate the printing business.[145]

If politically and economically cosmopolitanism was largely annihilated, in the cultural realm "its roots were deeper", the Party's chief ideologue concluded. There were two main reasons for this – the decades of cultural exposure to cosmopolitan values and the capitalist camp's ambition to compensate for their political and economic losses on cultural grounds. As Răutu put it, there was only one solution to defeat cosmopolitanism, namely to infuse the relationship between culture and people with "party-mindedness."[146]

It was a zero-sum game: where "party-mindedness" was lacking, "bourgeois objectivism" weakened the qualitative moral distinction of the socialist culture. In a similar vein, Agitprop's Iosif Chișinevski decided that all forms of artistic creativity were manifestations of ideology. An ideological-cultural "third road" could have been only a compromise, thus it was excluded: "for disseminating decadent values in the people's consciousness, the bourgeois

[143] Nicolae Moraru, "In Primul An de Republică," *Flacăra,* 25 December, 1948.
[144] Decree-Law no. 39, *Monitorul Oficial*, 28 February, 1948.
[145] Decree-Law no. 169, *Monitorul Oficial*, 31 July, 1948.
[146] Răutu defined the "party-mindedness" as "the open and explicit positioning on the side of a social group and the pursuing of its scientific conceptions".

ideology relies on the class enemy or manipulates the remnants of bourgeois thinking in the consciousness of the progressive intellectuals."[147]

In fostering a socialist, anti-Western culture, the RCP tied culture to the factory and industrial production. National in form and socialist in content, the socialist culture was more than a moral alternative e to Western culture. By rejecting cultural products tainted by "cosmopolitanism" it was supposed to assist in the project of socialist construction. In developing a cultural policy, the authorities regarded culture as a state resource to be planned like any other economic activity. By transforming it into a matter of state interest, they tailored and decided the forms of its distribution. The officials assessed the realization of the cultural agenda not on aesthetic grounds but on its fulfilment of the self-proclaimed social function.

For the development of culture on a socialist basis, the support of the intellectuals was critical. The idea of union representation for intellectuals already dated as far back as October 1945, when the TUAWJ was set up. In January 1948, the Union launched its first art and culture weekly magazine. Hailed as a tool of the Union in the ideological confrontation "between the United States and their acolytes and the progressive forces led by the Soviet Union", the magazine subscribed to promoting an art forcefully defined as both "a working tool and fighting weapon."[148] A few weeks later, the Romanian Writers' Society adopted a new statute to become the Writers' Union of

[147] Iosif Chișinevski, *Dezvoltarea Culturii in RPR Contribuție de Seamă la Apărarea Păcii* (București: 1949), 46.
[148] Eugen Jebeleanu, "Argument," *Flacăra*, 4 January, 1948.

Romania (after the Soviet pattern of creative unions).[149] The artists' benefits were further enhanced by the Party's Plenary Meeting of December 1948. From 1949 the number of state awards for cultural producers was raised, subsidized housing was made available, and a "literary fund" assisted the artists financially.[150] In parallel, the first articles to discredit writers who allegedly failed to understand the ideological conjuncture or "lagged behind" the new exigencies, came out in the Party press.[151] The passivity of intellectuals, e.g. lack of enthusiasm, did not advance the "democratic reconstruction", and thus came to be seen as a form of opposition.

To attain the status of a state artist, admission into a creative union was required. Since the transformative thrust of the cultural project was premised on the idea that art and culture had to transform how people thought and acted, the artists had a crucial role as "engineers of the human soul". Yet, while the artists were called to bridge the "gap between art and life", the new cultural production did not necessarily need to satisfy aesthetic tastes. It aimed to shape them. Even if the "validation" of the cultural policies came from the degree of workers'

[149] Ion Ianoși, "Uniunea Scriitorilor în Sistemul Culturii Socialiste și Segmentul Literar în Tranziția Românească," in *Insituții în Tranziție,* ed. Adrian Miroiu (București: Punct, 2002), 240.
[150] "Hotarârea Ședinței Plenare a C.C. al PMR Asupra Stimulării Activității Șiintifice, Literare și Artistice," *Vatra,* Septembrie-Octombrie, 2004, 14.
[151] The most famous press attack in 1948 was the vilification of the poet Tudor Arghezi, a modernist leftwing though not communist poet, by the Scânteia's editor in chief, Sorin Toma. In an article entitled "The Poetry of Decay or the Decay of Poetry", Arghezi, who was awarded the National prize for Poetry two years before, came under fire for his "objectivist art", "pure esteticism", "decadence", "anti-social egotism", and, of course, "decadence". This meant, Toma concluded, that a talented poet like Arghezi indeed wrote for the bourgeoisie. His pronouncements had been a crucial factor in determining the shape of guidelines for literary creation in the forthcoming year: there was no "art for art's sake"; "pessimism" and "nausea" are indeed the standards of the bourgeois decadent art and thus an "instrument of enslavement" of the local Romanian working class; since art evolves towards a class content, there is no "pure aesthetics in it"; the intellectuals must start to stop "kowtowing to the values inherited from the bourgeoisie". See Sorin Toma, *Poezia Putrefactiei sau Putrefactia Poeziei* (București: Scânteia, 1948).

engagement, the Party was less interested in whether the workers appreciated the cultural products. More important were the details of production (one may say the cultural imposition), that the artistic output was "topical" and easy to relate to.

An extensive institutional web surrounded the cultural producer. The creative unions, the Ministry of Culture, the Agitprop agency of the Central Committee, the editorial offices of various publishing houses, the censors, all intervened "on behalf of the author" in distinct stages of production. "The artist no longer works for the market, he works for the people. The artistic output is no longer validated by a falsely inculcated public taste," the secretary of the Writers' Union, Mihail Novicov summed up the Party's cultural accomplishments.[152] As Petre Dumitriu, one of the most gifted novelists of the time, also concluded, the real liberty of an artist consisted in being freed from the "constraints of the market and from the whim of the private publishers".[153]

If the artistic output attested to the artist's degree of ideological understanding, the literary critic assisted the artist in the process of "ideological clarification," namely in constructing a cultural product adequately "party-minded" In the powerful formulation of a literary critic, "the literary critique is pursuing a sole aim, to ensure that the cultural product is a powerful political tool for the working class."[154] But, as we will see in the next chapter, the status of the literary critic retained a high degree of ambiguity. A high-ranked state official, the communist literary critic acted as co-author in the new wave of

[152] Mihail Novicov, "Sarcina principală, Concretizarea," *Flacăra,* 25 April, 1948.
[153] Petre Dumitriu," Marea Chemare," *Flacăra,* 13 February, 1948.
[154] Octav Pascaluță, "Pentru Spiritul de Partid în Critică," *Flacăra,* 8 February, 1949.

socialist-realist literature. However, given the shifting ideological directives, be it an anonymous harsh review in the press, or a critical "voice from the people", his position was constantly in peril.[155]

The authorities concentrated their efforts both on bringing culture to workers and on bringing workers to culture, on factory sites and outside factories. Of course, this utilitarian vision of culture was not meant to distract the worker or to offer "spiritual escapes" from everyday life. On the contrary, exposure to culture was the precondition for the inculcation of a socialist consciousness. Bringing the products of culture to workers began on the very space of the shop-floor. The trade-unions no longer played the role they had in a capitalist society, to fight back for employees in the workplace, but assisted the state and Party institutions in mobilizing workers in pursuit of cultural goals. They organized, sometimes in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, a network of red corners, clubrooms, theatre troupes, wall gazettes and libraries across the country. By 1953 the trade-unions administrated 1,732 clubrooms, over 9,000 red corners and over 5,000 libraries.[156] Factory libraries ran by trade unions and collective librarygoing also became entrenched in the work place routine.[157]

A much-celebrated success in the cultural work of the Agitprop was the setting up of the first ever amateur workers' teams to give performances of

[155] Alex Goldiș, *Critica în Tranșee. De la Realismul Socialist la Autonomia Esteticului* (București: Cartea Românească, 2011), 12-13.
[156] Dumitru Popescu, "Despre Rolul Sindicatelor in Revoluția Culturală," *Contemporanul,* 30 January, 1953; Iosif Chișinevski, *Comorile Culturii Devin un Bun Al Masselor Populare* (București: Partidul Muncitoresc Român, 1952), 13.
[157] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 1/1945, 12; report of a Party delegate from Constanta at the first national conference on agitation and propaganda in January 1945.

popular dances and songs on the stages of the National Opera Hall and the Romanian Athenaeum.[158] The latter institutions would also schedule special weekly performances for workers.[159] The forms of workers' exposure to culture diversified over time and, for example, after 1947 the theatre companies regularly admitted workers' delegations at rehearsals and included them in the creative decisions concerning the plays.[160]

Sometimes factories worked with the trade-unions and the Agitprop in hiring artists, running exhibitions or organizing collective gatherings with authors and public intellectuals. The benefits of such gatherings were seen as mutual: cultural encounters helped the factories to improve production and the working culture in general, while the artists were expected to improve and refine their works in accordance to the feedback based on the "workers' life experience".[161] The clubs and the red corners, in places not capacious enough to accommodate clubs, provided the workers with lectures, meetings with authors, and individual studies. By the end of 1953 the Party frustratingly admitted that the majority of the red corners and workers' clubs largely neglected the "ideological substance of their work".[162] However, symbolically, they showed that the construction of socialism was inextricably related to culture.

To bring culture to workers outside factories, the officials made use of the state structures to offer various incentives: discounts were offered for

[158] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Sectia Cancelarie, file 4/1945, 85.
[159] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 6/1948, 3; report of the Committee for Arts of Culture of the Central Section for Political Education, 4 February 1948.
[160] Ibid., 4.
[161] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 14/1952; reports on the cultural work in various regions.
[162] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 24/1953, 89; report compiled by the Agitprop regarding the activity of the Council for Socialist Culture, 8 June 1953.

attending performances, collective viewing of performances and book launches were held with the support of factory trade-unions, whilst collective radio auditions took place in the regions reached by the expanding wired radio network. Collective visits to the cinema also received discounted prices and in regions without cinema theatre halls the authorities delivered the political message through mobile cinemas. After the Soviet model, each mobile cinema had a political agitator and the screenings were followed by political discussions with the audience.[163]

The workers were taken to the big cities' libraries, theatre performances and films, and amateur theatre and musical groups proved very popular.[164] The local gazettes organized literary contests with prizes where workers with artistic inclination received formal confirmation of their cultural skills. But the regime also brought the workers in contact with culture at events in sport, festivals, or staged mass events dedicated to the celebration of state holidays and anniversaries.

The interwar tradition mattered. Building on the educational and cultural structure erected by the interwar state to assist its nation building efforts, the new authorities expanded the network of popular athenaeums and culture houses (*cămine culturale*) to offer public lectures, artistic performances, and various political meetings. Their main task was to encourage the residents to take part

[163] By 1950 there were 49 mobile cinemas in Romania. See ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 7/1950, 112-115; report of the Agitprop regarding the situation of mobile cinemas.
[164] In 1945, the National Opera Hall and the Romanian Athenaeum stages saw for the first-time performances given by amateur workers' theatre and popular dances groups. See ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 4/1945, 85. For example, by the late of 1947 all major factories in the city of Brasov had their own theatre troupes, while itinerant troupes visited smaller factory sites (ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 13/1947; report of the Brasov branch, September 1947).

in the amateur artistic and political activities at athenaeums. Greatly popular with the audience in the early postwar period were the political seminars aiming to "make-clear" (*lămurire*) the significance of day-to-day events. For example, in early 1945, such seminars drew consistent audiences of 3-400 people in large cities such as Constanța.[165]

Organizations such as The Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Relations with the Soviet Union (ARLUS) also played an important role in the education of the new type of worker-citizen. The aim of the association was explicitly political ("the friendship with the Soviet Union is the essence of democracy") and through its countrywide branches conducted cultural work, ran libraries, organized seminars and festive celebrations.[166]

The General Confederation of Labour (GCL), the national union centre, engaged the working class in cultural pursuits through its vast network of libraries, book-shops, workers' clubs, and holiday hotels and villas. Even on vacation the workers were surrounded by the cultural structures of the state. For example, by 1950 in Tușnad, a resort famous for its mineral waters located in the Eastern Carpathians, the GCL established a town library of more than 5,000 volumes and 4 mobile libraries, in addition to hosting reading groups debating different political brochures and agitation materials.[167] At the same time, The

[165] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 1/1945, 12; speech delivered by Chișinevski at the first national conference on propaganda and agitation, 28 January 1945.
[166] For the ARLUS charter see the first issue of the Association's periodical, *Veac Nou,* from December 1944 (pages 1-12). By 1951 ARLUS claimed to have set up over 20,000 permanent study workgroups in the provinces which reportedly involved almost 3 million members in its seminars and cultural activities (see ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 32/1951, 4-7; evaluation meeting held at the Agitprop main office, 28 June 1951).
[167] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 7/1950, 27; report of the Agitprop after an inspection conducted in the health resorts of Tușnad and Slanic-Moldova.

Society for the Advancement of Science and Culture (*Asociația pentru Răspândirea Științei și Culturii*), provided 2 lecturers to debate scientific-technical and current political matters. The resort was fitted with loudspeakers and a cinema, and radio receivers were sent to major hotels and villas, where the workers were also entertained with artistic performances (theatre plays and popular dances).[168] On the major construction sites, exposure to culture was replicated along similar lines. For instance, in early 1948, when the state inaugurated the first major socialist construction site (the railway connecting Transylvania to Wallachia through the Jiu Valley), Agitprop recurrently assigned artistic brigades of prominent writers, painters, and sculptors to perform on the site.[169]

Needless to say, conceived along these lines, the work of cultural enlightenment was not always a triumph. The workers' willingness to take part in the cultural experiment of the 1950s varied and subversive practices developed, while the repertoire of commodities supplied by the communist institutions often slipped into empty ritualistic forms. For example, in 1952, in the industrial city of Resita, the local theatre staged a didactic Soviet play addressing the role of the Soviet worker in industrial production. To the chagrin of the cultural officials, the play premiered in front of a small workers audience (only 85 patrons) and after only 8 showings it was cancelled due to a lack of audience.[170] Similar lack of interest met the screening of the 1949 Soviet film *Encounter at the Elbe,* which drew an audience of only 200 (in an 800 seats

[168] Ibid., 9-31.
[169] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 285; meeting of the Agitprop's leaders with representatives of writers, journalists, and artists, 29 November 1948.
[170] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 12/1952, 104; report of the Agitprop's Sector for Literature and Arts, 7 April 1952.

theatre) when premiered.[171] Even so, the wide-ranging cultural apparatus of the state pushed the people in the direction of unprecedented cultural exposure. In so doing, it notably re-shaped the means mediating the people's interaction with culture, to produce both large-scale cultural inclusiveness and new ways of consuming culture.

Conclusion

By the early-1950s, a culture constructed on a socialist basis was premised to connect the high and low cultures and become a tool for fashioning a socialist future. The early postwar tropes of cultural renewal and mass-mobilization tied the emerging socialist culture to already established institutions and practices. The trajectory of the early postwar cultural experiment, from its initial antifascist stage, which made the RCP part of the legitimate political discourse, to the mood of conformist repression of the Cold War, encapsulated broader political shifts. By mid-1946, the collaborative atmosphere (national unity) was vanishing, whilst the rhetoric of postwar reconstruction gave way to a culture of suspicion, hostility, and pathological control. Both in the West and in the East the Cold War became a system of disciplinary power. In the aftermath of the war, neither did the RCP have any plans for restructuring the cultural life, nor did it rely on Soviet practices. Instead, to consolidate its control over culture it made use of existing state structures of cultural administration while further adjusting the level of control. The Stalinist culture of the 1950s was built on such established

[171] Ibid.

practices. Against this background, the next chapter will look at how the Agitprop made the socialist culture “operative.”

Chapter 2. Model and Instrument of Cultural Construction: the Agitprop and the Imposition of a New Cultural Order in Postwar Romania

Scholars of cultural politics in Romania under state socialism have consistently placed the Agitprop at the heart of the "ideological corruption" of cultural life. Most often, their works, which fall back on a ready-made notion of "culture", influenced by interwar anti-communist values, focus on the ways in which the postwar artistic representations and collectivist cultural practices failed to satisfy imputed standards. As the main Party agency for cultural change, the Agitprop is held to embody the "epistemic violence" which negates the "true" cultural standards, or "the perversion of the discourse regarding the arts; and the harassment of the intellectuals more or less reluctant to be cowed by the regime's politics of culture".[1] For example, one of the most influential accounts of Romanian communism claims that "the trio Chișinevksi, Răutu, Roller … clamped down on any creative expression which did not conform completely with the narrow straight-jacket they imposed."[2] Cultural prejudices further inform class prejudices:

[1] Cristian Vasile, "Propaganda and Culture in Romania at the Beginning of the Communist Regime," in *Stalinism Revisited. The Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe,* ed. Vladimir Tismăneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 368. For the same line of argument see also Cristian Vasile, *Politicile Culturale Comuniste în Timpul Regimului Gheorghiu-Dej* (București: Humanitas, 2011); Eugen Negrici, *Literatura Romană sub Comunism. Proza* (București: Editura Fundației Pro, 2006); Eugen Negrici, *Literatura Romană sub Comunism. Poezia* (București: Editura Fundației Pro, 2006).

[2] Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania, 1944-62* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964, 177; Iosif Chișinevski, Leonte Răutu, and Mihail Roller were the most influential Party's ideologues.

> The Agitprop made use of renegade, naïve, arrivistic intellectuals … and they targeted the semi-literate, unsettled postwar impoverished masses, the marginal … they knew that it was only by manoeuvring these masses that they could stir up some genuine political passion, create the impression of 'class power', and simulate that excitement which produces the 'new man', an enthusiast of egalitarian ideal.[3]

The Agitprop's mobilizing and transformative goals such as the advancement of workers' culture and education, formulated as they were in the language of social utility, are seen as informing a "pseudo-reality", a rhetorical smokescreen for the RCP's "real" goals: to "fight against any spontaneous intellectual movement", to enslave artistic freedom, and, finally, to annex culture to propaganda.[4]

To be sure, the Agitprop singled out propaganda as one of the primary tasks of a cultural producer: "the cultural work of intellectuals should be connected with the Party's political objectives and contribute to the development of Romanian science."[5] Yet propaganda had a powerful end, namely to assist in the socio-political development of culture and reroute it towards workers: "cultural creation will become not only a delight for people, but an impetus in the battle for perfecting civilization, for building a happier life."[6]

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[3] Eugen Negrici, *Literatura Romană sub Comunism. Proza*, 24.
[4] Cristian Vasile, "Propaganda and Culture in Romania," 368.
[5] Iosif Chișinevski, *Dezvoltarea Culturii in RPR, Contribuție de Seamă la Opera de Apărare a Păcii* (București: Editura PMR, 1949), 35.
[6] Petre Iosif, "Teorie si Creație," *Flacăra,* 9 May, 1948.

The language of social utility developed its own classificatory practices as regards culture. Some cultural products served agitational purposes in conjunction with economic mobilization: street posters, wall gazettes, some of the poems. Nevertheless, the traditional high culture (theatre, literature, poetry, opera) remained of central importance. An outstanding play or novel served as a means of elevating the people into conscious political citizens. "Our new poetry," Traian Șelmaru, the literary secretary of the Romanian Writers' Union and an Agitprop board member, stated, "has the mission to make the people deeply and passionately love the new life, to praise the new man and equally to hate passionately everything which might jeopardise this new life … this consciousness will give us [the artists] new incentives for work."[7]

However, an exclusive focus on the development of high culture and a reductionist emphasis on intellectuals' benefits or sufferings, both obscures and circumscribes the Agitprop's functioning. For all its failures, the socialist cultural project embodied a distinct system of production, distribution, and consumption which renders problematic the understanding of postwar communist culture exclusively as a negation of a normative Western culture.

This chapter looks beyond the trope of the Agitprop-as-a-"bogus"-socialist-culture, and seeks to place it in social-historical and institutional-cultural contexts. Thus, I am interested in how "culture" became operative, why it became endowed with a distinct meaning, and how the Agitprop channelled it "correctly". In creating a consensus on the very nature of art and literature, on

[7] Traian Șelmaru, "Pentru o Mai Înaltă Măiestrie Artistică a Poeziei Noastre," *Flacăra,* 22 March, 1951.

the authorial creative process, on the informational and pro-social tasks of the press, and in overseeing the ideological raising of the masses and rearing of their educators, the Agitprop was instrumental.

The agency was not only a means of coercion in the hands of the Party-state, but an instrument of moral regulation in producing and reproducing consensus. Needless to say, looking at the fashioning and imposition of the postwar communist cultural project through the lens provided by the Agitprop takes us beyond questions of cultural production. The wide-ranging apparatus of the Agitprop coordinated and became enmeshed in all aspects of culture. It tightly regulated not only the strategies of cultural imposition, but also the tactics of cultural use (consumption) and even distribution. In so doing, it relied on local established practices and institutions, and it achieved this through (re)construction rather than blunt destruction.[8]

Early Developments: "Theatre Amidst Bayonets"

The communists regarded agitation and propaganda as having no pejorative connotation. Lenin once described "systematic, all-around propaganda and agitation," as the "chief and permanent task" of a Party member. Militant agitation and propaganda had always been fundamental weapons of communist

[8] To be sure, it became almost impossible for the Party to fully distinguish between propaganda and culture. The Party positions and the Party-line (the traditional focus on agitation and propaganda) were disseminated through media outlets which were not reserved exclusively for the Agitprop. It was thus sometimes impossible to distinguish when a cultural product was cultural but not agitational, educational but not propagandistic.

parties in persuading society that their political conception of the world was superior to that of the bourgeoisie.

The state repression in the aftermath of the First World War ushered in surveillance, interrogations, arrests, torture and occasional killings, censorship and sometimes closure of communist newspapers and media outlets, and not least trials often staged with long-term sentences for "communist activities". All these soon pushed the local communists into a difficult underground existence. Given such constraints, it became clear for the Party that overthrowing the interwar Romanian regime would have to be achieved through political rather than overt revolutionary means. In other words, the political education of the rank-and-file was key.

The political ban stifled much of the RCP's political activity and national political communication.[9] Fearing the "contagion" of Bolshevism, the government brutally cracked down on communist publications. The border regions of Bessarabia and Bukovina, both with sizable Russian and Ukrainian ethnic groups posed the main threat in the eyes of the Romanian government. Subsequently, a state of siege was proclaimed for almost the entire interwar period, whilst the transfer of judicial attributions from the state to military courts shaped a legal practice oftentimes reduced to a military form.[10]

The military courts were in charge of conducting pre-publication censorship, but they also criminalized communist book trade and journalism. To

[9] Robert King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1980), 26-9.
[10] Cosmin Cercel, "The 'Right' Side of the Law. State of Siege and the Rise of Fascism in Interwar Romania," *Fascism* 2 (2013): 217 and 223.

pick an example from many others, in 1927 when an underground Ukrainian-socialist newspaper was shut down by the authorities, its managing editors were brought to a military tribunal where they received prison sentences for "illegal press activity."[11]

To circumvent the ban imposed on communist activities, the Party developed alternatives to ensure its participation to the political life. In order to be allowed to field candidates in the parliamentary elections it created front parties, as well as infiltrating the social-democratic parties and the left-wing of the National Peasant Party.

Because the Party did not develop a fully organized agitprop department during the interwar years, the propagandistic activities, media channels, and educational activities were managed by an agitprop office which functioned under the Central Committee. In accordance with the Leninist principle of combining "illegal with semi-legal work," the agitprop relied on conspiratorial cells surrounded by a network of legal organizations.[12] It established united front parties such as the Peasants-Workers Bloc, concurrently with cultural associations – The Students' Democratic Front, The Soviet Union's Friends Society, and The League of Labour.[13] In parallel, other organizations under the

[11] See ANR, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Naționale (hereafter MPN), file 13/1927-29, 4-9; report of The Directorate of Police and State Siguranța (the secret police). In 1930, an internal report of the censor's office considered "the communist danger" to be "very high" and proposed that the state sponsor the organization of private anti-communist clubs and leagues to fight the spreading of communist ideas (ANR, Fond MPN, file 186/1930, 2-3; report to the head of the censor's office about the danger of communism in Bukovina and Bessarabia, 5 May 1930). The author suggested that the private clubs and leagues should not feature "too-obvious" anti-communist names like "anti-communist", "anti-Russian", so they would be able to conceal their real aim).

[12] For Lenin's approach to illegal and legal work of a communist organization see V.I. Lenin, *Lenin Collected Works, vol. 18* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), 387-96.

[13] The biggest electoral success for the Peasants-Workers Front came in 1931 when, despite the fact they were able to run for offices in only half of the counties, the Front obtained 2.5% of the

direction of the Central Committee such as the Red Help, a network which supported imprisoned communists, remained underground.

To grapple with the growing limitations of the underground, the RCP would have had both to centralise its political activity and establish a forum for theoretical debates.[14] These two key functions were performed by the underground press of the Party. The press had a third function too, namely to attract and rally prospective supporters to the communist cause which in the long term may have been even more important. In the communist-led trade unions, the Party press proved to be the most popular. The RCP also produced newspapers for factories with the aims of assisting the local unions during industrial action and of explaining the relevant Party policies to factory operatives.[15]

The core of the activity in the underground revolved around illegal literature, both in terms of producing it and smuggling it into the country, as well as engaging the working-class readership. To broaden its mass of readers, the RCP also attempted to "infiltrate" the mainstream left-leaning press in order to publish subversive articles with the help of sympathetic journalists. The conspiracy norms of the underground instituted divisions between the legal and illegal work of the journalists and writers associated with the Central

total votes (five MPs). Yet, in a characteristic move which showed the limits of the interwar democracy, the Parliament invoked procedural failures to invalidate the results. See Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 400-01.

[14] As the communist propaganda in any form was banned, the agitprop work of the Party primarily focused on brochures, leaflets and newspapers printed in its own clandestine printing presses.

[15] For details see Gheorghe Ioniță, *Pentru Front Popular Antifascist in Romania. Organizații Democratice de Masă Legale Create, Conduse sau Aflate sub Influență P.C.R. (1935 - 1938)* (București: Editura Politică, 1971).

Committee's agitprop office. For example, the agitprop structure set-up a special branch to coordinate the communist and left-wing journalists affiliated with mainstream newspapers and magazines.[16] In parallel, the underground network of publications was run by a specially dedicated Board of Illegal Press.[17]

The underground norms barred the cadres from alternating between underground and mainstream activities, meaning that work in the formal political sphere was to be kept separate from assignments in the underground. Matei Socor, who after the war would become the first communist director of the Radio Station, was a prominent member of the agitprop network in the 1930s. At the start of the decade, the Party assigned him to undertake political work in the mainstream "antifascist sector". When the government banned the antifascist organizations (1934), Socor relied on his father, an important newspaper owner in Bucharest, and his connections to take up various part-time jobs with mainstream newspapers. A few years later, in the biography he submitted to the Party's Verification Commission (1949), he would recall this strategy as a necessary "tactical move to secure the influence of the Party in the mainstream newspapers' offices."[18] When King Carol II proclaimed his royal dictatorship, Socor was delegated to the underground work and made a member of the Agitprop's board in 1938.[19]

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[16] Arhivele Naționale ale României (hereafter ANR), Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă si Agitație (hereafter Secția PA), file 22/1937; Mihail Burcea, *"Apărând Ordinea de Stat." Siguranța pe Urmele lui Gheorghe Crosneff în România Interbelică* (București: Editura Universității București, 2016), 45.

[17] Until 1931, when the first issue of *Scânteia,* the Party's famous newspaper came out, the main theoretical publication edited by the Agitprop was *Lupta de Clasă* (The Class Struggle), first published in 1920. The Party's publication portofolio included other illegal publications such as antimilitaristic ones, designed for the youth, and those of the Red Help's.

[18] ANR, Colectia 53 – Dosare de Partid Ale Membrilor de Partid cu Stagiu din Ilegalitate Care Au Încetat din Viață, file S 141, Vol. 1, 23.

[19] Ibid., 23-24.

With the onset of the Second World War and Romania's alliance with the Third Reich, the communist underground became even more unsafe.[20] By February 1941 communist activities and propaganda became punishable by death ("conspiracy against the state order").[21] In the wake of the invasion of the Soviet Union, four out of the five members of the illegal Central Committee of the Party (among them, the head of the Agitprop body, Iosif Chișinevksi) were arrested and imprisoned. Agitprop activities barely existed. The Party preferred to play it safe. For example, trying to avert the risk of its members being caught distributing communist propaganda, various propagandistic materials (flyers, poems) would be inserted in the best-selling books of the time with the help of communist printers.[22]

During the war, political guidelines transmitted from the Soviet Union watered down the revolutionary radicalism of the Party. The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact substituted anti-war propaganda and agitation for the traditional anti-fascist rhetoric of the interwar years. Accordingly, the war was an imperialistic one which would ultimately lead to the dismantling of Greater Romania, itself an imperialistic formation.[23] Soon after the June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, the guidelines were revised once again: the anti-fascist line gained prominence once more, but it was now framed as a national liberation struggle against Hitler and Antonescu. In its attempt to create a National

[20] In March 1940, the clandestine printing presses of the RCP were discovered by the Siguranță, which by the end of June sent to prison almost 200 communists. See Cristina Diac, *Zorii Comunismului în România. Ștefan Foris, un Destin Neterminat* (Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2014), 91-94.
[21] Decree-Law no. 236, *Monitorul Oficial,* 6 February, 1941.
[22] Diac, 134.
[23] ANR, Colectia Microfilme Rusia, rola 201; report about the activity of the RCP delivered by Vasile Luca at the June 1939 Plenary session, quoted in Alina Tudor-Pavelescu (ed.), *Partidul Comunist din România in Anii Celui De-al Doilea Război Mondial, 1939-1944* (București: Arhivele Naționale ale României, 2003), 94-95.

Patriotic Front with anti-Antonescu parties, RCP's Central Committee demanded its members to "abandon slogans and political actions which could pit the Party against the other political parties."[24] In these circumstances, agitational work aimed to undermine the Romanian state war efforts through disruptions and demobilization of workers.[25]

There is thin archival evidence to document the functioning of the Party's offices in this period. The membership of the Agitprop board, no less than that of the Secretariat and the Central Committee, was unstable during the interwar and wartime years. Harassed by the Police and infiltrated by the Siguranța (the secret police), the RCP grew extremely suspicious of betrayals or potential informers and conducted periodical assessments of its cadres which resulted in frequent bans and expulsions.

In particular, the Party's ability to carry out public educational and cultural initiatives to shape the contours of popular culture was much hindered. As a consequence, Romanian communists mounted few countercultural challenges to the official culture. If elsewhere in Europe, agitprop activities such as amateur theatre and musical performances proved to be very popular entertainment forms in the working-class milieu, [26] in Romania they were rather exceptions.

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[24] ANR, Colecția Microfilme Rusia – xerocopii pachet XXI, file 10, 241-255; The resolution of the RCP's Central Committee regarding the necessity of the establishment of the National Patriotic Front, January 1942, quoted in Tudor-Pavelescu, *Partidul Comunist,* 37.
[25] Ibid.
[26] In Weimer Republic the agitprop amateur theatre was a popular form of entertainment, part of the youth culture. See Richard Bodek, *Proletarian Performance in Weimar Berlin: Agitprop, Chorus, and Brecht* (Columbia: Camden House, 1997). For agitprop theatre in the 1920s Soviet Union see Lynn Mally, "Exporting Soviet Culture: The Case of Agitprop Theatre," *Slavic Review* 2 (2003): 324-324.

For example, the most celebrated performance of the foremost workers' theatre group during the interwar years was the staging of Maksim Gorki's *Night Asylum* in a sold-out, heavily overcrowded playhouse.[27] The success of the play with the workers alerted the authorities who revoked the licence for future performances. Moreover, when the theatre group started rehearsals for new plays, the authorities used intimidation and the outright force to prevent them being performed. Police agents were sent to patrol the entrance of the building the rehearsals took place in and in some cases searches were conducted and the audience was taken to police stations. In his memoir, a member of the group captured the charged atmosphere around these plays with an apt metaphor: "theatre amidst bayonets."[28]

Constrained by the increased repression, the amateur theatre troupe ceased its mainstream activity in 1931. No longer granted access to playhouses they restricted their activities to clandestine performances, which largely meant performances given at clandestine tea parties, at cultural circles and parties organized by trade unions, or at New Year's Eve parties in working-class neighbourhoods. [29]

As the previous example suggests, the relation between RCP and popular culture in the interwar years is arguably much more complex than it is conventionally portrayed in the post-1990 historiography. The limited cultural

[27] C.Z Alexandru, *Teatru Între Baionete* (București: Institul de Studi Istorice si Social-Politice de pe Lânga CC al PCR, 1970), 54-78.
[28] Ibid., 100.
[29] Official licences for leftwing theatre troupes were denied even in the case of plays written by non-communist authors, notwithstanding that such plays featured in the repertories of state theatres. In the interpretation of the authorities, worker's performance was in itself a dangerous political statement.

penetration of the RCP, these works argue, in fact signalled a wholehearted rejection of communism (socialism) by the masses.[30] Admittedly, to establish a counter-hegemony to the national culture, the local communists would have had to articulate a broader ethical and cultural challenge, to use Gramsci's terms.[31]

As it was, the Party's handling of agitation and propaganda before the end of the Second World War carried with it the Leninist assumption that, given its manifold modes of inculcation, the "bourgeois ideology" was imposed on the working class "spontaneously". The communists contended that the answer to overturning the pernicious consequences of bourgeois culture lay in a revolutionary party which was to conduct agitation and propaganda in a downward direction, from vanguard to the masses. Yet both the Leninist credo, that the revolutionary party should lead the masses' and the underground existence limited their political and culture outreach.

The Formative Early Postwar Years

It was only after 23 August 1944 that the Party, no longer illegal, re-organized the agitprop activities under the direction of a central agency, The Central Section for Political Education (*Secția Centrală de Educație Politică*). Iosif Chișinevksi, the erstwhile leader of agitation and propaganda activities, became the head of the agency. In order to assist the Party's political and cultural-

[30] See for example Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
[31] Joseph Femia, "Hegemony and Consciousness in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci," *Political Studies* 1 (1975): 40-41.

educational agenda, the Section would soon establish internal structures such as the Committee for Press, the Committee for Political Propaganda, the Committee for Arts and Culture, and the Party's publishing house.[32]

Similar to the interwar period, the archival evidence to document the Agitprop's transition from underground to mainstream politics and to ideological leadership in culture is fragmentary. There are two possible explanations for this. First, the task of building a mass party and the early postwar political battles (over reconstruction and political primacy) overtook the concern with paperwork. Secondly, in the early postwar multi-party system, the Agitprop did not yet acquire the institutional centrality it later enjoyed under the Party-state system.

In the early postwar years, the Agitprop pursued two major directions, namely it focused on the nationwide expansion of its network, concurrently with intensifying the efforts to disseminate the communist political message. These priorities reflected the Party's concern with the immediate political and economic goals. In the beginning, a pragmatic need for securing political power took precedence over the revolutionary long-term cultural goals of refashioning human nature and social subjectivity.

Convened in January 1945, the National Conference on Agitation and Propaganda provided the first official forum where questions of the Agitprop's organization were discussed. Foremost among them were the plans for

[32] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 1/1945, 118; Iosif Chișinevski's speech at the first Party's conference on agitation and propaganda, 29 January 1945; The Central Committee's sectors were restructured in the autumn of 1944 and the agitprop activities made part of the Division for Political Education (*Secția Centrală de Educație Politică*) – see ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Organizatorică, file 127/1944; the RCP organizational scheme.

expanding the local branches and increasing the number of staff. For example, in the provinces, the Agitprop's expanding responsibilities had created the need for a considerably larger body of employees. Yet, in some regions, in the absence of reliable cadres, the local Party organizations struggled to establish Agitprop branches. For instance, in Braila, one of the most prosperous maritime ports on the Danube in the 19th and early 20th century, the shortage of prospective candidates determined the Agitprop's top administrators to postpone the establishment of a branch for a few months.[33] Similar problems were experienced in Sibiu, a city in the southern part of Transylvania, where the local Party officials lamented that they could not find "a single person who had the necessary political training."[34] Even in Iasi, the biggest city in the region of Moldova and home to a few communist student organizations in the interwar period, the RCP had only eight active party members in the aftermath of 23 August.[35]

More or less, by the time of the conference, most local Party branches reported having set up structures to perform educational and cultural activities. Operating with hastily appointed staff, in its majority with no prior connections with the communist movement, the local branches also functioned as training sites for their own staff.[36] Crash courses on Marxism and on the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union constituted the backbone of the

[33] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Secția PA, file 1/1945, 23; report delivered by Ilie Zaharia, the Agitprop's delegate for the press affaires, at the first Party conference on propaganda and agitation, 28 January 1945.
[34] Ibid., 22.
[35] Ibid., 46.
[36] In the regions where the Party's support was traditionally strong, branches were established soon after 23 August. See for example the Timișoara region where a local agitprop branch was established in September 1944 (ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, file 4/1945, 18; speech by Chișinevski).

communist political education. The trainees received elementary knowledge of the Party's organization, skills to interpret current political issues, and an introduction to the functioning of communist mass organizations.[37]

During the conference, the head of Agitprop, Iosif Chișinevski, reiterated the distinction that Lenin (himself drawing on Plekhanov) had established between propaganda and agitation. The boundaries between the two were often unclear because to a certain extent agitation also meant propaganda, albeit restricted to daily political questions. In Chișinevski's words, propaganda involved theoretical explanations of the social and economic processes that underpinned broader historical process. It signified "enlightenment", transforming the worldview of the population by promoting extended explanations: "[propaganda means] an idea, a political conception, a theory … this means to embrace the Marxist conception and the history of the Bolshevik Party which embodies this theory … [and] that is why we publish books and we build schools."[38] Agitation, on the other hand, was structured to appeal to the audience's emotions, to motivate and mobilise it with simple slogans rather than with ideological sophistications: "through agitation we expose the people to our day-to-day slogans and political interpretations."[39] If propaganda was linked

[37] For instance, it was estimated that about 90% of the staff in Brasov county were enrolled in such political classes. See ANR, CC al PCR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 1/1945, 21 (report on the activity of Sibiu and Brasov branches delivered by Constanța Crăciun at the first Party conference on propaganda and agitation, 28 January 1945).

[38] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 1/1945, 133; keynote speech at the first Party conference on propaganda and agitation delivered by the head of the Agitprop, Iosif Chișinevski, 29 January 1945.

[39] Ibid., 134. In Lenin's theorization, a propagandist requires skills different from those of an agitator. While the propagandist primarily operates through the means of the printed word, the agitator, on the contrary, carries out his duty mainly by the means of the spoken word (see Vladimir Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?,* 42); In a widely cited book on the Soviet propagandistic apparatus, Peter Kenez argues that before being institutionalized by Lenin and later on by the Soviet and communist leaders, the distinction between *agitation* and *propaganda* was first drawn by the Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov: "A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; the agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass

with education and enlightenment, agitation designated organization and mobilization.

Chișinevski's distinction between agitation and propaganda was imbued with the sense of elitism which characterized the Party's political approach in the interwar period, that the Party would be the leading force in the proletariat's struggle to attain socialism. Yet, a shift occurred. If before 23 August the agitation had targeted mainly the urban proletariat, now it was expanded to include all the population, urban and rural alike. Propaganda also widened its scope, being directed towards raising the cultural level of the population and co-opting a broader mass of people in the reconstruction process.

When the topic came up during the conference, the Agitprop's leaders indicated that, given the current political conditions in Romania, agitation was to be more appropriate and effective. Fearing that the abstraction of Marxist theory would rather estrange potential support, it was considered better to appeal to workers' personal experiences, individual grievances, and anxieties. Priority in this regard was given to the publishing of new progressive literature, effective use of public speeches by trained Party members, and various group activities in factories and villages.

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of people" (Quoted in Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State. Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 7. In a proposal to restructure the propaganda work addressed to the Central Committee in 1951, Chișinevski linked the propaganda effort to the fulfilling the first five year plan launched in 1950: "it is unconceivable to distinguish between planning in industry, planning in economy, and planning in culture and science … our propaganda has proved successful in all its sectors of activity, in school education, in arts, in science, in cinematography" (ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 12/1951, 74; Iosif Chișinevski's report on the reconstruction of propaganda work, 14 March 1951).

The central Agitprop turned down and criticized local branches' attempts to ignore the instructions regarding the publishing of Marxist literature and Marxist-inspired political analyses. For example, in 1945 the Party's newspaper in Constanța ran an issue on dialectical materialism which included theoretical discussions of imperialism and formulated warnings about the broadening gap between bourgeoisie and proletariat. The supervisors from Bucharest criticized the local staff's tactical error in ironical terms: "It seems that our comrades from Constanța have such a good understanding of the dialectical materialism that they have nothing better to do but to engage in speculations about the 'reformation of the soul'… Look at them! They are like metaphysical missionaries! But it is still an enigma for us how they understood our guidelines".[40]

If agitation was seen as expanding the people's political awareness, propaganda further educated socialist citizens. In accordance with the Leninist definition, the Party press was to act as an agitator, propagandist, and organizer. Before the war, limited by the constraints of the underground, propaganda was generally confined to the printed word and agitation to the spoken one. The "legal" newspaper offered the promise to integrate both of them. Yet, rather than propagandistic, the early postwar design of the Party's newspaper was agitation and organization oriented. Not the Soviet *Pravda*, but the French newspaper *L'Humanité* provided the inspiration. The Agitprop directed the press to strive for a more agitational and emotional style because "to have a Pravda-style newspaper it would require an audience much more educated than our current

[40] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 1/1945, 128; keynote speech at the first Party conference on propaganda and agitation delivered by the head of the Agitprop, Iosif Chișinevski, 29 January 1945.

one."[41] Officials of Agitprop ordered the Party press to gear down militant political claims and focus instead on issues of layout and personalization of style and tone: "for a backward mass of readers the graphical design of the newspaper is still very important; we can come up with the most competent interpretation of the events, but without an attractive layout the readers will overlook our newspapers."[42]

Agitation conducted through newspapers, posters, brochures was paired with propaganda, conceived mainly in the form of cultural education. In the absence of a socialist state structure, cultural enlightenment was also linked to short-term propagandistic demands. It did not promote "maximalist" objectives, i.e. the need for party control over the nature and production of culture but it focused on apparently neutral political topics such as the equalizing of the access to culture: "If culture did not serve the popular masses, then it would end up being a tool of manipulation in the hands of the exploitative classes … this was the case with the previous monarchic, fascist-legionary and wartime dictatorship of Marshall Antonescu."[43]

The intellectuals were particularly important to influence the public and the Agitprop relied on prominent intellectuals who belonged to the Party to help popularise its cultural enlightenment program: "cultural education means propagandistic work in literary, musical, artistic, and related domains which in the hands of a propagandist can be turned into powerful weapons for broadening

[41] Ibid., 102-03; report entitled "How a Newspaper Should be Organized and How a Newspaper Article Should be Written" delivered by Ilie Zaharia at the first Party conference on agitation and propaganda, 2 March 1945.
[42] Ibid., 105.
[43] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, file 4/1945, 84; report by Fenia Rudenco, titled "On the Cultural Work", February 1945.

the political-cultural level of the people … more effectively than the verbal or written agitational work."[44]

Beyond the broader agitation and propaganda, the Party's Agitprop agency *organized* the reconstruction of the cultural institutional sphere. As long as questions of systemic cultural change did not feature prominently on Agitprop's agenda in the early postwar years, its officials adopted a classic Leninist position. Until the transfer of property from private to collective hands was accomplished, the question of culture was overshadowed by the political struggle.

Therefore, in the early postwar years the Agitprop acted more like a coordinating committee of representatives of the Party's agencies involved in disseminating the communist political message: The Romanian Association for the Strengthening of Relations with the Soviet Union, the RCP's Publishing House, newspapers, trade unions, theatre and musical troupes, houses of culture etc. For example, at the Radio Station, the Agitprop worked with communist intellectuals to expand the repertoire of programmes.[45] In many regards, the practices the Agitprop employed resembled the interwar practices of combining public agitprop activities with covert work. Reports sent by local Agitprop branches regularly updated the central office on the progress in gaining influence in newspapers' offices and cultural institutions. For instance, a report sent by the Brasov branch discussed the strategy of gaining control of the editorial office of a local cultural magazine: "unfortunately, so far we have not

[44] Ibid., 83;
[45] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 96/1945; reports on the activity of the Romanian Association for Strengthening of Relations with the Soviet Union.

managed to extend our control over the entire editorial office of the *Astra Culturală* magazine; but we succeeded in the appointment of one of our Party members in the editorial committee."[46]

In the early postwar years, neither were the traditional parties strong enough to isolate and crush the communist party, nor was the latter strong enough to claim full political power. The focus on political and economic consolidation deferred the implementation of a Marxist-Leninist agenda. To perform its tasks, the Agitprop centralized all the means of propaganda and agitation and often used the infrastructure of the interwar state to coordinate cultural activities (houses of culture, theatres) and the artistic milieu. As we shall see in the next sections of the chapter, the proclamation of the Republic in December 1947 would mark a recalibration of agitation and propaganda and a renewed focus on the long-range task of cultural uplifting.

A Leading Organ for Cultural Change, 1948-53

By 1948, as discussed in Chapter One, the complete breakdown of East-West relations and the creation of Cominform institutionalized the two-camps view of the world. Within a few months (December 1947-mid 1948), the RCP proclaimed the People's Republic and the King was forced into exile, the Social Democratic Party merged with the RCP, a new constitution was passed, and the major factories and means of production were nationalized. In January 1949, the Party introduced the first five-year plan and by the time the collectivization drive

[46] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 13/1947, 15; report of the Brașov branch.

was launched, in spring 1949, the economic production rested almost completely in the hands of the state. These economic measures reshaped the political and social structures, and, not least, infused the Romanian type of socialism with a Soviet-style articulation.

The Party began prioritizing problems of longer historical perspective such as the "enlightening and education of the masses." While previously the communist propaganda described state socialism as a moral alternative to the capitalist order, after the proclamation of the Republic propaganda came to be more anchored in the political and cultural experience of the economic development. The Agitprop no longer only supervised the state and the Party bodies producing agitational and propagandistic materials, but it assumed the central role of organising them.

The Agitprop's powers expanded to the extent that it became a key institution in the intricate party-state system of governance. In the new state of popular democracy, the Agitprop and its branches from the provinces assumed a central place in organising, indeed concentrating, the political, cultural, educational, scientific resources in the hands of the RCP. The leading position of the Agitprop in imposing the party-line over the "cultural front", channelling "correctly" the cultural aspirations of the population, and preventing the competing discourses from reaching the public audience, was undisputed after 1948.

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In terms of institutional structure and operation, the Agitprop's charter of 1949 expanded its early postwar structure to twelve sectors: party propaganda, agitation, public schooling, central press, press from the provinces, mass cultural work, science, literature and arts, publishing houses, sport, radio, and cadres.[47] The Agitprop also directly administrated the A. Zhdanov Upper School of Social Sciences, the Institute for Historical Studies of the Party, the Party's Publishing House, and the theoretical publication of the Party, *The Class Struggle* (*Lupta de Clasă*). Amid a breeze of de-Stalinization in 1953, the agency was temporarily disbanded into three distinct institutions, the Department of Agitation and Propaganda, the Department for Science and Education, and the Department for Literature and Arts. However, shortly afterwards, they would be reintegrated under the aegis of the Agitprop. Eventually, in 1955, the ideological supervision of the arts and culture was removed from under the jurisdiction of the Agitprop and two new agencies resulted, one for Science and Culture and one for Propaganda and Agitation.[48]

This structure gave the agency resounding authority in matters concerning the "Party character" and "Party-line". Its power stretched from the monitoring of book production, cultural magazines, theatre and musical performances, involvement in the public schooling system, and supervising the publishing houses, to overseeing, for example, the ideological education of the forestry workers and chemical engineers. The Agitprop possessed nearly full

[47] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 2/1949, 47-55; reports of local Agitprop branches.
[48] Ion Ianoși, *Internaționala Mea. Cronica Unei Vieți* (Iași: Polirom, 2012), 355.

powers to monitor the entire media in Romania, the publishing houses and creative unions, and not least to effect changes in staff and content where considered necessary. It also provided the cultural bodies with regular updates of the Party-line, as they were handed down by the Politburo. The newly appointed cadres across the state bureaucratic system were required to go through the Agitprop's clearance procedures and thus made the Agitprop a familiar presence across the state bureaucracy.

The Bucharest central office became the prototype for the country-wide system of Agitprop offices. In the most important industrial regions the Agitprop established extended branches. This meant that in addition to the core divisions (propaganda, political agitation, press and publishing houses, education), these branches also integrated dedicated divisions for science and literature.[49]

The primary tasks of agitprop departments were established in Bucharest both formally, in meetings with the senior staff, and informally, in agreements

[49] In terms of national and social composition, the Agitprop echoed the other institutions of the cultural bureaucracy. In 1949, five out of nine major internal divisions were headed by ethnic Romanians, three by Jewish, and one by Hungarian ethnics respectively. Overall, across the internal sectors, the Agitprop employed sixty-one instructors, thirty-two Romanians, twenty-two Jewish, six Hungarians, and one Russian (in terms of social origin twenty-two could claim working class credentials, while twenty-three were intellectuals). For more information, see ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 91/1949, 5; statistical data compiled by the Agitprop. In 1950, the Bucharest central office had thirty-three instructors, of whom twenty were Romanian and thirteen of Jewish origin; fifteen were listed as having working class backgrounds, whilst nine were classed as intellectuals (see ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1950, 82; statistical data compiled by the Agitprop). In the local branches, Romanian ethnics dominated, one-hundred-forty-seven out of one-hundred-seventy-two, whilst Jewish ethnics were hardly represented, with only three instructors. Merely three of the Agitprop instructors in the provinces had gained Party membership around 23 August and no instructors had held a Party card in the interwar or wartime years. (ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 55/1950, 87; statistical data compiled by the Agitprop). After the collapse of communism, the vocal anti-communist nationalist faction insistently singled out the national composition of the Agitprop as evidence for the "anti-Romanian stance" of communism. Of course, the premise that the early communist regime sought to promote distinctive national and cultural identity at the expense of the dominant Romanian population, with the disproportionate presence of national minorities (Jewish, Hungarian) in the communist leadership confirming it, is feeble and self-serving.

between leaders of the Central Committee (CC). To provide the branches with updated guidelines, recommendations, in some cases with propagandistic and agitational material, the central office communicated with memos. But in urgent matters or to express outrage at inadvertencies in applying the Party-line, Bucharest issued telephonic instructions to the territorial structures.[50]

As we have seen, in the early postwar years, the ongoing political battles, the fear of alienating the population, the ambiguous international situation and, not least, the lack of an economic socialist structure prompted the Party to adopt a circumspect rhetoric in cultural politics. If in a non-socialist, private-property based society, the cultural system is oriented towards the market (the artists need buyers in order to survive), the economic reconfigurations of 1948 carried a different promise. The RCP proclaimed culture as being refashioned "from an instrument of bourgeois domination into an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat".[51] Building socialism became synonymous with building a socialist culture, yet it became almost impossible for the Party to fully distinguish between propaganda and culture. The media channels for transmitting the Party-line and the Party's political stances were not reserved solely for Agitprop. The instrumental view of culture, arts, and education no longer distinguished between propaganda work, on the one hand, and artistic creativity, on the other. The state-sponsored culture was meant to help in the process of socialist construction, and it had a social function and responsibility.

[50] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 37/1951, 4; guidelines regarding the improvement of the activity of the Agitprop. There was a hierarchy to be respected when making phone calls – for example, only the head of Agitprop was entitled to telephone the head of a Party local branch (*primul secretar*).
[51] Sorin Toma, *RPR pe Drumul Revoluției Culturale* (București: Editura PMR, 1949), 2.

It was a notion of culture embedded in the idea of state power as cultural revolution, an instrument through which the defining forms and images of the socialist culture were secured. In one of the marathon meetings at the Agitprop's main office, the editor-in-chief of *Scânteia* and one of the most authoritative voices in cultural problems, Sorin Toma, complained about a "fear of acknowledging the character of our state" across the media institutions. Toma regarded the new political practices as constituting emancipatory transformations: "I can see that some of us are still afraid to refer to the real essence of our state; and they have this reluctance because they still regard the state through old lenses, as a guarantor and protector of civic rights but not as they should, as an instrument of their fulfilment."[52]

In this sense, the Agitprop aimed to structure the production and reproduction of the cultural field by governing the access to cultural expression, by shaping the form of cultural products, and by setting the limits of consumption. Structurally, therefore, censorship went beyond the formal coercive, i.e. interdictory, to be inscribed in the mechanism of validation of the cultural. The Agitprop both imposed and oversaw the norms and forms in which culture should reach the people. It attempted to shape the form and content of cultural expression and the domain of "thinkable" reception. The idea behind the Agitprop's function focused on ways of influencing the cultural construction: the greater the extent to which the "legitimate" norms were institutionalized, the less the need for a formal censorial body.

[52] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 144; Sorin Toma's speech (the editor-in-chief of *Scânteia* and a member of the CC) at a meeting of the Agitprop's Sector for Press with representatives of newspapers from Bucharest, 1 June 1948.

The Agitprop's mission, to be the model and instrument for the cultural systemic structures of the Party, revolved around two major tasks. First, the agency ordered the cultural production of the newly established socialist state. Second, it supervised the ideological content and the realization of the cultural products across the cultural bureaucracy. In so doing, as discussed in the following sections, it both linked the cultural producers to the people and controlled how the cultural products were made accessible to large audiences.

An Ordered State Culture

In 1948, under the supervision of the Agitprop branch, the local newspaper in Sibiu published a "guiding" article for the local cultural community. Entitled "The Art We Want", it might have passed for just another standard article of the kind routinely published in the press in the 1950s, had its final claims not infuriated the Agitprop seniors in Bucharest. "The artistic products", the article stressed, had to "obey the government instructions" because "the government speaks on behalf of the official line of the Party,"[53] whilst the Ministry of Arts "must provide the artists with clear instructions to ensure that the artistic products incorporate the Party-line."[54]

The Agitprop staff in Bucharest reacted with outrage to what they perceived to be a proof of the authors' "forced politicization" which indeed was a proof of their "non-political" commitment: "this is a servile attitude which

[53] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1948, 16; activity report of the Sector for the Press in the Provinces, May 1948.
[54] Ibid.

misrepresents the institutional relationship between the state apparatus and cultural production! Articles of this kind are misleading precisely because they argue for a state-led culture and not for a culture which stems from the people."[55]

The Agitprop's reply echoed the Party's idiosyncratic vision of a "cultural state", a form of state power which would be a medium for popular cultural awareness and would enable the people's cultural authenticity and creative energy.

In coordinating the Party-state bodies which aspired to turn the writers and cultural producers into committed socialists, the Agitprop work was officially "consultative" and not interdictory. "We just oversee how the Party-line is applied," a report of the Sector for the Press in the Provinces put it.[56] The report's echoed the pronouncements of the 5th Plenary of the RCP which tasked the agency with "supervising the work in the state and ideological sector". Accordingly, the agency was expected to give "neither political-ideological advice nor guidance to institutions, we just check [their work]", one of the seniors officials highlighted.[57] In the Party's vision the distinction between amateur and professional culture decidedly narrowed.

These circumstances created administrative and ideological challenges, especially when it came to the Agitprop's institutional relationship with the artistic field. As Petre Iosif, a member of the Agitprop's Sector for Arts and

[55] Ibid., 4.
[56] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 7/1950, 99; report of the Sector for the Press in the Provinces.
[57] Ibid., 22; report of the cultural office of the General Confederation of Labour, I June 1950.

Literature, stated, an ongoing lack of clarity persisted about who was entitled to articulate the Party-line:

> The Sector for Arts and Literature oversees the general development of literature and arts, analyses these developments, and reports to the Central Committee which is the only body to provide the Party-line … there have been discussions [in the intellectual community] about who is actually formulating the Party-line and some comrades have suggested that it is the Sector for Arts and Literature. It is utterly wrong! There is only one committee which gives this line, and this is the Central Committee. The Sector for Arts and Literature merely oversees how the Party-line is applied by different mass organizations and institutions, plays a role model for them, and organises debates about the incorporation and distribution of the Party-line.[58]

In helping to implement History's progression, the Party required cultural producers to deliver "first class artistic outputs with deep social utility." Yet a conundrum remained: since a revolutionary culture required communist cultural producers, but they constituted a small fraction and there was no time for the political development of others, the Party had to get involved: "in other historical times, but not today, … the writers might have had time … to read the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, then *Capital*, and afterwards they would

[58] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 298-99; Petre Iosif's speech at the Sector for Arts and Literature's meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.

have been in the position to write without our support … but this is a luxury we cannot afford today … History summons us but it also give us the entitlement to get involved [in the cultural production]".[59] Yet setting limits to the Party's intervention in cultural production, that is calibrating the relationship between censorship versus self-censorship, often escaped official definitions. More than that, it was considered risky to lean on "rude and invasive methods," Leonte Răutu admitted, because plain interdictions would restrain cultural creativity.

The communist cultural administrators feared that if framed in excessive interdictory and didactic terms, the socialist culture would become "normative" and imbued with political jargon.[60] This meant a weakening of the political role of culture. In the Party-state dualism and overlapping competencies of the communist cultural bureaucracy, the Agitprop was often regarded as the highest ideological forum. Nicolae Moraru, an Agitprop member and general secretary in the Ministry of Arts, was frustrated with the tendency of cultural producers to wait for instructions from "the above": "the comrades have fallen into a bad habit of coming to us [the Agitprop], as if they are going to see a priest … but the only help we can offer is to assist the writer in the process of the self-questioning of his social role, so he is progressing towards cultural achievements."[61]

To achieve this sense of self-regulation the Agitprop distinguished between two stages of cultural oversight. In the first stage of supervision, the

[59] Ibid., 310.
[60] Ibid., 268-69; Mihail Novicov's speech at the Agitprop's meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.
[61] Ibid., 302; Nicolae Moraru's speech at the Agitprop's meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.

Agitprop's sectors were supposed to oversee the distribution of the Party-line to creative unions, which, in their turn, were requested to incorporate it in their artistic output. During the second stage, the state institutions, and foremost among them the Ministry of Arts and Information, were entrusted with delivering the products on the market.[62] In the words of Mihail Roller, one of the leading ideologues of the Party in the 1950s, the two stages designated the "organizational aspect" and "the artistic realisation" respectively of a cultural product.[63]

The Agitprop possessed nearly complete authority to monitor conformity with the Party-line, that is the ideological quality. Its sectors – for instance in the case of literary creation, The Sector for Arts and Culture – controlled "the implementation of the strategic and tactical line … [provided] counsel, critical feedback regarding the artistic creation". By creating an "institutional space where problems of literature were to be discussed, [and] the writers critically exchanged opinion,"[64] The Romanian Writers' Union further extended the Agitprops' oversight of the cultural producers. Subsequently, the organizational stage of cultural production was carried out by the Ministry of Arts which coordinated and administrated the institutions called on to deliver socialist culture to the market, namely book publishers, theatres, operas, houses of culture, etc.[65]

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[62] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 5/1948, 2; report of the Sector Arts and Culture, October 1948.
[63] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 88; Mihail Roller's speech at the Agitprop's meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid., 94; Even in 1950, Leonte Răutu criticized the Minister of Arts for his unwillingness to accept the Agitprop's full authority: "Mezincescu [the then Minister of Arts] still thinks that instead of offering assistance, the Agitprop's involvement creates confusion." See ANR, Fond

Yet, the Party-state duality in cultural affairs made the distinction professed by the Agitprop's seniors less clear-cut in practice. Lingering institutional and political ambiguities placed cultural supervision both with the Agitprop (as the disseminator of the proper socialist "values") and the state agencies of cultural administration. As a result, the latter often meddled in the Agitprop's domain of "ideological" affairs, whilst Agitprop exceeded its advisory role and intruded in the "organizational" matters reserved for the state institutions. The Party ideologues sought to restore the right "political orientation" with direct intervention:

> You never know where to go and with whom to talk when you are writing on new topics or when you need feedback on your work in progress … This, indeed, is very frustrating … sometimes we don't even know who is in charge of the guiding of cultural production. Is it the Ministry [of Arts and Information]? The USAZS [The Union of Writers, Artists, and Journalists]? The Agitprop's Committee for Arts and Culture? The Romanian Writers' Society? We have a problem.[66]

The agency developed rituals of intervention to ensure adherence to the Party-line. To set the tone for the cultural agenda, the Agitprop hosted multi-agency meetings with the representatives of the cultural bodies. Soon, these sessions (*intâlniri*) at the Agitprop's main office evolved into the favourite

CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 36/1950, 179; transcript of a meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Arts.

[66] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 267; Mihail Roller's speech at the Agitprop's meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.

formal ritual for disseminating the Party-line. Supervised by the CC's head of propaganda Iosif Chișinevski, and the Party's chief ideologue Leonte Răutu, the sessions stretched for days at a time. During the sessions, representatives of state bodies (the Romanian Writers' Society, the General Directorate for Press and Printings Materials, the Ministry of Arts and Information, publishing houses, the Radio Station, newspapers etc.) delivered and discussed reports, with feedback provided by the Agitprop's seniors. However, the main ideological tasks of the Agitprop's work were often decided in informal sessions of the highest Party bodies, such as the Politburo.[67]

The Party leaders saw manifold benefits in such meetings. First of all, the meetings articulated the Party-line for an upcoming period of time. Memos and instructions sent to the state and Party agencies clarified the ideological positions to be endorsed in the media and indicated the tabooed topics. Second, the meetings reviewed the work carried out by the cultural and media institutions. Although intended as dialogue sessions to improve cultural production and distribution, these sessions were typically pedagogical and disciplinary. Their conclusions became obligatory in the cultural sphere. In addition to these periodical sessions, a continuous stream of advisories, such as written memos and telephone notes, provided the institutions from the cultural front and the Agitprop's regional structures with daily or periodical guidelines on changes to the Party-line. The advisories stretched from reports articulating and explaining the Party-line, and memos establishing reading lists for the staff, to instructions regulating the activity of newspapers, radio stations, theatres,

[67] Pavel Țugui, *Despre Lumea Cultural-Artistică in Secolul XX, vol. II* (București: Fundatia Națională pentru Știintă si Artă, 2012), 10-29.

publishing houses, artistic unions, press agencies, and ministries. This sense of entitlement, derived from the authority of the Party-line, drove one of the Agitprop's leaders to proudly declare: "here at the Agitprop we don't offer you only material support but moral support too."[68]

The Agitprop also habitually issued theoretical articles (*articole de îndrumare*) intended for publication in newspapers and literary magazines such as *Scânteia,* and the RCP's main theoretical organ, *Lupta de Clasă.* Their dual purpose was to make the Party-line accessible to the masses and to act as "models" for its incorporation into cultural products. For example, in early 1948 the Agitprop orchestrated the first major press attack against the most important poet of the time, Tudor Arghezi. A Zhdanov-style attack, it was intended to create greater ideological orthodoxy, whilst delivering an example of a "new Marxist literary critique." Officially authored by *Scânteia's* editor-in-chief, Sorin Toma, the pamphlet was actually the result of a collective effort of the Agitprop's leadership. As he claimed in his memoir, Toma "secretly" wrote the first draft which was subsequently subjected to further elaboration by the Agitprop's agency seniors, Iosif Chișinevski and Leonte Răutu.[69] The pamphlet addressed the role of the arts in the socialist construction: it denounced art for art's sake, recognized all artistic narratives as driven by ideological projects (thus discrediting the idea of "pure aesthetics"), and called for the repudiation of bourgeois "aesthetic values."[70] Upon its publication it received wide acclaim

[68] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 6/1948, 36; Leonte Răutu's concluding speech at a meeting of the Central Section for Political Education, 4 February 1948.
[69] Sorin Toma, *Privind Înapoi. Amintirile unui Fost Ziarist Comunist, Redactor-Şef al Scânteii din 1947 până in 1960* (București: Compania, 2004), 124-144; Pavel Țugui, *Scriitori si Compozitori in Luptă cu Cenzura Comunistă* (București: Albatros, 2006), 36-158.
[70] See Sorin Toma, *Poezia Putrefacției Sau Putrefacția Poeziei* (București: Editura Scânteia, 1948), 3-39.

in the press and became institutionalized as an object of study in state and Party schools. The Agitprop handled the processes of dissemination too. In this vein, the "strategies of power" employed by the Agitprop aimed to shape the limits of the "legitimate texts" by incorporating both officials and the cultural producers into the logic of the Party-line.

Along similar lines, artistic and media cultural production was continuously scrutinized by the regional and central offices of the Agitprop. Its sectors compiled periodical reports on the activity of state institutions involved in cultural production and distribution such as the Ministry of Arts, The Romanian Writers' Union, General Confederation of Work, the Radio Station, creative unions etc. The reports discussed a wide array of issues, from staff changes to problems concerning the reception of books, films, and theatrical performances. The occurrence of "reactionary," "hostile," or "progressive" tendencies amidst cultural producers signalled achievements or, on the contrary, flaws in their cultural work. On the basis of the reports, the Agitprop adjusted its means of intervention since, as one official explained: "the link of the author with life is not established simply because a writer spends two months at a construction site, but [because we] we direct the [cultural] production."[71]

[71] ANR, Fond Secția PA, file 9/1948, 266; Agitprop's board meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.

Ideological Supervision

"The role of the cultural supervisors was to shape the political understanding of the author so that, by giving up on any sense of independent thinking, freedom, creativity, he would develop a permanent complex of inferiority."[72] Nina Cassian, a foremost communist poet in the postwar revolutionary moment, penned these lines in her diary in 1952. Despite her frustration with the Party's oversight of cultural administration, she did not question the overall logic of the communist cultural project, but its degeneration into a Stalinist disciplinary and divisive design. The Agitprop's cultural supervisors, she claimed, cynically pledged allegiance to socialist-realism to stir "constant suspicion" between authors."[73] In so doing, they placed political criticism above artistic criticism and pressured the writer to conform with the "social command".

Even committed communists like Cassian felt that the rigid cultural approach of the Party inflicted a heavy blow on the "artistic vocation" to the extent that it "drained the aesthetic blood" of writers.[74] Communist writers such as Cassian and Emil Dorian (see Introduction) did not expect the Stalinization of the postwar cultural experiment. Both devoted communist supporters, associated with communist creative unions and organisers of literary and musical lectures for workers, they viewed the postwar years as an opportunity to place their creativity in the service of the people. The Party was not kind to them. The two writers were accused of modernist and surrealist influences, or

[72] Nina Cassian, *Memoria Ca Zestre, vol. 1* (București: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2003), 171.
[73] Ibid., 74.
[74] Ibid., 172.

"formalism" in the official jargon, which led to their receiving an unfavourable reception in the literary journals at the Agitprop. They would continue to hold various jobs in the cultural bureaucracy, but their literary creation largely parroted the official language to fit in with the "ideologically acceptable" forms. Whilst they did not give up their belief in art as enabler of a higher development of humankind, they lost their confidence in the realization of a socialist culture in Romania.

The root of their unhappiness with the "economy of socialist-realism"[75] was their confinement to control and discipline to a considerable degree. The Party, on the contrary, regarded the doctrine of socialist-realism as a medium of bringing the artists and the cultural producers in line with people's aspirations. Needless to say, the questions pertaining to the institutional formation and artistic practice of socialist-realism often escape a coherent definition. More important, I argue, is to integrate socialist-realism within the distinct socialist "economy of truth". For example, in the Agitprop's officials' approach, socialist-realism designated both a preoccupation with social utility and a negation of the artistic forms not pursuing the "search for truth": "What are we asking the writer for? We ask the writer to defend the interest of the working class and by this we mean that we assign the writer the mission of bringing reality, which has been for so long masked by the class enemy, to life … our help is effective only if we successfully persuade the writer of the rightfulness of our approach."[76]

[75] Evgeny Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist-Realism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 3-15.
[76] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 276; Corin Grosu's speech at the Agitprop's board meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.

In effect, the cultural supervisors did not value a cultural product according to its aesthetic value, but according to the value it offered to the social life. As understood by the Agitprop, one could gauge whether the artistic standards and values successfully expressed themselves politically by the extent to which they permeated the everyday life of the people: "we cannot at the same time be communists and impressionists! … it is absolutely necessary to instil the Leninist principles in people's minds through properly crafted artistic products."[77] The head of the Agitprop also argued along these lines: "the enlightenment of the masses may sound great in theory, but without the organizational and creative force of the Party in overseeing the theatres, cinema theatres, artistic performances, etc., we will come up with products lacking a solid ideological content, therefore flawed and harmful."[78]

Only the intervention of the supervisors in the creative process could guarantee the overcoming of the subjective ideological misinterpretations of the producers. According to Roller, the Agitprop's leading role in stirring the artists towards creating socialist works started with ideological regulation:

> We do not have to wait passively for the writer to come to us with his work… we are not spectators in the artistic creative process but an active part of it … thus our role is to direct [ideologically] the creative process and to be aware of what [kind of cultural products] we need at certain times … we cannot position ourselves at the end of the creative process and wait for what will be published, but we must direct the process by

[77] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 6/1948, 36; Leonte Răutu's speech at a meeting of the Sector for Arts and Culture, 4 February 1948.
[78] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 69/1951, 5; Iosif Chișinevski's speech at an Agitprop board meeting. - years

> the guidance we offer. This is not to say that the writer cannot take personal initiatives but, at the same time, we must highlight that the creation process must be directed by us.[79]

By coordinating the Party-state cultural bureaucracy, the Agitprop continuously scrutinized and synchronized the work of the cultural agencies. However, to exercise intellectual and moral leadership, namely to institutionalize the commitment to socialist values in the worldview of its practitioners, a specific kind of consensus was required. Yet, it was not simply a matter of power imposed from above: "the point is not to impose certain topics onto a writer, but to help the writer we have to co-opt him to our politics."[80]

In so doing, the work of the Agitprop fell beyond interdiction and blunt imposition. Indeed, the Agitprop attempted not to restrain but to reshape artistic creativity. A cultural producer, according to Roller, "should not strive to become an academic but a socialist."[81] In meetings, its leaders often calibrated their rhetoric to mark a distinction between guidance in cultural production and manifest "despotic interventionism:" "it was more than once that our Sector for Arts and Culture had treated the writers in a despotic manner … but we have to make sure that this is a residue of the past … if we have achieved relatively weak

[79] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 226; Nicolae Moraru's report on the activity of the Ministry of Arts, 2 August 1948.
[80] Ibid., 276; Mihail Roller's speech at the Agitprop's board meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.
[81] Ibid., 268.

results in culture it is also because, too often, the writers who are with us were not encouraged but treated dictatorially."[82]

Clearly, much of the attention paid to cultural producers during the late 1940s and early 1950s was repressive. Yet, not all the attention was repressive since privileges and material rewards offset many constraints. Being a patron of cultural life also empowered the Agitprop to plan various welfare programs on behalf of cultural producers. For example, in 1952 when the supervisors of the central Agitprop criticized the writers from Mureș county for the incorporation of the Party-line, they simultaneously expressed satisfaction regarding the "quality of life of the artists." The "well-supplied food market of the city," and the fact that "all leading artists in the city have proper accommodation and workshops,"[83] was self-reassuring for the Agitprop: as long as the material conditions for creation were provided, the artists would improve.[84]

However loosely the supervisors may have referred to "creativity," they saw it as inseparable from the broad material social processes. In accordance with the Marxist principle that "social being determines consciousness," the Agitprop developed a matching rhetoric to overcome the "social isolation" of the cultural producer. It proclaimed the "need to bridge the gap between life and art" and the "demand that the artist should be trundled [*tăvălit*] through life": "it

[82] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 298; Petre Iosif's speech at the Agitprop's board meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.
[83] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 12/1950 (52), 112; Agitprop report on the activity of the Mureș Country Regional Party Committee in the problems of arts and literature.
[84] For instance, the Agitprop estimated that forty out of four hundred members of the Romanian Writers' Union in 1949 were "communist writers". The officials relied on creative unions to assist the artists' work, but also established generous rewards systems (ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Secția PA, file 6/1948, 26; board meeting, 4 February 1948).

is not enough to guide the authors … the authors themselves must develop their own knowledge of social life."[85]

As cultural life began to be tied to factories, artists came into unprecedented contact with ordinary people. Groups of organized writers went to factories and construction sites in order to "connect with the people" and bring poetry and novel readings, and musical performances – "the new fruits of culture" to the workers. For example, in 1948 the Agitprop organized group visits of writers, painters, sculptors and composers to the Bumbești-Livezeni railway site, the first major construction project undertaken after the proclamation of the republic.[86] Officially named "artists' brigades" embarked on three-month tours with the mission to produce significant collective contributions to the emerging socialist-realist body of literature. In a similar vein, they were expected to inspire workers as well as help increase work productivity and give a voice to the workers' cultural aspirations by exposing the latter to culture. The artists were both teachers and chroniclers testifying for the success of the new socialist society. Indeed these artists' excursions to construction sites developed into "collective authorship" experiments eagerly monitored by the Agitprop's supervisors.

At an assessment session at the Agitprop, Maria Banuș, a young communist poet recently returned from a spell in a writers' brigade, described her experience at a construction site in the Northern part of Romania:

[85] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Secția PA, file 6/1948, 271; Mihail Novicov's speech at an Agitprop board meeting.
[86] The railway was being built to connect Transylvania to Wallachia. See ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 280-82; Maria Banuș' speech at an Agitprop meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.

> When I was lodged at Salva Vișeu [a railway development], I struggled with a writer's block … but, one day, passing by a very poor village I came across a group of children who were singing the Internationale … the unexpected encounter impressed me so much that I was finally able to write a poem … then I forwarded the poem to comrade Novicov [a literary instructor at the Agitprop] … He told me: the poem is not bad, but I cannot see where the Party stands in it … You are talking about the Internationale as if it existed in a vacuum, I cannot see the Party anywhere in it … I went home and I started to think that comrade Novicov was right, I was not a good communist, I did not feel the way a good communist would have felt.[87]

Banuș' commitement to personal improvement pleased the supervisors, who again showed that disciplining was not an end in itself: "the help we offer to authors is effective only when their work is at an early stage … It is not only about ideological clarification … If the work is at an advanced stage, we cannot offer effective help anymore."[88] As an Agitprop supervisor was proud to point out, "the Party is sharp-eyed and warm-hearted."[89]

Joining in factory visits or other forms of socializing with the workers did not always produce the results that the Agitprop expected. In order to be published the authors also learnt how to manipulate the system in their favour

[87] Ibid., 285.
[88] Ibid., 291, 295-6; Marcel Breslașu's speech at the Agitprop's board meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.
[89] Ibid., 291; Cicerone Theodorescu's speech at the Agitprop's board meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.

and thus they often relied on “proper language” (images, catch phrases) and a ritualistic syntax (sequences of events). Of course, the supervisors were aware of such strategies, and took them as evidence of the weak ideological commitment of the author. The Agitprop routinely fastened upon flaws such as the portraying of “youngsters who do not resemble human beings,” of “human beings who no do suffer, do not love, do not express any feelings,” or on “fragmented composition,” to name only a few of them. “The reader cannot establish any connection with such characters,” the cultural supervisors alleged.[90]

The Agitprop work also went beyond the supervising of the established cultural producers to focus on the proletarianizing of the milieu of the cultural producers. The agency conducted searches for “proletarian talent” in factories and on construction sites across the country. Selected candidates were enrolled in Party schools or allocated to the agencies of cultural bureaucracy, such as newspapers, magazines, publishing houses etc., whilst the most gifted received scholarships to the recently opened Mihai Eminescu School of Literature to study to become writers. The recruitment process was directed by the local Agitprops in cooperation with the factory trade unions, literary magazines, and members of the writer’s union. Disruptions in recruitment often led the central Agitprop to hold the local administrators responsible.

For example, in late 1948 the Agitprop branch recruited a worker-poet in one of the city’s factories. The local authorities prepared him for a trip to

[90] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 34/1952, 84; transcript of a board meeting, March 1952.

Bucharest where he was expected to recite from his poems at an Agitprop board session. But filled with the day's political slogans, his poems failed to impress the audience formed of professional writers and Party cultural supervisors. Moreover, when asked about the political goals of his poems, the author was barely able to make sense of the large-scale celebrations he referred to in his poems, such as May Day or the October Revolution.[91] A personal poem, however, drew the attention of the board. It was not built on celebratory clichés but it conveyed the experience of the author's first day of work at the factory. The board's enthusiasm was further rewarded with a series of similar poems which the author read off a notebook he pulled out of his coat's pocket. Praised highly for his "love for the factory" and "originality," the worker-poet received a job offer in Bucharest, whilst the local Agitprop branch was reprimanded. As it turned out, it was a local Agitprop supervisor who instructed the young poet to focus on poems saturated with standard formulations at the expense of his more personal ones.[92]

The professional trajectory of a journalist from *Scânteia* whom I spoke to during my research further illustrates the Agitprop's involvement in promoting and educating cadres of proletarian writers. Of a modest background, Ilie Tănăsache started working as an unskilled labourer at the Romanian Railway Depot in the city of Galați. During training for an apprenticeship, Tănăsache was made leader of a youth brigade and given the task to persuade his colleagues to read from the new titles of the Party's publishing house. A fellow colleague, a practising boxer with no previous interest in reading,

[91] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 9/1948, 273; Asia Moraru's speech at the Agitprop's board meeting with the representatives of the writers, artists, and journalists, 29 November 1948.
[92] Ibid.

accepted Tănăsache's challenge to read Boris Polevoi's socialist-realist novel *A Hot Department* (Moscow, 1939). According to Tănăsache's recollection, his colleague was so caught in the reading that he stayed up all night to finish the novel. The next day at work, all he could talk about was Polevoi's book.

The colleague's conversion to reading socialist literature coincided with a literary contest for workers hosted by the city's newspaper. Tănăsache decided to take part in it and his reportage presenting his colleague's pedagogical encounter with culture won the prize for the best piece written by a newspaper correspondent.[93] Tănăsache's life unexpectedly changed. The newspaper made him a permanent correspondent and then offered him a full-time job as a journalist. During the next few years he would climb the ranks to become the editor-in-chief of the newspaper and later an investigative journalist with *Scânteia*.[94]

By restructuring the traditional high culture and making it available to large audiences, the Agitprop posited it as a tool of both human elevation and transformation. Under the postwar socialist experiment, cultural production was reoriented towards the workers, yet this refocus also institutionalized the consumption of culture as a daily obligation for the worker. The extensive apparatus of Agitprop also oversaw how culture was transmitted to the masses. In periodic meetings with state officials across the cultural offices, the Agitprop discussed the public's responses to different films, books, and theatrical

[93] Discussion with Tănasache, 6 July 2014.
[94] Ibid.

performances. At the same time it would send for publication articles intended to assist the reader in the political understanding of certain cultural products.

Nevertheless, the Agitprop's officials wanted to ensure that the political goal of the cultural construction, to turn workers into communists, was also accomplished. However, they came to realize that some of the canonical socialist-realist works did not attract a great deal of attention among workers. For example, in 1951, the Agitprop reacted bitterly when it learnt from the Ministry of Culture that the "films with high ideological content drew small audiences in the large industrial cities."[95] Nor did the most famous socialist-realist novel of the time, *Drum fără Pulbere* (Road Without Dust) receive a better reception. The novel portraying the transformative project of the Danube-Black Sea Canal was "received with indifference, not to say hostility," an internal report of Agitprop highlighted.[96] The Agitprop used to blame not the ideological quality of such products but the state agencies in charge with the advancement of culture.

Conclusion

The RCP insisted that the Party-state political organization would overturn the cultural discrepancies caused by the elite culture/mass culture dichotomy. Its cultural policies carried out the promise that the benefits of culture would reach all people. Yet, the Party leaders did not strive for achieving this objective by

[95] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 6/1951, 9; report of the Minister of Culture, Eduard Mezincescu, 23 January 1951.
[96] Ibid., 17; report of the Sector for Literature and Arts, 9 February 1951.

lowering high culture's aesthetic quality. At stake was rather to elevate popular taste to match the level of high culture.[97] The Party-state administration of the cultural production and distribution assigned the cultural producers a privileged place in forming and informing human subjectivities.[98] If culture did not reach the masses, then the Party would fail to transform the people into agents of socialist transformation. In the powerful words of one of the deputies of the Agitprop, Ofelia Manole, "we want to change the whole society as we want to change the political, economic, and social structures of society. But in doing this we have to prioritize the creation of suitable people for society. We cannot build a new world without creating the new man."[99]

In the collective writing project mobilized by the socialist culture, the individual authorship often lost ground to diverse forms of co-authorship. The literary critic, the reader, and perhaps, foremost, the cultural supervisor came to be involved at different stages in the cultural production. The authors have traditionally been considered as occupying the most precarious position in the system, but often the critics and the cultural supervisors were equally vulnerable.

Placing himself in the position of a virtual reader, the literary critic also had an influential contribution to the shaping of the socialist cultural product. Nicolae Novicov, a literary critic and instructor of the Agitprop asserted that: "[our critique] should not be beating around the bush … it should check whether [a work] says the truth; but that truth which is linked to the present, the truth

[97] Carol S. Lilly, *Ideology and Rhetoric in Communist Yugoslavia, 1944-1953. Power and Persuasion* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 94.
[98] Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 17.
[99] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 15/1950, 45; report of the Sector for Literature and Arts, May 1950.

which is valid today, our truth … if the intention of the author is genuinely good, but it cannot be transmitted, then the value of a work is much diminished… this is an important aspect of the literary critique."[100]

One can argue that before postmodernist literary critics re-theorized the critic and the reader as virtually co-authors, the revolutionary socialist-realist theory had already offered a practical dimension of co-authorship. Because the credibility of the "positive hero" as a transmitter of socialist culture depended on the writer's transformation into a new person, the Party's supervisors and literary critics often acted as alter-egos of the writers.

The Agitprop did not just censor or restrict cultural production. Instead, it built a far-reaching cultural apparatus which planned the cultural production, co-opted artists and organized audiences. The cultural experiment conducted by the Party-state was not primarily based on "negative" practices, such as formal censorship. More importantly, in its attempt to organize and construct a common sense of a socialist reality, it had a significant productive dimension. As we will explore in the next chapter, censorship and censors represented just another level of oversight.

[100] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 6/1948, 272; Mihail Novicov's speech.

Chapter 3. "Comrades, We Are Well on Our Way to Take Censorship to a Superior Level": The Ambiguities of Institutional Communist Censorship

The communist "culture state" developed a vast web of institutional structures to turn the cultural producers into both subjects and objects of the new socialist culture. The Agitprop possessed nearly complete authority to ideologically monitor the cultural production of the Ministry of Culture, various creative unions and publishing houses, trade unions, and the Radio Station. Because the state culture was thought to express the people's latent cultural productivity, it was assumed that it would be correctly consumed. In the words of an Agitprop official writing in *Contemporanul,* "our Party is forging a forward-looking working-class culture … [unlike] the bourgeoisie which kept science, literature and the arts away from the people and from its aspirations."[1]

In a cultural system decidedly oriented towards production, the state censorship offered an additional level of supervision. Characteristically, the General Directorate for Press and Printed Materials (GDPPM) was not designed as an ideological-advisory board for the media and cultural institutions, but operated as a government agency of restrictive control ideologically subordinated to the Agitprop. As one of the officials of the censorial agency explained at an internal meeting, the institutional censorship did "not deal with

[1] Pavel Țugui, "Partidul Făurește o Cultura Înaintată," *Contemporanul,* 4 May, 1951.

the artistic realization but with the political rightfulness of a manuscript."[2] However, he admitted, "the artistic realization itself could be a political problem too … like, for instance, when a novel which explores the socialist transformation of agriculture is poorly written, this novel becomes a political issue because it does not serve the collectivization campaign."[3] As we will see later in the chapter, such paradoxes not only problematized the institutional boundaries of formal censorship, but they also often rendered its work and institutional jurisdiction ambiguous in practice.

To be clear, I am not arguing that censorship, in its institutional dimension, operated as a purely negative, thus repressive force. Parts of its workings had always been "productive" by helping to create, partly deliberately, partly circumstantially, a consensus on what was socially and politically acceptable. In the broad context of the socialist culture, censorship also acted in tandem with creativity: not only as a reason and precondition for it, but also as an agent of creativity (self-censorship).

It would be counterproductive, indeed impossible, to understand how communist censorship functioned if the analysis were to privilege the Party-state's thirst for power for the sake of power. In using the potential of the modern administrative state apparatus for erecting a cultural state, the Party-state posited itself as the antithesis of the bourgeois type of politics. Cultural creativity

[2] Arhivele Naționale ale României (hereafter ANR), Fond Comitetul pentru Presă și Tipărituri (hereafter CPT), file 24/1957, 27; report of the Directorate for Literature covering the period October to December 1957.
[3] ANR, Fond CPT, file 24/1957, 27; report of the Directorate for Literature covering the period October to December 1957.

mattered but only to the extent to which it helped bring about a new society and polity.

The opening of the former communist party archives offers both an excellent opportunity to gain insight into the functioning of the state censorial mechanism – often subject to more mythologization than analysis – and the possibility to place the censorial body on an historical continuum. Not only does it offer a practitioner's perspective, but it also offers an invaluable window into the cultural transformation of the first decade of communist rule.[4] Of course, I further argue, in speaking of censorship we should transcend its bureaucratic undertakings and consider the whole context of the state-directed process of cultural production and distribution. A focus on the Romanian communist censorial agency – the GDPPM in the first decade of its existence – offers a new lens for the analysis of what is traditionally considered, in the literature, as the most important aspect of the cultural policy, the Party-state control of cultural sphere.

I will argue that after the war the official censorial body, building on the previous interwar experience, embarked on an ambitious program to monitor and regulate the various media outlets and literary forums. Its "proscriptive" agenda, however, was complemented by a "productive" one, as the censorial agency's mission went beyond correction and standardization to the all-encompassing goal to educate the masses in the new orthodoxies and contribute to the creation of the communist new man. Progress in both directions, however,

[4] Dominic Boyer, "Censorship as a Vocation: The Institutions, Practices, and Cultural Logic of Media Control in the German Democratic Republic," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (2003): 514.

was impeded by the structure of the censorial agency itself and its position in the cultural mechanism. Long before self-censorship or external opposition made censorship either obsolete or ineffective, the tenuous relation between rival communist cultural organizations with overlapping competencies, the ambiguity of the censors' tasks, and their occasionally conflicting goals considerably limited the reach and efficiency of censorship.

Rituals of Censorship: "From an Old Propaganda Tool to a State Body of the Proletarian Dictatorship"

The GDPPM was established in May 1949 in an attempt to coordinate and centralize the censorial functions of the state, previously divided between a cross-ministerial network of agencies. Like other institutions of the cultural system, the censorship agency drew extensively on practices rooted in its prewar tradition. The centralized institutional structures for overseeing the cultural and informational sphere were central to the post-First World War nation-building process and the wartime propaganda and surveillance. Thus, they predated the communists.

The first constitution of Greater Romania (1923) was generous in proclaiming the defence of civil liberties and freedom of expression. It contained provisions forbidding any form of prophylactic censorship, such as, for example, the state's attempts towards silencing the media.[5] In practice, however, the

[5] Law no, 282,Constituția României, *Monitorul Oficial,* 29 March, 1923.

control of the printed word was exercised by the state in both post- and pre-publication forms. Built on the structure of the Ministry of the Interior's Press Agency, the first unified censorial body, the Directorate for Press, was set up in 1926. During the interwar period, the Directorate for Press found itself under the jurisdiction of several ministries, such as the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Council of Ministers but its main functions remained largely the same: the supervision of foreign publications and the regulation of the domestic book market and press.[6]

Predicated on a nationalist myth of territory, Greater Romania envisaged itself as a homogenous ethnic state.[7] For its "progressive and normal development", an organic relationship with the public sphere was key. The authorities drew heavily on the cultural vocabulary of biopolitics, biologization of national belonging, and a self-perceived unfinished ethnic revolution in their definition of the "state interest."

In defining the acceptable, they defined the undesirable too. The "desirable" publications would, ideally, feature "nothing offensive or injurious to the Romanian people or state."[8] On the other hand, it was common for censors to adopt a harsh line in dealing with socialist literature and other "undesirable" literature, constructed as "acts of disrespect towards the nation and its ruling

[6] Marian Petcu, *Puterea si Cultura. O Istorie a Cenzurii* (Iași: Polirom, 1999), 132-33.
[7] The broad consensus across the political spectrum was that the Romanian nation had special rights in relation to the territory it inhabited. In repairing the damage of the past, the nation needed protection from corrupting political influences. See Vladimir Solonari, *Purifying the Nation. Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Nazi-Allied Romania* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 18-19.
[8] ANR, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Naționale (hereafter MPN), file 2/1924, 13; a censor's report submitted to the head of the Directorate for Press, 20 September 924.

elite."[9] In the newly acquired provinces, where a state of siege was proclaimed for extended periods of time, the military tribunals and courts administrated both the daily press censorship and a licencing system, as well as assuming pre-publication censorial powers. They could close down newspapers and withdraw undesirable books, and granted special licences for newspaper articles.[10]

By and large, two major paradigms of governmental censorship operated. First, to defend the state both at home and abroad, censorship supressed what was deemed as damaging to the "state interest". Second, by restricting public access to various media products and books, censorship assumed a role in the moral education of society. In other words, censorship was wielded when, by cultivating a disharmony between political culture and public culture, the media was perceived as having a potentially dangerous influence on the nation. The interwar Directorate for Press developed practices later adopted and refined by the communist censorship agency: the licensing of all foreign publications, such as newspapers, books, magazines, and the editing and licencing of domestic publications. When these practices fell short of expectations, the authorities relied on the judicial process to take journalists and authors to court. A Directorate for Press review report on "the press and political offences committed by journalists pertaining to the ethnic minorities from Transylvania" is also indicative of the level of harshness displayed by the

[9] ANR, Fond MPN, file 14/ 1926-38, 36-37; letter of the head of the Directorate for Press to the Minister of National Defense, 20 January 1934.
[10] During the interwar period the state of siege was only briefly suspended by the first National Peasant Government in 1930, to be reinstated in 1933 and again in 1938, when King Carol II assumed dictatorial powers. For example, Bessarabia had been under martial law since its annexation in 1918 and given the purportedly "Bolshevik menace" and internal vulnerabilities, the state of siege was never to be entirely suspended in the province. But as much as it was a reaction to external threats such as the Bolshevik revolution and the irredentism of neighbouring states, the state of siege was a preferred disciplinary and powerful tool in dealing with internal disturbances labelled conveniently as "socialist agitation and propaganda".

authorities. Between 1919 and 1934, the report reads, the authorities investigated 308 alleged "agitations against the unity of the state" and handed final convictions to 314 journalists, that is, to almost 60% of those investigated.[11]

The fast-paced decline of the already feeble democratic experiment in the 1930s abruptly moved the country towards far-right politics.[12] In 1938, King Carol II proclaimed a royal dictatorship by disbanding the institutions of the parliamentary system and by abolishing the old Constitution of 1923. Echoing the fascist turn in Europe, the King outlawed all political parties and allowed the existence only of his own mass party, the National Renaissance Front (*Frontul Renasterii Nationale*).[13] In parallel, steps towards the monopolization of the mass media and cultural production were also taken. The cohabitation between a single party and the state administration institutionalized new techniques of surveillance and control. For a tighter calibration of the media message alongside propaganda, a General Directorate for Press and Propaganda was established in March 1938 under the jurisdiction of the Council of Ministries. It unified the former Directorate of Press, the Radio Station, the newswire agency, Rador, and the Directorate for Cinematography.[14]

When the war broke out, the newly set-up Ministry of Propaganda incorporated both the propagandistic and censorial structures.[15] It became

[11] ANR, Fond MPN, file 285/1934, 2-5; report about the political offences committed by journalists from Transylvania pertaining to ethnic minorities during the period between June 1919 and 1 August 1934.
[12] Keith Hitchins, *Rumania, 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 416.
[13] Ibid., 423.
[14] Decree-Law no. 3599, *Monitorul Oficial,* 11 March, 1938.
[15] Mioara Anton, *Propagandă și Război. Campania din Est, 1941-44* (București: Tritonic, 2007), 67.

instrumental in the tightening of press monitoring, to the extent that only the news compiled and distributed by the central newswire agency could be published. Prior to publication, newspapers were assessed for ideological and political errors by commissions set up in ministries.[16]

More radical practices of control, such as the daily press advisories (*normativul*), further tied the media to the government. Stretching from instructions requiring the media to prioritize or avoid certain topics, to doctored news articles compiled by the General Directorate for Press, the advisories constituted both orders and guidelines for the media.[17] The censorial body often worked in concert with the similarly chartered military censorship to implement the government advisories in practice.[18]

During the war, the mass media representatives were required to attend periodical review sessions at the Ministry of Propaganda. In a striking similarity with the later practices of the communist censorship, the General Directorate for Press compiled periodical reports to assess how newspapers were complying with the official advisories.[19] Thus, the publishing became inextricably linked to the state. Such practices illustrate the wartime government's political ethos to

[16] For example, the Ministry of Interior demanded a newspaper remove from its front page a picture portraying a group of people in top hats: "no other communist propagandistic pictures like these must be allowed from now on" (it implied that the top hat might be read as a critique of the upper class). Cited in Ioan Lacustă, *Cenzura Veghează, 1937-1939* (București: Curtea Veche, 2007), 95.
[17] For example, an advisory from 19 February 1939 read: "All newspapers are obliged to publish daily until 27 February the joint statement of the bishops of Transylvania … the bishops' signatures on the statement must appear clear on the left and on the right of the first page". Cited in Lacustă, 235.
[18] When censorships were ordered after the newspapers' issues had been finished, in lieu of the purged articles the published issues would feature rectangular black boxes. See Alexandru Baciu, *Din Însemnările unui Secretar de Redacție. Pagini de Jurnal, 1943-1978* (București: Cartea Românească, 1997), 27.
[19] ANR, Fond MPN, file 385/1938-43, 84-85; report of the General Directorate for Press for the period 6 September 1940-15 August 1941.

shape the boundaries of the people's political thinking and secure their loyalty. But in conjunction with this use of propaganda they also redefined the social role of the media as an appendix of the government.

In the aftermath of 23 August 1944, the censorship agency reported to multiple ministries, from the Ministry of Propaganda (1945), to the Ministry of Information (1946), and the Ministry of Arts and Information (1948).[20] However, until the Allied Commission of Control (ACC) was disbanded in September 1947 following the Paris Peace Treaties, the Directorate for Press shared censorial competencies with other agencies. Local censorship offices, headed by county prefects, would completely merge with the Directorate for Press only in late 1946, while a censorial office, administrated by the Allied (Soviet) High Command, also functioned on the basis of the Armistice Agreement. The latter issued all publication licences, approved films and artistic performances, and assumed unrestricted post-publication powers to censor and to withdraw and suspend licences.[21]

After the proclamation of the Republic on 30 December 1947, the Directorate for Press was made part of a larger institutional reconfiguration which integrated the cultural bureaucracy in the dualistic Party-state system. As a governmental agency under the aegis of the Council of Ministers, the new GDPPM was created in 1949 to centralize the censorship of the media. By

[20] See Decree-Law no. 462 for the Disbanding of the Minister of National Propaganda, *Monitorul Oficial,* part I, no. 218, 21 September 1944; Decree-Law for the Re-Establishment of the Ministry of National Propaganda, *Monitorul Oficial,* 24 March, 1945.
[21] The Soviet-led Allied High Command extended its protection to the RCP publications and during the political struggles between the RCP and the traditional parties would often censor the opposition's publications. See Mihaela Teodor, *Anatomia Cenzurii. Comunizarea Presei din România, 1944-1947* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2012), 47-50.

coordinating all censorial activities, the GDPPM transcended the Party-state dualism to become a major player in the cultural sphere. Yet, given its authority as a regulatory body to oversee the media and cultural production, it did not have jurisdiction in ideological counselling. In the words of one of the deputies, the GDPPM was "a state agency which oversees the activity of agencies and institutions with ideological character. Under no circumstances should it have a guiding role."[22]

Reflecting on the lessons of the Paris Commune of 1871, Marx warned "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes. The political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political instrument of their emancipation."[23] One can see the almost verbatim revamping of the wartime organizational design as confirming Marx's prediction. Although the official reports highlighted a purportedly transformative dimension of the censorial apparatus, "a transformation from an old instrument of propaganda into a state organ of proletarian dictatorship," in practice the transformation was less remarkable. However, I do not argue that the communist regime was not ideologically distinct in the way it engaged in censorship and other surveillance practices. Due to their revolutionary ideology, the communists were more prone to employ a more drastic censorship at times. Yet, far from marking a break with the interwar tradition, the communist power, as Peter Holquist has written of the Russian

[22] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1949, 8; internal decree issued by the GDPPM's Collegium, 23 September 1953.
[23] Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France," in *Writings on the Paris Commune,* ed. H. Draper (London: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 196.

Revolution, "represented only the most forceful and successful implementation of the new view of politics."[24]

In the broad context of cultural revolution, the inherited institutional design rather limited the social transformative aims of the censorial body. Instead of the vehicle for social transformation communists so often held it to be, the censorial body was itself part of what needed to be transformed.

How Institutional Censorship Functioned

According to its charter, the communist censorial agency was established to oversee and regulate all printed publications and printing distribution licensing system.[25] In the early 1950s the GDPPM implemented censorship through four major directorates. The Directorate for the Central Press and Periodical Publications and the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces oversaw the central and provincial press, the Official Gazette, as well as the Radio Station's news bulletins. Foreign literature, such as newspapers, books, and academic journals, were censored and licenced by the Sub-Directorate for Foreign Press. The fourth directorate, the Directorate for Printed Materials, supervised the book market through its two sub-directorates, the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing and the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervision. Whilst the latter sub-directorate dealt primarily with the literature banned by the de-fascization laws, the former

[24] Peter Holquist, "What's So Revolutionary about the Russian Revolution? State Practices and the New-Style Politics, 1914-21," in *Russian Modernity. Politics, Knowledge, Practices*, eds. David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 91.
[25] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1950, 57-58; copy of the decree no. 218/20 May 1949 for the establishment of the GDPPM.

licensed the new literary production.[26] In 1952 the GDPPM was endowed with new powers which extended its authority over all radio programs, public exhibitions, museums, and cinemas.[27]

By 1954, the GDPPM cemented its position in the administration of the publishing market.[28] To cope with the booming state cultural production, the officials broadened the jurisdiction of the censor's office, whilst implementing a censorial system based on the censor's specialization by topic expertise. Before the 1954 changes, the censors within the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing fulfilled their tasks by working in rotating shifts. The new system introduced specialist subjects such as book licensing, and control of the libraries and bookshops.[29] Consequently, it was expected that the institutional censorship would achieve a more centralized and more geographically uniform character.

Like all the other institutions belonging to the cultural bureaucracy, state censorship was subject to planning and standardized guidelines. But, unlike them, its activity was top secret. A public admission of censorship not only would have violated the 1948 and 1952 constitutions (they proclaimed the freedom of the press and free speech),[30] but it would have also questioned the Party's ability to act as a cultural mediator in the interest of the people. Riddled

[26] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1949, 5-21; workplan highlighting the duties of the GDPPM's directorates and offices, June 1949. See also ANR, Fond CPT, file 10/1949, 2-3; copy of the decree 461/28 May 1951.
[27] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1952, 19-21; the GDPPM's organizational structure in 1952.
[28] Three "sectors" – the Press, the Book, and the Propaganda and Visual Agitation – each headed by a deputy, took over the traditional directorates. At the same time, a new Directorate for Staff Training and Supervision was established to oversee the ideological education of the censors. See ANR, Fond CPT, file 10/1949, 18-21; copy of the decree no. 267/1954 issued by the Council of Ministries.
[29] Ibid.
[30] For the 1948 Constitution see *Monitorul Oficial*, no. 87 bis, 13 April, 1948; for the 1952 Constitution see *Buletinul Oficial*, no. 1, 27 September, 1952.

with such tensions, the work of the censorship board was officially formulated in terms of "regulation," "overseeing," and "advisories," rather than plain interdictory language.

In practice, neither the authors nor the publishers were permitted to discuss their submissions or interact in any way with the censors. Abstract and impersonal, censorship had to express the commitment of a conscious cultural producer, not a personal affair. The officials feared that the development of interpersonal relations between censors and producers would have threatened the integrity of the censorial act. Thus, inter-institutional communication was exclusively carried out by the heads of the directorates, the deputies, and by the chief censor. After a publisher had submitted a manuscript, the censor's report was merely the first step in the censoring process. Censors would deliver their final report only after refining their ideological critique of the manuscript's weaknesses and omissions in informal meetings with senior censors. Upon approval, the report was finally forwarded to the publisher. During the process the author of the manuscript could neither intervene nor dispute the report.

Censoring a newspaper was as much a matter of political abilities as it was one of bureaucratic rigour. Censorship started with the censors checking the typesets. Before an issue went to press, another and final check-up was conducted at the printing house. To use the official terminology, the newspaper was "censored in page."[31] Time mattered too: the censors were expected to read

[31] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 280; monthly work report of the central office of the GDPPM, December 1950.

and proofread a newspaper in less than an hour and a half.[32] An error, be it ideological, political, spelling error, or a factual inaccuracy on the part of the censor could have significant consequences. In addition to exposing the censors to sanctions, the errors could also lead to newspaper issues being withdrawn from the market.[33]

The GDPPM central office in Bucharest set up uniform national standards and presided over a network of semi-autonomous local branches. At its most prominent directorate, the Directorate for Central Press and Periodical Publications, the censors monitored and licensed the press, radio news bulletins and programmes, the news bulletins of the state news agency (the Agerpres), advertisements, street posters, and various other printed materials.

The censors within the central agency divided their working time between the central office and their dedicated offices at the printing houses. To serve both as proof of accomplishment at work and educational material for fellow censors, the most important censorships were recorded in special registers. The encounters between journalists (especially *Scânteia's*) and censors at the printing presses, where the censors asked for last-minute changes, were often charged.

The Party's flagship newspaper, *Scânteia*, served as a crucible for the dissemination of the Party-line. By embodying the Leninist *dictum* – collective

[32] ANR, Fond CPT, file 18/1951, 153-55; minute of a meeting between the GDPPM, the Agerpres, and representative of journalists held at the Agitprop central office, 20 November 1951.

[33] For example, in September 1951, the authorities withdrew from the market two newspaper issues amounting to 250,000 (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 281; monthly work report of the GDPPM, December 1950).

propagandist, agitator, and organizer – it set the agenda for the entire press.[34] The censors themselves were required to read *Scânteia* as part of their ideological enlightenment. Given that *Scânteia* was recognized as an "authoritative organ" of the communist leadership, the censors found themselves caught in a paradox: assigned to censor the newspaper, in practice they merely checked it out for spelling errors and factual inaccuracies.[35] In the editorial offices of the central newspapers, well connected to political circles and sites for aspiring Party politicians, the censor's red pencil was often regarded as a personal offense.[36] Whereas the journalists denounced censorship as "inimical," the censors perceived their criticism as weakening the logic of the institutional censorial act.[37]

For example, in 1951, feeling humiliated by a journalist from the *Scânteia Tineretului* (The Youth's Spark), a censor petitioned to Iosif Ardeleanu, the censor chief. In his letter he complained about the mockery he suffered at the hands of the journalist whilst on his night shift at the galleys at the printing house. The censor reported that he was doing his routine work. Checking the next day's issue proof sheets, he ordered the copy-editor to remove parts of the text on the grounds that they revealed industrial production figures, which had recently been added to the regularly updated "secret lists" of the GDPPM. Infuriated, the copy-editor used mockery to rebut the censor. He

[34] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație (hereafter Secția PA) , file 1/1945, 102-104; speech by Ilie Zaharia at the first Party national conference on agitation and propaganda. See also Emilia Șercan, *Cultul Secretului. Mecanismele Cenzurii în Presa Comunistă* (Iași: Polirom, 2015), 45.
[35] ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1949, 5; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, September 1949.
[36] Conversation of the author with Pavel Tugui, 22 July 2013.
[37] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 150; minute of a meeting of the Directorate for the Central Press, 18 January 1952.

picked up a red pencil from the desk, handed it to the censor and ironically asked him to mark off the numeral "1946," a number chosen from the newspaper issue at random. "The numeral can be an industrial production figure too and, you know, it is deadly dangerous to let such figures pass into the printed issues", the copy-editor parroted the censor.[38] As the exchange intensified, the copy-editor reportedly went as far as calling the censorship agency a "bureaucratic state apparatus." Although the censor reported the incident to Ardeleanu claiming that it had undermined his authority at the printing press, the GDPPM could do little to vindicate him[39] Most likely, this was not an isolated incident within the Directorate for Central Press. It frustratingly exposed the limits of authority of the GDPPM as well as its ambivalent status as a state agency exercising political control.

Replicating the duties of the main office in Bucharest, the local branches in the provinces also supervised the press, the radio programmes, and the literary production. They functioned under the double jurisdiction of Bucharest's Directorate for the Press in the Provinces and of the local Party's regional branches.[40] To assert its authority over the local branches, the Bucharest Office

[38] ANR, Fond CTP, file 1/1951, 388; letter of the censor Tarnovschi Ludovic to Ardeleanu in which the author reported that he was disrespected by a journalist, 14 December 1951.
[39] When the censor's report ended up on Ardeleanu's desk, the censor chief called for immediate sanctions against the offender. The lack of any subsequent follow-ups in the archives deprives us of the outcome of the story. Yet, even if the story could have been reconstructed, it would have added little to the central aspect of it. Confrontations like this between censors and copy editors, we learn from the censor's petition, were by no means singular.
[40] In the cities without GDPPM offices the licences were granted by the local popular councils. (see ANR, Fond CTP, file 7/1951, 139; report compiled by an instructor of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, 11 December 1951). The local branches received powers to censor the printed materials yet no right to issue publication licences, which remained in the jurisdiction of the central branch (ANR, Fond CTP, file 14/1949, 14-22; minute of a GDPPM Collegium meeting, April 1950).

employed a variety of authoritative means, the most common one being the regular assessment of local censors' work.

Censorial interventions had to be approved, customarily via telephone, by the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces in Bucharest.[41] In addition, the local branches filed periodical reports to keep track of the most important censorial interventions, suggestions to editors, and forms of hostility or resistance to censorship.[42]

When the Bucharest censors conducted periodical inspections in the provinces, they evaluated the local censors' work against these reports.[43] The locals were paired with, and shadowed by, monitors from Bucharest as a means of having their ideological skills supervised and assessed. The supervising reports, almost without exception, criticized the poor political training of the local censors. For example, a report reviewing a two-month tour through twelve cities in the spring of 1951, worryingly concluded that "the work of censorship is not being taken as seriously as it should be taken."[44]

Because of limitations in terms of staff, the local branches lacked specialized offices. Thus, the local censors dealt with all aspects of the censoring process, from controlling the printing houses and checking the foreign literature,

[41] ANR, Fond CTP, file 14/1949, 14-22; minute of a GDPPM Collegium meeting, April 1950.
[42] ANR, Fond CTP, file 7/1951, 27; work report of the instructors of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, November 1951. In 1951 the GDPPM concluded that the regular work reports sent by the local branches were too "formalistic". As a consequence, the interval of submission was changed from one to three months (ANR, Fond CTP, file 16/1951, 30; memoranda sent by the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces to the local censorship branches, 26 April 1953).
[43] When the central office double-checked the Hungarian-language newspapers published in December 1951, it spotted 39 "political errors" and just over 100 stylistic errors. ANR, Fond CTP, file 20/1951, 19; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, December 1951.
[44] ANR, Fond CTP, file 2/1950, 9; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, May 1950.

to reading newspapers and literary magazines. Concerns in Bucharest regarding poor training in the provinces led to the decision not to award full authority over sensitive topics, such as the local literary reviews and radio scripts, to local branches. Instead, the central office used to double-check the censorships undertaken by its local censors (*post-control*).[45]

To build a professional expertise in censorship, the GDPPM established in 1952 a Directorate for Professional Training. The Directorate ran tutorials with censors and organized regular (usually quarterly) seminars with censors in Bucharest and multiagency meetings where censorial matters were discussed. For its role in training the censors, the censorial body administrators regarded the Directorate for Professional Training as pivotal in professionalizing the act of censorship. Yet, it was not until 1957 that the officials could claim to have established a body of professional censors. Whereas previously the censors organised the materials according to a system based on the frequency and types of publications (daily, periodical, book etc.), the new system ("professionalisation of censorship") assigned the publication to censors by topic.[46]

A third major directorate of the GDPPM, the Directorate for Foreign Publications, censored the daily foreign press, the foreign literature, the academic journals, and all the other various foreign publications, at the port of entry into the country. The censors delineated the foreign publications according to three rubrics. First, the literature considered as having "an outright or a

[45] ANR, Fond CTP, file 2/1952, 4-11; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, July 1952.
[46] ANR, Fond CPT, file 24/1957, 95-96; work report of the Directorate for Book Publishing, July 1957.

masked hostile line, anti-democratic, anti-communist, instigating to war," was classified under the "strictly prohibited" rubric. Second, when the censors decided that publications might occasionally touch upon, but not feature the topics prohibited by the first rubric, they would licence them as "secret." According to regulations, only the Council of Ministries could grant licenses to the strictly prohibited publications.[47]

Publications licenced as "secret" and "strictly prohibited" were barred from circulation. They were either stacked in special library repositories, or shipped to individuals and institutions who received prior special approval (usually granted for research purposes). The Directorate for Foreign Publications held the formal right to grant "special permission" to institutions and individuals, but, at times, informal agreements between high ranked academics and seniors from the Agitprop superseded its authority.

For example, in 1951, in a letter to Ardeleanu, a member of the Romanian Academy of Science claimed that, although an "authorized" subscriber to a scientific French magazine, he had not received the publication for five months in a row. As it turned out, the academic was not in possession of a formal GDPPM licence, but cited a verbal agreement with the head of the Agitprop: "I discussed the matter with comrade Răutu and he assured me that I should encounter no problems in receiving magazines from France and Belgium for the purpose of my research."[48] Ardeleanu had tacitly complied and

[47] ANR, Fond CPT, file 10/1949, 41-42; guidelines regarding the import of foreign press and publications, 15 March 1952.
[48] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1951, 119; letter of Mihail [Buduru] to Iosif Ardeleanu, 1951.

forwarded the letter to his deputy with the request to release the withheld issue. The handwritten note intimates that this was not an isolated case.[49]

Third, the only foreign publications exempted from licensing were those imported from the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc.[50] The reason was twofold. As publications from "fellow socialist countries" they were "credible" and "trusted". At the same time, a considerable degree of control had been achieved through editorial agreements with countries from the Eastern Bloc. For example, in November 1951, Romania concluded an editorial agreement with Hungary which established mutual assistance and the coordination of their editorial plans.[51]

By handling the pre-publication and post-publication mechanism, a fourth major directorate of GDPPM, the Directorate for Book Publishing, oversaw the book market. Its two main sub-directorates, the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing and the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervision, both licensed book manuscripts and conducted the purging of fascist literature, as defined in the de-fascization laws.[52]

Of course, book manuscripts had already undergone various forms of control and alterations before they finally reached the censor's desk. For instance, before it was included in the yearly editorial plan, a book proposal was

[49] Ibid., 119.
[50] ANR, Fond CPT, file 10/1949, 40; guidelines regarding the importation of foreign press and publications, 15 March 1952.
[51] For the text of the agreement see ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1951, 180-85; Agreement between the Romanian People's Republic and the Hungarian People's Republic Concerning the Coordination of the Editorial Process, 15 November 1951.
[52] Every printed material had to have two stamps of approval. One certified that the publication passed the censor – "approved for printing" (*bun de imprimat*) – while the second one gave the final clearance at the printing house, "approved for distribution" (*bun de difuzat*).

a matter of a double negotiation, first between the author and the publisher and then between the publisher and the Agitprop.[53] The Directorate for Book Publishing could neither review editorial plans nor intervene in the writing process. It could only asses the book manuscript in its final form. Alterations in content and form were negotiated only between publishers and the Agitprop's Sector for Literature. A part of the state publishing sector, including the Party's publishing house and the Romanian Academy, were exempted from sending manuscripts to the GDPPM. In these institutions the key editorial positions were controlled by members of the Central Committee, hence there was a high level of trust in them.[54]

The censors reviewed the manuscripts and the editorial plans of publishing houses according to internal guidelines which established boundaries of expertise and the reading pace.[55] The censors were required to keep up with a reading time, following which they were expected to write a report underlying the errors they spotted as well as the reasons for their censorial interventions. As a senior censor explained, in the censorial work there were two types of interventions, mandatory and comments. Whereas the mandatory interventions aimed to remove the "serious political-ideological errors," with comments censors would ask for textual improvements.[56] This classification was

[53] The editorial plan stated in advance the number of books to be published in the forthcoming year; therefore, the censors knew, for example, that in the third quarter of 1951 they would deal with 700 new titles coming in from publishers. ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 151; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing, October 1950.
[54] For example, in 1949 the Party's publishing house had its own internal censorship office, with censors provided by the GDPPM. After the office was disbanded, in early 1950s, the publishing house would no longer be subjected to GDPPM oversight. ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1949, 17; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, October 1949.
[55] For training purposes, the book manuscripts assigned to recently hired staff were also assessed by a second, more experienced, censor.
[56] ANR, Fond CPT, file 24/1953, 55; report of the GDPPM's Collegium, July 1953.

implemented to deter the censors' practice of distinguishing between "lesser" and "fuller" errors. "Such misguided distinctions," a senior censor pointed out, "render the act of censorship unstructured since one cannot distinguish between errors at all … it invites compromises which invites errors."[57] For example, in June 1952 the Directorate received for reviewing 520 manuscripts (books and brochures) which amounted to a reading volume of almost 80,000 pages. The censors made 148 annotations and demanded 120 censorships.[58]

On the basis of the censors' reports, the senior censors decided whether the publication would receive the license.[59] If corrections were required, the manuscript, together with a standardised form outlining the changes to be made, was returned to the publisher.[60] Yet, in practice, the censors often took a self-serving approach to censorship. They feared that failing to spot all political errors would result in disciplinary actions against them, so they censored whatever might have been regarded as suspicious.[61]

To ensure that only works deemed necessary for the spreading of socialist culture circulated required not only the establishment of a state system of print production but also the removal of the literature which might hamper this goal. The censors within the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising both

[57] ANR, Fond CPT, file 23/1952, 74; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing, November 1952.
[58] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 99-101; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing for the third quarter of the year 1952, June 1952.
[59] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 45; meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing, 2 September 1952.
[60] Liliana Corobca, *Controlul Cărții. Cenzura Literaturii în Regimul Comunist Din România* (București: Cartea Românească, 2014), 149-50.
[61] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 106; work report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing, 1 October-15 January 1952. The guidelines also required that a censor's stamp of approval be applied on the first fly leaf of a book, whilst in the case of pictures on the back of each picture (ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1953, resolution of Ardeleanu, December 1953).

built on and broadened the scope of the de-fascization legislation to include "[all books] which promote the rotten bourgeois culture … an ideological barrier which the working class must break down on its way towards socialism."[62] According to the GDPPM's guidelines for book purges, that meant "all printings with hostile and obsolete character."[63] Far from being distinctly communist, such practices built on an established interwar and wartime tradition. For example, only a few years before the communist book purges, the wartime Directorate for the Press had employed similar practices to target Jewish writers as well as films and theatrical performances starring Jewish actors.[64]

In the 1950s the GDPPM's control over the printing industry was more limited than it would later become. In particular, the censorship agency lacked power to actively meddle in the publishing industry. The GDPPM's sense of incomplete power over the state publishing system resulted in frequent complaints to the Agitprop about institutions disregarding the censorship protocols. For example, in late 1951, the GDPPM wrote to the Agitprop to complain about the institutional behaviour of the State Publishing House which, allegedly, printed materials without the censor's stamp of approval. Similar accusations were also levelled against the Agerpres, the state newswire agency. To reassert the GDPPM's authority, the Agitprop stepped in and called a multi-

[62] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1950, 25; report on the activity of the Directorate for Book Control, 20 September 1950.
[63] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1953, 20; guidelines for the classification, preservation, and circulation of the printed materials.
[64] Petcu, 154.

agency meeting at its main office. Both "offenders" were reprimanded for neglecting to respect the GDPPM's authority.[65]

This complex and elaborate mechanism of formal censorship was closely supervised by the Party's Agitprop agency. With resounding priority in all matters having a "Party character", the Agitprop had its own sectors for press, literature, and printed materials which provided regular instructions to the analogous departments of the GDPPM.[66] In meetings at the Agitprop office, through telephonic notes, and through written memos, the GDPPM received guidelines ranging from how to conduct an inspection of a large library, to advice on how to assess the censors' reports.[67]

The daily activities of the GDPPM and the Agitprop were even more intertwined in the provinces. The local branches of the GDPPM often shared buildings with the local Agitprops, whilst the latter also supervised the recruitment of censors.[68] As we will see in the next chapter, the censorship body's discontent with the recruitment process and with the part-time nature of the censorial work in the provinces would often lead to tensions with the Agitprop.

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[65] ANR, Fond CPT, file 18/1951, 25-33; meeting at the Agitprop central office between the GDPPM, the Book and Printing Distribution Agency, and the Agerpres, November 1951.
[66] To use institutional language, the Agitprop "oversaw how the Party-line was translated into practice by the GDPPM" (ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1950, 33-34; the Agitprop charter).
[67] ANR, Fond CPT, file 50/1951; Agitprop's instructions about how to conduct inspections of libraries, 15 May 1952.
[68] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1949, 8-9; report on the activity of the GDPPM for the period 1 July-1October 1949; ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 282; report on the activity of the GDPPM for the year 1950, December 1950.

However, as the next section of this chapter illustrates, given its lack of systematic power, the GDPPM's influence in the publishing system remained largely a negative one.

Modes of Restrictive Control

The example of the newspaper copy-editor who ridiculed the arbitrariness of censorship's taboos can be seen as more than a conflict over symbolic status in the state publishing sphere. The incident also draws attention to the limits of authority and effectiveness of the formal censorship mechanism. The censorial act, like all state acts, can be performed only by people in a recognized relationship with the "official". To be effective, the censorial act has to materialise in a dual dimension – as a disciplinary set of norms and formal regulations (objective dimension) and in "things and minds", in the processes which permeate and mediate the mental structures and identity (subjective dimension).[69]

The restrictive control of the GDPPM focused primarily on the circulation of information. We have already seen in the previous chapter how, at the infrastructural level, the media and the publishing system were reconfigured into a system of centralized production and distribution. In order to advance the development of the socialist culture, a cultural project had to have social utility. The Agitprop coordinated the institutions of the cultural

[69] Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989-1992,* trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 35.

bureaucracy and acted as the Party's authority in defining aesthetic and professional standards, as well as the ideological nature of a cultural product.

The cultural system was designed to ensure the realization of cultural products deemed necessary, whilst excluding those deemed harmful. Yet, the GDPPM's position was not designed to be at the "productive end": "it is essential that the censors understand that we are not an institution which guide the newspapers, but an institution which reviews the newspapers to prevent errors."[70] The head of the Directorate for Book Publishing made a similar remark: "let us not forget that we are defending our state … we are soldiers who defend the state secret and the ideological purity."[71]

Fighting the "errors" of newspapers and printed materials was the main responsibility of the GDPPM in the 1950s. The censorship agency distinguished between three main categories of errors: political errors, errors related to breaches of "state secrets", and formal or general errors.[72] The early guidelines issued in 1949 were concerned primarily with the prevention of "incorrect" political messages, i.e. messages "instigating against our government, undermining the class-struggle … instigating to racial hatred against minorities".[73] A political error denoted a difference between a textual representation and the relevant interpretation of the topic by the Party (Party-

[70] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 83; minute of a meeting of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, 11 May 1951.
[71] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1952, 101; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, 2 September 1952.
[72] For example, a report of the Directorate for the Central Press from April 1952 mentions that out of a total of 1, 080 censorships carried out in the central newspapers in April, 486 were political and 247 prevented the violation of state secret in the press (ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 284-85; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, April 1952).
[73] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1949, 41-42; guidelines for the censoring of the press and printings, May 1949.

line). For example, in an article entitled "We are showing our enthusiasm for the global peace movement," published in a daily newspaper in Bucharest, the author wrote: "everywhere we go, we hear rumours about the imminence of a new war; these rumours determine us, the working people, to look with great concern at the future of our children and brothers." By assessing it as being contrary to "the interest of our republic," the censor removed the phrase from the body of the article on the grounds that it "instilled unnecessary pessimism which could lower the spirits of the working class."[74]

The Agitprop regularly updated the censorial body with lists of "state secrets." Lengthy prohibitions referred to news or print materials deemed to endanger the national security. Such errors were defined under the umbrella term of "state secret" to include military and economic matters, and, indeed, anything which was considered politically sensitive. When the initial guidelines were released in 1951 they delineated categories of state secret such as military, economic, agricultural and zootechnics, transportation, state investments and constructions.[75] The guidelines covered a broad array of topics, from references to the geographical location of different factories, touristic maps, statistical information to names of products and pictures of industrial sites.[76] In developing the guidelines, the officials acknowledged the Soviet influence: "as a general rule, as regards the defending of the state secret, the press will have to follow the Soviet example."[77]

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[74] ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1953, 76; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, August 1951.
[75] ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1954, 62-71; copy of the decree no. 34 from 1951 – guidelines for defining state secrets in the press, books, printings, brochures, radio broadcasts, films, theatres, exhibitions, museum, conferences etc.
[76] Ibid.
[77] ANR, Fond CPT, file 18/1951, 76-77; guidelines for defending the state secret in the press.

The guidelines on state secrets were further compiled into booklets (*caiete de dispoziții*) which became an important work tool for censors after 1953.[78] It featured mainly economic taboos, but at the same time it targeted public representations or lexical constructions potentially detrimental to linguistic unity. The interdictions varied and included: "nothing about chess, crosswords, sports camps, joint training of our athletes with foreign athletes, foreign trips of our sport teams" [they could awake the people's interest in foreign countries], "nothing about financial benefits and bonuses, prizes, etc.,"[79] [people will become envious] "do not disseminate pictures with peasants still working in traditional peasant sandals."[80]

The guidelines similarly prohibited news critical of the government or of the Soviet Union and its leaders, as well as news and articles popularizing cultural events from a non-Marxist position. Condensed under the rubric of state secret were also the references to religious values, to various images and information supposedly revealing state secrets to "imperialist countries," and the publishing of news about certain disasters which could potentially instil panic in the population.[81]

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[78] The *Perechen'* or the Talmud, as the censors sometimes called it, was a list of information which constituted state secrets and it was the main tool of the Soviet censors to enforce orthodoxy. It was a top-secret list comprising lists of authors and texts banned from circulation. See Jan Plamper, "Abolishing Ambiguity: Soviet Censorship Practices in the 1930s," *Russian Review* 60, no.4 (2001): 351; Martin Dewhirst and Robert Farrell, eds., *The Soviet Censorship* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1973), 55; Marianna Tax Choldin and Maurice Friedberg, eds., *The Red Pencil: Artists, Scholars, and Censors in the USSR* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 18-19.

[79] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1949, 47; lists featuring terms and expressions banned from publication.

[80] Emilia Șercan, "Institutia Cenzurii în Perioada Comunistă. Instrumente și Proceduri de Lucru in 1965," in *Revista Română de Istorie a Presei* no. 10 (2011): 100.

[81] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 237-238; guidelines for the censoring of the press and printings.

Yet, in the beginning, dealing with articles about industry and industrialization – industrial outputs, references to the number of people in the workforce, product names, production costs, units location etc. – posed the greatest challenge for censors. The skills showed in handling economically sensitive information gave the measure of a trained censor. By offering "crucial information to the enemy," too many details on economic issues could have breached the orders regarding the state secret. On the other hand, by overshadowing the Party's achievements, an unwarranted intervention by the censor was considered to weaken the strength and the quality of the propaganda. In the words of the head of the Directorate for Central Press: "when the figures and the industrial outputs do not serve the internal and external enemies … we just weaken the power of our propaganda and agitation work [if we censor them]."[82]

As essential tools in the construction of socialism, the newspapers had to present, in a convincing manner, the achievements of state policies. An overzealous or superficial censor, the senior censors claimed, could have inflicted "hardships on newspapers … and prejudices against our institutional reputation."[83] As a senior censor of the Directorate for Central Press put it, "the way the state secret issues were handled [by the Directorate] showed a mechanical attitude which betrayed a poor understanding of the Party's political

[82] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1949, 7; transcript of a GDPPM board meeting, 19-20 August 1953.
[83] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 3; minute of a meeting of the Directorate for Central Press, 17 November 1951;

line … which placed a great burden on newspapers and impaired our institutional prestige."[84]

This type of taboo construction should be seen as acting as a pedagogical technique in tandem with a "language ideology" – it assumed that without public representation, neither the image nor the actual object of reference of a lexical construction would be significant.[85]

A correct censorial interpretation of the censors would "enrich, not hamper the realization of our regime of popular democracy", the senior censors highlighted.[86] Yet, despite of the latter's claims to a unified system of knowledge control, the wealth of advice and updates sometimes contradicted one another. Of course, it was tempting for censors to take the easiest path, namely, when in doubt, to request the outright removal of all the economic and industrial related outputs. But, for the GDPPM's leadership, such an approach epitomized "leftist excesses", and a "mechanical attitude towards work and political ignorance."

For example, in 1952, in the midst of the First Five-Year Plan, a censor flagged a newspaper article on the grounds that it disclosed economically sensitive information related to the national electrification process. Because it contained economic figures, the censor reacted instinctively by asking for the removal of the entire article. To his hierarchical superiors, however, his decision revealed no more than a "bureaucratic attitude towards work". The censor

[84] ANR, Fond CPT, file 11/1951, 3; minute of a meeting of the Directorate for the Central Press, 17 November 1951.
[85] Boyer, "Censorship As a Vocation," 134; Schiffelin et al., *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[86] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 83; meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, November 1952.

should have known that the figures had already been circulated in a report delivered by the Party's general secretary, Gheorghiu-Dej, therefore they were no longer a matter of secrecy.[87] From the reprimand we also learn that the mishandling of economic information was a recurrent problem and the censorial board regularly petitioned the Agitprop for counsel.[88] However, because the majority of updates and advisories were delivered verbally it is difficult to fully grasp the Agitprop's scale of control.

Supervised by the ACC, the censorial agency had already begun its purges of the "fascist" literature from libraries and bookshops in 1945.[89] Yet, the subsequent instructions, compiled in book indexes, expanded the purges to almost all undesirable political topics. Whereas the GDPPM gave the final approval, the initial purges were conducted by librarians. The printed materials fell into three categories. All literature printed after 23 August 1944 received authorization, as did publications printed before this date but which were nevertheless deemed "progressive for the times when they were published". In the second category, the censors placed the printings "with obsolete character but not openly hostile … necessary for research," whilst the third category referred to "all hostile materials, anti-democratic, anti-communist … authors who are enemies of democracy, peace, and socialism."[90]

[87] ANR, Fond CPT, File 5/1952, 106; work report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, 15 January 1952.
[88] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 83; minute of a meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Approval, November 1952.
[89] In the early postwar period the purges were conducted by the cultural counsellors from the Ministry of Propaganda, which later became the Ministry of Arts and Information. See Liliana Corobca, *Epurarea Cărților în România (1944-1964)* (București: Tritonic, 2010), 38-40; See also Decree-Law no. 2, *Monitorul Oficial.* 2 May, 1945.
[90] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1953, 20; guidelines for the classification, preservation, and circulation of the printed materials.

The GDPPM oversaw the libraries and bookshops' compliance with the regulations governing the book trade. For example, the "non-hostile" printed materials (in the first category) were placed in the general collections of the libraries, whilst the publications in the other two categories were banned to the public and were held in special repositories with access restricted to authorized readers. By the end of 1951, to extend their control over the purged printings, the authorities established special regional repositories where printings in the third category made up the so-called "secret collection."

As was the case with the guidelines compiled for the state secrets, the Party also issued regularly updated instructions to assist the censors with the book purges. The instructions classified the printed materials both chronologically – books published before the Russian Revolution, between the wars, and after August 1944 – and by topic.[91] For example, among the topics barred from publication were religious, occult, Zionist, mystical, and pornographic publications. With other topics censors had discretionary powers to purge. In the case of the "nationalistic literature," for instance, the guidelines stated that it "would be purged gradually." But the censors were expected to rely on their political training and to "approach the national question using an internationalist standpoint." In the same vein, erotic literature was permitted only if it depicted "a healthy, optimistic, and life-affirming kind of love."[92]

The censors would be at times caught between inconsistent directives overriding guidelines adopted previously. For example, during an inspection in

[91] ANR, Fond CPT, file 50/1951, 9-10; guidelines for conducting inspections of libraries.
[92] ANR, Fond CPT, file 8/1949, 197-98; guidelines for conduction de-fascization of public libraries and book shops, July 1949.

1952, the censors ordered the librarians of the University Library in Bucharest to remove all technical books published between 1918-1944 from the general collection (works of general interest). The internal guidelines of GDPPM stipulated that the books had to be removed and restricted to "research purposes." However, by the time the librarians implemented the order, the GDPPM's guidelines had once more been updated. The new instructions requested that only the books "permeated by cosmopolitanism" but not all technical books from the interwar period, were to be removed from general collection. Overtaken by events, the censors returned to the library and demanded that the librarians reverse the previous order and comply with the new directives.[93]

The GDPPM's teams of censors conducted inspections at libraries (public and university libraries), bookshops and checked whether recent books incorporated had complied with the revisions demanded by censors before publication. Since cultural consumption became both a matter of state interest and a tool for social change, the non-state institutions diminished in importance and, to a certain extent, ended up discredited. Culture was evaluated by political utility, and the censors from the Sub-Directorate for Book Control often clashed with the private booksellers: "private book selling is just a commercial pursuit, thus it is straightforwardly against the interests of the working class … it only facilitates the spreading of the bourgeois poisons."[94] Used booksellers were banned in late 1950, but the censors still focused on the used book market. Their

[93] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 29-30; minute of a meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, 11 November 1952.
[94] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1950, 25; Activity report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervision, 20 September 1950.

searches for "black marketeers" sometimes took them to unconventional places such as the flea markets on the outskirts of Bucharest.[95]

The GDPPM's regulations for the overseeing of the foreign news required that the media outlets covering foreign policy incorporate, most often verbatim, the news bulletins released by the official news agency, the Agerpres.[96] Of course, the censors checked how the media carried out the task. However, external offices at different ports of entry in the country managed the censorship of the foreign press, foreign literature, the academic journals requested by libraries and private individuals, and other printed publications. The removal of the "negative" content followed a familiar pattern: the Directorate for Foreign Publications decided which individuals and libraries could receive foreign publications, it censored articles, and, in some cases, banned newspapers and magazine issues. Even if an individual or institution were granted a license to receive foreign literature, this was not necessarily a guarantee that, for example, they would receive all the issues of a foreign magazine.

To pick an example, in 1951 several issues of an Austrian magazine, licensed to a local scientist, were retained by GDPPM. The censors questioned the "scientific character" of the magazine and cancelled its authorization. In the report, the censor underlined the "covert capitalist propaganda" of the magazine, as well as its "commercial character, featuring articles laudatory of the United

[95] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervision.
[96] Since the RCP monopolized all the news production through a single news agency, the Agerpres, strict orders prohibited the sourcing of the news from alternative sources. This does not mean that the "official" news did not go through censorial control.

States and the Marshall Plan."[97] Another magazine, this time from the UK, was similarly refused by the censors. Although it was a specialized academic magazine (forestry industry) the censors turned it down for "its biased comments about the Soviet forestry industry."[98]

When the elaborate pre-publication system of censoring could not prevent "bold political errors," the GDPPM reacted by withdrawing from the market the "erring" newspapers, books and other printed materials. Instead of the phrase "we must reduce the *consumption* of raw materials," a local newspaper mistakenly printed on its front page "we must reduce the *communism* of raw materials." The censors reacted by withdrawing the offending issue, but, in spite of their efforts, 80 copies sold before the ban came into force remained to be found.[99] Similarly, at the construction site of the Danube-Black Sea Canal, a newspaper issue was withdrawn in 1952 because the censors spotted a discrepancy between the front-page picture and the person it was supposed to portray.[100]

But regardless of how rigorous these surgical operations upon language were, the spectre of the double entendre was present: "long live comrade Stalin! The war instigators are falling and collapsing everywhere and this is because of

[97] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1951, 74; weekly report of the Directorate for Foreign Publications, 20 April 1951.
[98] Ibid., 76.
[99] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 98; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, February 1951.
[100] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1952, 5; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, February 1952.

the *battle* which the Soviet Union carries on in the *peace* camp" (my emphasis).[101]

In practice, actual socialism seemed rather "unwilling" to follow the theoretical direction imposed onto it, and therefore a sense of semantic indeterminacy pervaded the work of censorship. In his attempt to grapple with this sense of indeterminacy, one senior censor defined censorship as "not a spontaneous act of free will but a permanent knowledge of everyday political problems."[102] The "political error" represented the most important error for censors and it was defined broadly enough to designate a mismatch between a media representation and the Party-line. The seniors took the hardest line on them: "dozens of prevented errors cannot compensate for a serious political error which makes it into print."[103]

Indeed, the distinction between the various types of "errors" was more blurred in practice. One journalist told me that his worst ever error was a misspelling. While working for a local newspaper, the journalist wrote an article with a standard-mobilizational title "To the battle for people's bread" (in Romanian*, La Luptă pentru Pâinea Poporului Muncitor!*). However, during the printing process a scribal error erased the letter "r" from the word *popor*, the Romanian for *people* and replaced it with the letter "u". Since *popou* means booty in Romanian, the title acquired a lethal-subversive connotation. Further complicating the matter, the error was treated as a political one and the local

[101] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 30; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, 10 October 1949.
[102] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1950, 11; activity report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, June 1950.
[103] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1953, 21; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing. September 1953.

Party branch and the Securitate investigated the case as an "act of sabotage." The authorities were alarmed that the media text could have been picked up by the anti-communist media from abroad (i.e. Radio Free Europe) in order to shame communist Romania.[104] After being subjected to weeks of investigation and multiple declarations to the Securitate, the journalist was cleared of any counterrevolutionary intent. He got off with a verbal reprimand.[105]

In 1953, Iosif Ardeleanu, the chief censor, admitted to the "indeterminacy" of censorship: "the work we are doing here at the censorship [agency] depends pretty much on meaning."[106] As will we see in the next section, institutional censorship was trapped between the ambition to provide systemic meaning to the cultural signifiers of the socialist cultural order and its limited, mainly restrictive, powers granted by its charter.

Productive Textual Practices

Besides monitoring the daily media and cultural production, the censors also sought to proactively refine the language of the cultural products: they negotiated argumentation, inserted the latest pronouncements of the Party, and, not least, suggested new ways to increase the efficiency of cultural production and its mass reception.

[104] Conversation with Tănasache, 5 August 2018.
[105] Ibid.
[106] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1954, 85; Ardeleanu's speech at a board meeting of the GDPPM.

As we have already seen, in spite of the GDPPM's overall "negative" influence over the state sector (text suppression, bans, book purges), in helping to create a kind of consensus around what was or should be socially acceptable, state censorship also acted "productively." On the other hand, assuming a "too positive" role, i.e. an active involvement in the ideological content of a cultural product, fell beyond the rather limited powers of the institutional censorship. For example, in late 1949, while on duty at the Radio Station in Bucharest, a censor convened a meeting with a group of editors. According to the GDPPM's report on the case, in his speech to the editors the censor delivered both criticism and advice on dealing with ideological sensitive issues. When the superiors learnt about the censor's undertaking they reacted with indignation. Making ideological observations, the report stressed, went beyond the scope of a censor's work, namely to "check on the Party and state agencies and not to offer political and ideological guidance."[107]

But one can find similar cases across all the directorates and offices of the GDPPM. For example, in 1949, censors from the Directorate for the Central Press took it upon themselves to rephrase sentences of the Agerpres news bulletins. A news release reporting the visit of a Soviet delegation to Romania stated that the visit "sparked a *genuine* manifestation of the *masses' love.*" However, the censor felt that only a rephrasing could prevent the lurking danger of a double meaning. Hence his intervention: "it should have said: generated an

[107] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1949, 8; resolution of the GDPPM Collegium, 23-25 September 1953.

enthusiastic manifestation of *love from* the masses … and why does the author say 'genuine'? Only these particular manifestations of love were genuine?"[108]

The censors working in book censorship faced the greatest challenges in accommodating these tensions. As the head of the Sub-Directorate for Book Licensing stated, "we find ourselves in a vicious circle because too often the principle we are led by – to be a supervisory body – is distorted."[109]

A newspaper picture, a reportage, or a book could warrant pages of comments, stretching from evaluations of the correct incorporation of the political line to interpretative judgements of a particular character's behaviour and clothes. For example, an article published in a previously approved French magazine debated the life expectancy in the United States to conclude that it had risen since the end of the war. The censor in charge with reading the issue promptly intervened and banned the article on the grounds that "private health insurance, which is nothing more than a tool of oppression, is depicted as an advantage in the article."[110]

Another censor, echoing socialist realism's aim to create, not just to reflect, reality turned down a novel arguing that although the plot fitted the accepted paradigm – it was about the British colonial exploitation in India – "it is virtually impossible to find a single positive character in the entire novel … also there is not any mass movement to take on the bloody slayers … today, after

[108] ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1949, 2; memorandum on the activity of the Agerpres, compiled by the Directorate for the Central Press, August 1949.
[109] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 19; minute of a performance assessment meeting in the Directorate for Books (speech by Flavius Schäffer, the head of Directorate), 11 December 1952.
[110] ANR, fond CPT, file 2/1951, 74; weekly report of the Directorate for Foreign Press, 20 April 1951.

the war, this type of prose can no longer be accepted."[111] Through literary works, the cultural officials aimed to shape the taste of the public and not necessarily to satisfy them. As the censor report's concluding remarks put it: "the novel is of no help for the reader, it does not help the reader to understand the real situation in today's India, and in general, the political situation in the colonies."[112]

Often, censoring was very close to copy-editing. A censor reviewing an article which discussed the political situation in the Balkans struck out the most problematic passages and asked the author for a rephrasing. The article, due to be published in a literary magazine, argued that "in the Balkans there are still two states which continue the role of the lighter of the *powder keg of Europe*, namely Greece and Yugoslavia … they rely on provocations which are *also* aimed at the countries of popular democracy in the region" [censor's emphasis].[113] Adopting a condescending tone, the censor gave his reasoning: "first of all, today we can no longer speak of the Balkan region as being the *powder keg of Europe*. It is a mistake because in the Balkan Peninsula there are three popular democracies, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania … the Titoist provocations aim exclusively and not *also* at the countries of popular democracies." But the censor was equally concerned with the ambiguity of the text: "the author is ambiguous, one can assume that the Titoist provocations are aimed at other Balkans countries too, whereas the fascist monarchy of Greece and Turkey are in reality Tito's allies."[114]

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[111] ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1951, 166; censor's report (from the Directorate for Book Licensing) about the Hungarian language novel "Frunza de Ceai" (The Tea Leaf), , 27 February 1952.
[112] Ibid.
[113] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 108; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, July 1951.
[114] Ibid.

In some cases, the censors were advised by the Party officials not only to consider the political stakes of a text, but to assess its aesthetic realisation as well. The censors assessed the quality of translations in news bulletins and books and in problematic cases they would flag "errors in translations" by making comments such as "the translation of the book is inaccurate in parts and, thus, can be confusing."[115] They also often objected to outdated information in texts. One censor demanded that an article from a literary magazine be eliminated so that "such an outdated article would not jeopardize the overall quality of the issue."[116]

A self-assumed pedagogical mission made the censor get involved in matters which went beyond correcting ideological flaws. The manuscripts received by the censors often featured stylistic shortcomings, faulty grammar or logical contradictions. Sometimes censors could not resist the temptation to offer advice in the margins but their hierarchical superiors took care to remind them of the limits of their role.[117]

In their reports on newspapers, the censors would sometimes comment on the quality of graphic design composition and on the employment of "political weapons" such as photography and caricature. For example, a censor criticized the *Scânteia Tineretului* (The Youth's Spark) newspaper for not doing enough to popularize the Party's achievements: "photography and caricature are leading instruments of agitation and propaganda but they are not used in a

[115] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1951, 8; internal memorandum about an impending re-organization of the GDPPM, 27 November 1951.
[116] ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1951, 108; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, 12 December 1951.
[117] ANR, Fond CPT, file 32/1950, 78; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, October 1950.

creative way … only the issues 220 and 221 feature pictures depicting the work of our Party … the comrades from the Central Committee are photographed giving lectures … the caricatures are too few and only one of them can be considered as being a creative one."[118]

The level of politicization of a text demanded the most attention. For example, in stylistic constructions such as "socialism will reconstruct the world devastated by capitalism," the censors saw a "weak politicization" and asked for a rephrasing.[119] Other constructions were deemed to suggest a sense of political uncertainty, and again, revisions were required. In a phrase such as "at this crucial moment in history, the great Stalin…," the censor would sense "uncertainty": "why *at this moment*? Change, it suggests uncertainty."[120] Overall, such errors were assessed by the censors as reflecting the publications' treatment of political "matters in a lukewarm manner … not with the commitment of the class spirit."[121]

Characteristically for the communist handling of the formal censorial mechanism, even when the censors conducted purges of libraries and book shops, their work extended beyond the disciplinary dimension. For example, Flaviu Schäffer, a high-achieving censor in the Sub-Directorate of Book Supervision, always included in his reports a special section to discuss the "proletarian literary talents" he encountered during his inspections of libraries.

[118] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1950, 44; report on the newspaper *Scânteia Tineretului* for the period 15 December 1949 – 1 January 1950.
[119] ANR, Fond CPT, file 59/1951, 53; report regarding the book manuscripts sent by the State Publishing House in June 1951.
[120] ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1951, 96; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervision for the period 1-8 December 1951, 8 December 1951.
[121] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 79; activity report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, 1 May 1951.

Schäffer's punctiliously written reports reveal that the censor spent part of his time in discussion with librarians about amateur writers with working-class background in their regions.[122] Back in Bucharest, Schäffer would forward his recommendations to the Agitprop.[123]

The abundance of instructions, advisories, and updates received from the Agitprop aimed at framing the censors' work and action within tight political boundaries. As we will see in the next chapter, the quality of a censor's report, the censorship seniors believed, reflected both the censors' performance and their ideological training.[124] The reports featured rubrics for essential and minor censorships, political and state secret related interventions, and miscellaneous interventions. It was meant to embody what was called "the new superior censorship", which was realized in "careful support given to all publications."[125] Channelled properly, the adequate support offered by censorship would only bring more linguistic effectivity to a newspaper or a book, thus sometimes "salvaging the prestige of a publication."[126] Conversely, the supporting mission of censorship failed to materialize when the censors' interventions were unwarranted, which ran the risk of delivering weak ideological products to the public. As a report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing instructed its censors: "after every article, poem, and novel read the censor must pause and think about the main argument of the text, its political and ideological

[122] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1948, 151-52; report of Schäfer about an inspection of the libraries of the city of Ploiești, December 1948.
[123] Ibid.
[124] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 22.; minute of a meeting held on 12 December 1952 in the Office for Book Licensing.
[125] ANR, Fond CPT, file 11/1951, 16; memorandum of I. Rusu, the head of the Directorate for the Central Press, discussing the improvement of the work in the Directorate, 8 December 1951.
[126] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1956, 32; work report of the Directorate for the Central Press for the period July-December 1956.

implications. A censor must always ask himself the question: who benefits from the text?"[127]

The RCP leadership's greatest concern was that its capacity to control the production of meaning would be overshadowed by the residual "bourgeois" language in public space. As Michael Holquist aptly argued, the essence of all censorship resides in a "monologic terror of indeterminacy."[128] In order to overcome this indeterminacy, the RCP invested notable resources and time for an exact "calibration of the referential properties of language" in order to protect the people from other types of cultural mediations.[129]

Conclusion

The establishment of the communist censorship agency marked not a revolutionary "moment" but rather a "fusion" with the prewar and wartime traditions. The communists relied on established practices, although they employed them in a more radical fashion in pursuit of a more radical political end. The censoring of "inimical" and "dangerous" foreign publications, the various pre-publication censorial interventions, the daily advisories sent to the press, and the doctored materials which the media was constrained to publish on behalf of the government, were all practices which predated the communist takeover. The war and the Ministry of Propaganda redefined the role of the

[127] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1953, 22; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing; September 1953.
[128] Michael Holquist, "Corrupt Originals: The Paradox of Censorship," *PMLA* 109, no. 1 (1994): 14.
[129] Dominic Boyer, *Spirit and System. Media, Intellectuals and the Dialectic of Modern German Culture* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 136.

media in relation to the state, while it also gave legitimacy to state intervention in media and culture.

Considered within the broad spectrum of cultural institutions the censorial body reveals certain limits of action. The Central Committee's Agitprop, as the main organ for cultural change, developed, established and transmitted downwards the standards of ideological quality. As we have seen in the previous chapter it did so through a vast network of institutions and mass organizations which transmitted regular and obligatory guidelines. The Agitprop relied on the work of its own ideological instructors to oversee newspapers, periodicals and the literary field. Both complementing and drawing "inspiration" from the Agitprop, the creative unions, the Ministry of Culture and the state mechanism of publishing and planning also mediated the form of the cultural product.

As all censorial systems across history, the system of cultural control operated under a twofold function. On the one hand, the censorial system was sometimes brutally repressive of what it considered as harmful or dangerous. On the other, its design facilitated a "productive" dimension. The censorial body was expected to shape the cultural artefacts that the Party considered necessary for the enlightenment of the masses, the building of socialism and for the forging of a consensus on issues of what was culturally acceptable. Of course, this dual stance impacts on how we should understand communist censorship. To overcome the limited understanding of censorship as negative suppression one must consider the GDPPM in the broader context of cultural production. It is too

simple to state that the centrally planned formal system of censorship was just a cynical exercise in controlling, manipulating, and infantilizing the population.

Paramount for the Party-state's cultural production was the control over the production of the collective consciousness.[130] However, to consider the official culture as the offspring of the censor's pencil, as has often been suggested, means not only to assume the existence of "two cultures" but also to overestimate the role played by the censorial agency. True, the GDPPM's system of regulation was to some extent effective in defending the state cultural monopoly, or in reshaping different cultural products. But to assign it a main role in constructing the communist cultural hegemony goes beyond its rather limited means of action. As its modern bureaucratic design suggests, the GDPPM acted more like a regulatory agency, concerned with the distribution and the incorporation of the Party-line knowledge.

[130] A point made by Domic Boyer in "Censorship as a Vocation: The Institutions, Practices, and Cultural Logic of Media Control in the German Democratic Republic," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (July 2003): 521.

Chapter 4. The Censors

Historiography has only offered scattered and limited knowledge of the communist censors, of their working environment and day-to-day work. The common image of the censor is enigmatic yet demonic. A committed bureaucrat, he strikes out words and blue-pencils manuscripts only to safeguard the ideological positions of power. Yet, to cast the censor as an amoral state agent only reinforces tropes of anti-intellectualism. Himself a censor in apartheid South Africa, J.M. Coetzee once offered a standard definition of the censor as an intellectual other: censorship is "not an occupation which attracts intelligent, subtle minds", which means that censors "can and often have been outwitted."[1] Conversely, historian Robert Darnton cautioned against the moral high ground of such simplistic views: "the trouble with the history of censorship is that it looks so simple: it pits children of light against the children of darkness."[2]

The Cold War constructed the censor as an epitome of ideological repressiveness in the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc. As faithful employees in the "Ministry of Truth," they are conventionally depicted as frontrunners to embody the Party's ambition to achieve "total control" over the cultural field.[3] A stark binary opposition between the censor and the author, the latter

[1] J.M. Coetzee, *Giving Offence: Essays on Censorship* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), viii.
[2] Robert Darnton, "Censorship, a Comparative View: France, 1789 – East Germany, 1989," *Representations* no. 49 (December 1995): 40.
[3] Arlen Blium, "Forbidden Topics: Early Soviet Censorship Directives," *Book History* 1, no. 2 (1998): 268-282; see also by the same author *A Self-Administrated Poison,* trans. by I.P. Foote (Oxford: Legenda, 2003).

understood to be free, has veered the interpretation of censorial interaction under the East European communist regimes towards a disproportionate focus on authors. The censors have received little attention, if any, and if so, they have been either repudiated or derided for their alleged intellectual feebleness.[4]

The collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe increased the number of testimonies coming from writers who experienced institutional censorship across the Bloc.[5] Studies incorporating fresh archival evidence from newly declassified archives have further advanced our knowledge of state censorship and begun to recover the censor as a historical character. However, even in so doing, such works fail to give a contextualized account of communist censors, who remain shrouded in otherness.[6]

Concurrently, in more recent approaches to censorship (see Chapter One) a more dynamic image based on the workings of the micromechanisms of power has displaced the traditional liberal focus on discrete censoring subjects. But in so doing, the recent literature also betrays scant interest in considering the censor's point of view.

The main actors themselves, the censors, remained largely silent both before and following the collapse of state socialism. Before 1990, the first censors' testimonies appeared out of a combination of fortuitous circumstances:

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[4] See Derek Jones (ed.), *Censorship: A World Encyclopaedia, vols. 1-4* (London: Routledge, 2000); For Romania see Bujor Nedelcovici, *Scriitorul, Cenzura si Securitatea* (Bucuresti: AllFA, 2009). More nuanced accounts of censors and censorship in Miklós Haraszti, *The Velvet Prison. Artists under State Socialism* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

[5] Norman Manea, *On Clowns. The Dictator and the Artists* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1992), 63-91.

[6] Marin Radu Mocanu, *Cenzura a Murit, Trăiască Cenzorii!* (București: Europress, 2008); Liliana Corobca, *Controlul Cărtii. Cenzura Literaturii in Regimul Comunist* (București: Cartea Românească, 2014); Liviu Malita, *Cenzura pe Înțelesul Cenzuraților* (București: Tracus Arte, 2016).

either from censors who defected abroad and smuggled classified documents, or from censors opening up to academics.[7] They would, however, remain exceptions. Regrettably, the censors have rarely appeared in public and even fewer have given interviews since the collapse of state socialism.[8]

Even when censors did speak, their recollections were greatly influenced by the new post-communist order of cognition and recognition. The end of communism was experienced as an "end of history," a triumph of liberal capitalism which restructured the tropes of historical consciousness and remembrance along the binary victims-perpetrators.[9] Whereas the censors could not claim a victim identity unproblematically, their strategy was to cast themselves as victims of a routinized, illogical, and ultimately meaningless censorial mechanism.

The act of rewriting autobiographies of the former era in terms acceptable to post-communism, both morally and political, acquired a double self-justificatory dimension. On the one hand, in order to construct themselves

[7] In 1977 a Polish censor, who had previously collected and copied censorial materials from 1975 to his departure in February 1977, defected to Sweden with more than 700 pages of classified documents which later formed the basis of an edited collection. See Jane Leftwich Curry, *The Black Book of Polish Censorship* (New York: Random House, 1984); on Sabbatical in Berlin, the American historian Robert Darnton established contact with several young intellectuals from the censor's office – see Darnton, "Censorship, a Comparative View"; Robert Darnton, *Berlin Journal 1989-1990* (New York: Norton, 1991); Robert Darnton, *Censors at Work. How States Shaped Literature* (London: The British Library, 2014), 145-221.

[8] An exception was Vladimir Solodin, a former head of the Soviet Glavlit. See Steven Richmond and Vladimir Solodin, "'The Eye of the State': An Interview with Soviet Chief Censor Vladimir Solodin," *Russian Review* 56, no. 4 (1997): 581–90; See also Solodin's interview in the New York Times, "A Soviet Censor, Uncensored," *New York Times*, February 13, 1989; Oktiabr' Kalievich Valitov, *Pechat' i tsenzura* (Ufa: Kitap, 1995).

[9] The 1990s looked to the past not through the lenses of progress and revolution, but constructed it as a time of violence. The communist past was assigned a prominent pedagogical function. By working as a pedagogical device to warn against the past's dangerous utopian temptation, it both legitimated the current order and "denied" future political alternatives. See Enzo Traverso, *Left-Wing Melancholia. Marxism, History, and Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 71.

as disciplined bureaucrats and unwilling executioners of official directives, the former censors underplayed the nature of the censorial system.[10] By the same token, their self-repositioning "outside ideology" allowed them to see the censorial bureaucratic routine as a mundane and meaningless act. On the other hand, a second strategy, was to transfer the censorial act from the institutional to the private sphere. In so doing, they recast censorship as a negotiation between censor and author, a process undergirded/rendered possible by the censor as self-avowed cultural mediator. As intellectuals themselves, self-perceived as temporarily relegated to censorship, they could sense the Party's cultural excesses and were thus able to differentiate between "cultural" and "ideological" products. Culturally speaking, therefore, they posited themselves as having worked towards the advancement of the cause of arts and culture.[11]

The censors' models of remembering censorial work served to assert their democratic commitment in the post-communist period. Under pressure to regard themselves as communist perpetrators, they created narratives to downplay the importance of their work in the communist past. In an attempt to resolve the tensions of finding a place between victim and perpetrator, they cast themselves as non-ideological patriots who protected writers whenever possible. At the same time, the opportunity to publish in the field of literary criticism after 1989 enabled former censors not only to link repressed intellectual aspirations

[10] Jakub Berman interviewed by Teresa Toranska in Teresa Toranska, *Oni. Stalin's Polish Puppets* (London: Collins, 1987), 202-354.
[11] Paul Cornea, *Ce a Fost – Cum a Fost. Paul Cornea de Vorbă cu Daniel Cristea-Enache* (Iași: Polirom, 2013), 210-34; See also my discussion with Pavel Țugui, 22 July 2013.

with an anti-communist scholarly identity, but to also redraw their censorial work as an unavoidable biographical episode.[12]

This chapter argues against seeing the censor as an indexical "other," a figure who, through a process of suppression, shapes the identity of creative "intellectuals". As Dominic Boyer argued in the case of the GDR, this portrayal of the censor only reinforces "a trope of intellectual alienation."[13] The caricatured and de-politicized censor obscures the various institutions and practices of intellectual professionalism, and displace the censor from the social and political contexts of cultural production. To overcome this reified image, I read through biographies and accounts of professional education and training and approach the censors as social and historical agents.

Becoming a Censor

When the GDPPM was established in May 1949, the Agitprop sent the local branches a memo with guidelines for the recruitment process: "The censors to be hired must be politically well-trained, capable of dealing with the multifaceted issues of the censorship work, they must have good general knowledge and be devoted to the working class and to the Party". Censorial

[12] My discussion with Elena Doxanescu, 3 August 2013.
[13] Dominic Boyer, "Censorship as a Vocation: The Institutions, Practices, and Cultural Logic of Media Control in the German Democratic Republic," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 2 (July 2003): 539.

work, the memo pointed out, required above-average trained cadres, namely "students, university graduates, professors," with Party membership.[14]

Yet the Agitprop's job description constructed the ideal censor. In practice, the censor's office had to work with a lack of adequate facilities and shortage of trained cadres. The archival records of the censor's office offer many examples of censors' *faux pas*. Sometimes they appeared to be overwhelmed by the mundane application of the daily norms; other times they simply struggled to master the political language they were supposed to defend and calibrate. At times, even grasping the political significance of the censorial work seems to have eluded them.

What was the censor's role in the communist cultural system? Was the censor such an all-powerful character in cultural affairs as conventional accounts of censorship suggest? If not, was he merely a regular bureaucrat? The officials' conceptualization of the censors is often contradictory. Contrary to the image of the ideal censor which the Agitprop constructed, a significant number of censors could claim neither party membership nor advanced political knowledge. In formal meetings held at the Agitprop, the senior communist officials seemed rather dismissive of the role of the censors and institutional censorship. Concerned more with problems of cultural construction – developing a socialist culture – the Agitprop officials relied on censors only to quash the transgression of the cultural and political code.

[14] Arhivele Naționale ale României (hereafter ANR), Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație (hereafter Secția PA), file 31/1949, 15; memo sent by the Agitprop central office to the provincial branches, August 1949.

When in 1948 the censorship body asked the Agitprop for better trained employees, the reply of Nicolae Moraru, a prominent Agitprop member, ended with a telling conclusion: "we cannot assign writers for this job [censorship] … this can be done by anyone who has a minimum of political education, by a teacher, a student etc. … there is no need to assign writers for this, they have to be entrusted with more productive tasks."[15] A few years later, in 1954, the officials still reluctantly admitted that "often newspaper editors are far more qualified than our current censors."[16]

The archives record at length the GDPPM's officials' laments about the censors' poor training and lack of commitment. In their own definition, the officials expected the prospective censors to have "basic cultural knowledge and political-ideological skills to match the level of the publications the censors are expected to check."[17] Yet, the reports of the GDPPM, usually compiled after inspections in the provinces, often criticise the local staff's skills and work habits. To the chagrin of their Bucharest supervisors, some local branches were so disorganized in the late 1940s that sometimes publications were released on the market without prior checks by censors. Worse still, even when reprimanded by Bucharest, some censors had obvious difficulties in understanding the political consequences of their wrongdoings. In the local political hierarchy, the censors were functionaries in the local Agitprop departments where they often shared office space with journalists, artists, and cultural organisers. One local

[15] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 6/1948, 18; Nicolae Moraru's speech at the meeting of the Central Section for Political Education, 4 February 1948.
[16] ANR, Fond Comitetul pentru Presă și Tipărituri (hereafter CPT), file 4/1954, 96; meeting of the GDPPM's Collegium, 25 January 1954.
[17] ANR, Fond CPT, file 11/1951, 16; report in which the head of the Directorate for the Central Press (Ioan Rusu) discusses new methods to improve the activity of the Directorate, 8 December 1951.

censor, for example, although reprimanded for delegating part of his tasks – the exclusive duty to talk with the author of an article – to a staff member of the printing house, could hardly understand the implications of the telling off.[18]

In extreme examples of misconduct, some censors would even engage in black market activities. For instance, an inspection by the centre revealed that a local censor assigned to check the bread ration cards also made a living by reselling the cards on the black market.[19] The supervisors of the central GDPPM also learnt of censors with conflicting institutional interests and loyalties. In 1950 the supervisors from Bucharest found that a censor from a city in the Eastern province of Moldova worked both as a censor and an editorial assistant with the local newspaper which he was supposed to censor. In the nearby city of Bacau, the local censor overlooked to send work reports to Bucharest for months in a row, which prompted the central office to assume that the local branch had ceased censorial activities.[20] In 1949-50 inspection reports often included alarming conclusions such as "in this city there is virtually no censorship activity" or "here we need a censor as soon as possible, please raise the question urgently with the Agitprop."[21]

In the unprecedented social mobility of the postwar era, bad work habits and failures to perform basic job duties were the norm, not the exception. What the new political regime expected and tested in the case of the newly appointed staff were not professional skills but the potential for development. "Sometimes

[18] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 27; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, 5 February 1951.
[19] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1950, 20; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, 12 July 1950.
[20] Ibid., 22.
[21] Ibid., 21.

we recruited censors who had the necessary intellectual skills but not the necessary potential for development," an official of the GDPPM admitted later in 1954.[22] The leadership of the GDPPM sensed the paradox in how censors were appointed: "We are pursuing two major goals: we either hire unskilled people who, given their proper social background, will acquire necessary skills, or we hire petit-bourgeois elements, skilled, it is true, but who most likely will have a negative impact on our working environment."[23]

The personnel policy in the censor's office represented a serious compromise over the social composition issue.[24] The tension inherent in the communist cadre policy *en large*, the gap between ideological firmness and the actual recruitment practices, was visible in the recruitment practices of the GDPMM as well. To match recruits with the Party's ideological orthodoxy meant in practice to favour the cadres with a healthy social origin (working-class and poor peasant background). However, coming from social strata with low rates of school-going, such cadres were not very likely to have the necessary skills to deal with official paperwork, manage and organize collective groups, or pass critical judgment on various genres of writings. Compromise over the social composition was needed and it translated into a more "relaxed" cadre

[22] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1954, 99; meeting of the GDPPM's Collegium, 25 January 1954.
[23] ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1951, 60; annual report delivered by the deputy Ion Dumitrache, January 1951.
[24] In other bureaucratic sectors, such as the selection of cadres for the collectivization process, the Party notably pushed for imposing cadres with healthy origins (proletarian or poor-to-middle peasant background) as opposed to those labelled *chiaburi* (or kulaks). See Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege. The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 161; Michael Steward and Razvan Stan, "Collectivization and Resistance in the Shepherding Village of Poiana Sibiului (Sibiu Region)," in *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power. The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949-1962,* eds. Constantin Iordachi and Dorin Dobrincu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009). However, the greatest challenge to such rhetoric came from the fact the *chiaburi* enjoyed a prestigious status in the local communities, where wealth was linked with the exemplary hard-working individual. Further complicating matters, the social background of "healthy" cadres sometimes made them incompatible with sustaining a bureaucratic work.

policy which resulted in a ratio of healthy/unhealthy social origin unthinkable in other bureaucratic sectors.[25]

Because good cadres with strong communist credentials were difficult to hire, the GDPPM set up a recruitment policy which targeted fresh university graduates and enthusiastic youths.[26] Whilst the candidates for a censor's job in the Bucharest main office were recruited through the state distribution system for graduates and student internships, in the provinces it was the Agitprop which carried out the selection. The local Party structures recommended prospective candidates to the GDPPM. Subsequently, the Agitprop conducted the screening process.[27]

The GDPPM consistently blamed the "lack of interest" of local Party structures for the failures in the recruitment process. The local authorities, the censorship officials alleged, regularly appointed low-profile and part-time staff and, in extreme cases, they even failed to appoint censors at all. For example, in 1950, to fill the censors' positions for overseeing the newspapers in the cities of Timisoara and Arad, the Bucharest office had to resort to "institutional pressures and connections."[28] Although successful in their attempt, the GDPPM officials

[25] The archives preserve very few autobiographies of candidates for a censor's job. For example, I was able to find an autobiography of Simona Laufer, a candidate for a job with the Directorate for Foreign Press. Laufer left Romania for Palestine at the beginning of the war, but she returned with her family in 1949. In her autobiography to the Agitprop she highlighted her communist leanings and the ability to speak multiples languages. See ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 139; autobiography of Simona Laufer, 4 August 1950.
[26] In 1951, the leadership hailed a young censor from the Sub-Directorate for Book Control as a "young comrade who is educated by our school, by his day-to-day work in the office, and by the new society in which he lives. See ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1951, 14; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Control, May 1951.
[27] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 282; activity report of the GDPPM, compiled by the Office of the Director, February 1950.
[28] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 17; report after an inspection in the provinces undertaken by the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, February 1951.

took the matter as proof that the local authorities were ignoring the importance of censorship.[29]

To add insult to injury, at times local Agitprops would transfer censors to other jobs without notifying the censorship agency.[30] A report of the Directorate for Staff Training and Supervision acknowledged the lack of adequate means to prevent these breaches of institutional jurisdiction: "although our censors cannot be transferred to other jobs, the local [Party] committees sometimes transfer censors to other institutions."[31]

Both the low salary and the lack of prestige of the job were seen as hindering the recruitment of censors. A report written at the end of a two-month inspection in the provinces indicated the unattractive salary scale as the major barrier in the recruiting of skilled censors – "there is the problem of the salary … those on the outside, who would qualify for the job, ask for salaries exceeding two or three times our current possibilities."[32] In the early 1950s a censor earned less than a journalist in the provinces or a skilled factory worker. Since a factory worker earned far more than a censor, the salary on offer at the censorial agency was too unattractive to motivate the working class to join the ranks.[33]

Because of the low salary scale the censorial agency had to employ part-time censors in the majority of the offices in the provinces. The practice of hiring

[29] See for instance ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 16; report after an inspection in the provinces by the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, February 1951.
[30] ANR, Fond CPT, file 20/1951, 66; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, March 1951. See also ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1951, 83; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, June 1951.
[31] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 418; report of the Directorate for Staff Training, June 1952.
[32] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1950, 9; report after an inspection in the provinces undertaken by the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, June 1950.
[33] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 78; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, 10 May 1951.

part-time censors was reported to foster a weak work commitment and bad work habits: "those censors in the provinces who also have a secondary job with a higher payment rate… cannot pursue their censorial duties in proper conditions… they are superficial in conducting their work … a censor based in a city with a daily newspaper cannot have a second job!."[34] Yet, sometimes disregarding the basic principles of censorship, the Agitprop would appoint part-time censors who had a second job at the local newspapers.[35] For example, in Craiova, a city in the southern part of Romania, the head censor's primary job was headmaster of a local school. In a more serious breach of professional standards, his colleague was revealed to be the brother of the editor of the local newspaper which he was supposed to oversee.[36] About 100 km north, a censor from Râmnicu-Vâlcea was also the head of the local Committee for Physical Education and Sport, a job which required him to give up his censor duties for at least 10 days every month.[37]

In the earliest days of the GDPPM, the censors in the provinces were often individuals looking for a place in the postwar world, seeking new opportunities to supplement their income. Their censorial duties were often neglected. Shortages of paper affected not only the publishing industry but the censor's office as well, while the staff turnover was so high that in some cases

[34] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1950, 9; report after an inspection in the provinces undertaken by the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, August 1950.
[35] Interestingly, when a censor took the opposite path, being transferred from the GDPPM to the structures of the local Party branches, the officials spoke about the transfer in terms of a social promotion: "our censor was promoted to the rank of the activist in the regional committee of PMR". See ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1952, 50; memo sent to the local branches by the Directorate for Staff Training, May 1952.
[36] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1950, 22-23; report after an inspection in the provinces undertaken by the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, June 1950.
[37] Ibid., 17-8.

the censors left the office within days of their appointment.[38] The office space in the provinces usually meant a minimally equipped room somewhere on the premises of the local Party quarters. Even the censor's most iconic instrument of power, the rubber stamp, was occasionally hard to find in the offices. Some local offices were still using in 1951 rubber stamps from 1947-48 belonging to the Ministry of Arts.[39] The part-time censors would remain a familiar presence in the provinces – in some places they outnumbered the regular staff[40] – and in spite of the GDPPM leadership's efforts, part-time employment would only be scrapped in the late 1950s.[41]

To staff the Bucharest main office, the censorial agency primarily relied on the state centralized system of the distribution of cadres. Yet this was a source of frustration too. Sometimes, in spite of the GDPPM's demands, even graduates who had previously worked part-time with the institution whilst students were diverted elsewhere by the placement commissions. In the eyes of the senior censors these practices reinforced their sense that the central state authorities underestimated the importance of their work.

For example, in 1951 the GDPPM attempted to appoint three recent graduates, but the Ministry of Education expressed interest in the same graduates and intervened in the allocation process. The list of names with the GDPPM's

[38] Ideally, the induction period for a new censor lasted between two to three months. See ANR, Fond CPT, file 9/1951, 26; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, October 1951.
[39] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 27; report after an inspection conducted at Constanta branch by the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces, February 1951.
[40] An internal graphic of the Sub-Directorate for the Press in the Provinces showing the numbers of censors assuming office in the provinces between January 1950 and March 1951 is illustrative of the ratio of full-time/part-time censors. In this period of time, the number of full-time censors increased from thirteen to twenty-three, while the number of those taking up part-time employment rose from sixteen to thirty-six. (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 40; staff charts on various criteria – name, age, class, employment, etc.).
[41] Ibid.

claimed candidates were sent by the Governmental Commission for the Distribution of University Graduates to the Ministry of Education for approval. The latter refused to authorize the appointments requested by the GDPPM, which subsequently sent a strongly-worded petition to the Governmental Commission for the Distribution of the University Graduates, but to no avail. The GDPPM's leadership took the failure to recruit the desired graduates as indicative of the feeble prestige of the censorial agency within the communist cultural bureaucracy: "[they] willingly ignore the character of our work (censorship-control) which requires politically-and-ideologically equipped cadres with adequate political credentials."[42] This complaint reflected a twin frustration: "we were treated with the same disregard last year [1950] when we were only able to recruit after the best graduates were taken by other cultural and scientific institutions."[43]

Because of the shortcomings in the recruiting process, the GDPPM conceived the work and the workplace as central in doing their employees' class identity. The ascribing of class began with labour as the source of identity and it was meant to be collectivist and militant for the new socialist order. To become "politically uplifted," that is "communist," was to subordinate one's identity (class and craft) to an overarching proletarian ethic.

Before I discuss the pedagogical structure of the socialist workplace of censorship and the tensions between the censors and management, I turn in the next section to two leading censors of the early 1950s. These case studies will

[42] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1952, 14; a GDPPM memo to the Commission for the Distribution of the University Graduates, 1 October 1951.
[43] Ibid.

show that while, in principle, censors were meant to possess the highest levels of ideological understanding, pure social origins and unblemished political biographies, in practice the RCP was willing to appoint appointment people with very different personal and political histories. The key criterion in fact was the candidate's perceived loyalty and readiness to put their professional experience and expertise, however gained, to the service of socialist cultural revolution.

Building Exemplary Censors: Iosif Ardeleanu and Corneliu Codarcea

In 1949, against the backdrop of an impressive surge in membership, the Party launched a large-scale verification of its rank and file. When the campaign started, Iosif Ardeleanu, the future long-serving head of the censorial board, had just been named head of the Domestic Politics Department of the Radio Station. He would subsequently appear three times in front of the Verification Commission before he finally had his membership status confirmed.

The Commission had a special interest in investigating Ardeleanu's behaviour during an interrogation by the secret police in 1934, when he was arrested for his activity in the Red Help and later sentenced to five years in prison for "communist activity." The Party suspected that, in exchange for lenient treatment, Ardeleanu had agreed to collaborate with the Siguranța and had very likely given them the names of the leading communist members from

Timișoara.[44] When, a few months after his incarceration, Ardeleanu refused to join a communist inmates' prison protest, the Party became convinced that Ardeleanu's "petit-bourgeois residues made him weak and anxious when faced with the Siguranța."[45] Hardened in their belief in Ardeleanu's guilt, in spite of his unwavering denials, the Party expelled him. Two years later, in 1936, he would, however, regain his Party membership as a reward for his "good behaviour in prison." Yet the issue of Ardeleanu's alleged collaboration with the Siguranța was not yet settled. Released from prison in 1938, he took up various underground jobs with the Party, mainly in the sphere of trade unions, but he was arrested again in 1941 and imprisoned until 23 August 1944.

In 1949 in front of the Verification Commission, Ardeleanu was again reluctant to admit to any "bad behaviour" when under interrogation by the Siguranța back in 1934. Assuming that the Commission was in possession of his declarations to the Siguranta, Ardeleanu overcame his previous "deep fears" and admitted that he had indeed provided information about the Timișoara communist network to the secret police.[46] The Commission was both pleased with Ardeleanu's testimony and reassured that its moral authority over the verification process prevailed once again. Of course, hiding the truth from the Party and doubting its reasoning were seen as major breaches in the revolutionary consciousness, but nevertheless corrigible ones.[47] The

[44] For more information see Iosif Ardeleanu's file which consists of a rich selection of personal statements, autobiographies compiled for the use of the Verification Commission at ANR, Colecția 53 – Dosare de Partid ale Membrilor de Partid cu Stagiu in Ilegalitate care au Încetat din Viață (hereafter Colecția 53), file A/95, vol. I and II.
[45] Ibid., vol. II, 32; Ardeleanu's autobiography, 16 October 1949.
[46] Ibid., 25v.
[47] Igal Halfin, *Terror in My Soul. Communist Autobiographies on Trial* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 11.

"therapeutic weapon" of supporting low-consciousness individuals such as Ardeleanu was political enlightenment.

Thus, the Commission was lenient in its verdict. It reconfirmed Ardeleanu's Party membership but banned him from taking on decision-making positions (*munci de răspundere*) in the Party for a year. The references provided by a few leading Party figures also weighed in the final verdict. They portrayed a loyal, devoted, and disciplined Party member, with certain organizational skills. The referees, however, were less convinced of his political education. For example, Silviu Brucan, the deputy editor-in-chief of *Scânteia,* bluntly asserted that "I always thought … that Ardeleanu is better suited for organizational rather than propagandistic and agitational work."[48] In addition, the director of the Radio Station, Matei Socor, cast doubts on Ardeleanu's general knowledge in humanistic subjects: "Comrade Ardeleanu must improve his political and cultural skills and for this he must work to develop a better understanding of arts and literature."[49] Paul Luchian, Ardeleanu's direct supervisor at the Radio Station, echoed Socor's critique: "I have to say that comrade Ardeleanu's work at the Radio sometimes reflects a lack of general knowledge."[50]

Surprisingly for a future chief censor, his mastery of Romanian language was also problematic. For example, when he was arrested by the Siguranța in 1934 the authorities hired an interpreter to translate the indictment into Hungarian, Ardeleanu's mother tongue.[51]

[48] ANR, Colecția 53, file A/95, vol. II, 65; Silviu Brucan's reference on behalf of Iosif Ardeleanu, 12 September 1949.
[49] Ibid., 67v; Matei Socor's reference on behalf of Iosif Ardeleanu, 17 August 1949.
[50] Ibid., 68; Paul Luchian's reference on behalf of Iosif Ardeleanu, 17 August 1949.
[51] Ibid., 5-16; copies of Ardeleanu's declarations at the Siguranța.

We do not know why the Party decided to revoke Ardeleanu's ban, perhaps because of the chronic need for devoted cadres, but only a few months after the ruling, Ardeleanu was appointed editor of the leading literary magazine, *Contemporanul.* In less than a year he became the all-powerful head of the GDPPM. His career as a chief-censor (he retired in 1973), ran over twenty years, which nearly fully overlapped with the existence of the censorial body itself, disbanded by the authorities in 1977.

As a head of the GDPPM, Ardeleanu was a discreet although strict supervisor. In the eyes of some senior censors, perhaps too discreet a presence. For example, in late 1953, the head of the Sub-Directorate for Book Control, Flavius Schäffer, noticed that Ardeleanu's sparse involvement with the censors "resulted in his being little known by the comrades."[52] Ardeleanu directed negotiations with other heads of state institutions and presided at meetings with senior censors. He worked in close collaboration with the head of the Agitprop, Leonte Răutu, and his deputies Pavel Țugui and Mihai Roller.

When the censors were unsure about the political meaning conveyed by certain texts, Ardeleanu was the only censor authorized to contact the Agitprop for counsel.[53] He also reviewed problematic cases and made comments and annotations in the margins of manuscripts.[54] For example, in 1951 he decided that all printed materials featuring religious references were to be overseen by

[52] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1954, 51; transcript of a GDPPM Collegium meeting.
[53] Discussion with Țugui, 22 July 2013.
[54] At some point a senior censor from a sub-directorate of the GDPPM claimed in a collective meeting that there were new censors who, after several months of working in the institution, still could not have been able to recognize Ardeleanu had they walked passed him in the central hallway. See ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1953, 51; transcript of a meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising (speech by Flaviu Schäfer, the head of the sub-directorate), November 1953.

him personally.[55] Due to his background he also felt professionally compelled to intervene in the censorship of literary manuscripts in Hungarian, those dealing with economic issues (he trained as an economist), and articles from the literary magazine *Contemporanul* (where he briefly worked as an editor).[56] The senior censors routinely briefed Ardeleanu about the most important interventions in manuscripts and newspapers. So did the publishers and well-connected high-profile authors when asking for manuscripts to be fast-tracked or when they considered that the censors had made what they perceived to be unfair interventions in the text.[57]

For his hard-line on errors, largely exceeding the rigour of his peers, he was feared by the censors.[58] To offer an example, in 1951 a censor, "one of our best censors" in the words of his superior, approved an article referencing technological advances in the field of communication networks. Apparently, the censor was misled by the fact that the article had been published before by the news agency, the *Agerpres.* He therefore approved the article without reading it. The censor's direct superior reported the error to Ardeleanu and asked for a simple reprimand. Ardeleanu strongly disagreed. In his note, he explained that in deciding the type of disciplinary measure, the seniors should base their decision not on the censor's work abilities, but they should instead consider the "damaging effects of the error on the general state interest." Therefore,

[55] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 83; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, 11 May 1951.
[56] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1951, 174; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, March 1951.
[57] Discussion with Tugui, 22 July 2013.
[58] See ANR, Fond CPT, file 3/1951, 3-4; note written by Ardeleanu on the back of an internal report investigating the misconduct of a censor named Ghiță Gheorghe, 20 August 1951.

Ardeleanu argued, the right form of discipline should have been a final reprimand before dismissal.

Unlike Ardeleanu's, the interwar career of Corneliu Codarcea, the most celebrated censor within the Directorate of Book Supervising, was not inspired by socialist-democratic ideals. In 1917, Codarcea, a Romanian living in the Austro-Hungarian-controlled Transylvania, took his first-ever trip to Romania.[59] He arrived in extraordinary circumstances. The year before, as a soldier in the Austrian-Hungarian Army he had been taken into French captivity, where he remained until early 1917, when he was sent to Romania with a French detachment of war prisoners. After the war, Codarcea returned to his native Cluj, now part of the newly established Greater Romania.[60]

In Cluj, Codarcea immersed himself in Romanian nationalistic literary circles and established collaborations with various literary magazines. His most important collaboration was with *Țara Noastră* (Our Country), edited by the nationalist poet, journalist, and future prime-minister under Carol II, Octavian Goga.[61] Codarcea threw his energy into a literary and journalistic career as a fighter against Hungarian revisionism. In a lamenting article from 1926, he expressed his doubts about the Romanian government's policy of cultural nationalism. Reflecting on cultural work in the newly acquired provinces, Codarcea advocated fervently an ethno-nationalist "revolution": "the Transylvanian cities will be Romanianized only at a formal level, and because of that they will be carrying an artificial foreign soul … we can fight this only

[59] Romania understood in its pre-1918 boundaries, comprising Wallachia and Moldova.
[60] Corneliu Codarcea, "Români Ardeleni in Franța," *Țara Noastră,* 4 July, 1926.
[61] Octavian Goga would later set up the extremely nationalistic and anti-Semitic National Christian Party.

by establishing a proper cultural framework in which a Romanian soul will arise … The situation is bitter … many families still use Hungarian as a first language and in shops, on the 'corso,' at parties, the language of the Romanian 'elites' is Hungarian."[62] He wanted a "radical transformation of the people living in Transylvania, [a] Romanianization of the Romanians … for all the cities in Transylvania to become centres of Romanianism … we have to become Romanian in our souls."[63]

Codarcea's political stance was resolutely right-wing. When the *Liga Antirevizionistă Română* (The Romanian Anti-Revisionist League) was established in 1933, Codarcea joined it with enthusiasm. The League, under the patronage of Stelian Popescu, the owner of the ultra-nationalistic newspaper *Curentul* (The Current), militated for the "strengthening of the nationalistic consciousness of the Romanians", while "fighting the propaganda aiming at revision of the peace treaties."[64] Codarcea was a prominent collaborator in the League's annual calendar in 1935 where he reiterated that "we all have an important duty for the country."[65]

Sometime in the late 1930s he took up a job at the Directorate for Press in the Ministry of Propaganda. Codarcea distinguished himself as a dedicated censor and soon achieved promotion, being appointed head of one of the Directorate's sub-directorates.[66] He received further institutional recognition in

[62] Codarcea Corneliu, "Koloszvar-Cluj", *Țara Noastră,* 27 June, 1926.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ioniță Nicolae, "Fondul Arhivistic Liga Antirevizionistă Română," *Revista Arhivelor* no. 83 (2006): 95-113.
[65] Marian Petcu, *Istoria Jurnalismului din România în Date. Enciclopedie Cronologică* (Iași: Polirom, 2012), 591.
[66] Decizia no. 4195/1940 Referring to Staff Transfer Within the Ministry of Propaganda, *Monitorul Oficial*, 6 May, 1940.

1940 when he was offered a position in the Ministry of Propaganda's Office for Research and Documentation. There he was entrusted with collecting historical, literary, artistic and military research to be used by the wartime regime in propaganda brochures, press releases, manifestos, books, radio broadcasts etc.[67] In spring 1941, alongside other nationalistic intellectuals, he signed a public appeal which appeared in *Ardealul* (Transylvania) magazine and which called for the "re-unification of Transylvania with Romania."[68]

After the wartime dictatorship collapsed, Codarcea was among the very few censors to keep their jobs following the postwar institutional reconfigurations and purges. He was rewarded with a senior position in the Directorate for Book Authorizing and Control in early 1950, soon after the GDPPM was established. There is no evidence to indicate when Codarcea left the communist censorial body, but in the archives his work reports became rarer, then absent after 1953.[69] It is likely that he took retirement due to health problems. In spite of his "loaded" past Codarcea survived not only the early postwar staff purges but the Party's verification process of the years 1948-50 as well.[70]

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[67] Ibid.; For the organization of the Ministry of Propaganda see Mioara Anton, *Propagandă și Război. Campania din Est, 1941-1944* (București: Tritonic, 2007), 67-79.
[68] In spite of my efforts, it was impossible to fathom the exact date.
[69] The last mention of Codarcea in the official records I was able to find dates back to early 1953 when his name appears on a list of censors awarded a performance bonus for their work in the last quarter of 1952 – "he worked well in spite of his overall poor health condition". See ANR, Fond CPT, file 15/1953, 17; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, March 1953.
[70] Unfortunately, during my research in Bucharest I was not able to trace the personal file of Codarcea, or the files containing his deposition(s) given in front of the Party's Verification Commission. I was told that the archival collection containing the files pertaining to the activity of the Verification Commission sat uncatalogued somewhere in the repositories of the National Archives.

The reason for his survival is clear. In the GDPPM Codarcea's record of checking library and book-shop stocks and purging banned books was one of the best. He split his postwar censor career between working in the central office in Bucharest and travelling across Transylvania to purge libraries and bookshops. His Hungarian language proficiency was much needed. In parallel, Codarcea offered his expertise in the censoring of Hungarian and French books (after 1952 he worked only in book authorizing). In 1951, the head of the Directorate for Book Control hailed him as "an example for all of us… an example of a young soul… a new man with white hair."[71] He owed this glowing assessment to his "discipline in labour, reliability in all he is doing, and exceptional professionalism."[72] His commitment and attitude towards work, as a senior GDPPM censor put it, "are the best examples for our younger comrades."[73]

In October 1952, after an inspection of the local libraries in Cluj as the head of a group of censors from Bucharest, he reported to the central office about the local authorities' "lack of vigilance in the national problem." Somewhat ironically, only as a communist censor did Codarcea achieve his long-standing dream of fighting off Hungarian chauvinism. It was the Party which ultimately gave him a sense of fulfilment at work.[74]

[71] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1951, 13; transcript of a meeting of the Directorate for Book Authorizing, February 1951.
[72] Ibid.
[73] ANR, Fond CPT, file 9/1951, 33; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, October 1951.
[74] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 25; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, 12 November 1952.

Concerned with the cultural unity of the country after the First World War, in his interwar writings Codarcea often urged state intervention in culture. As a censor and an official in the Ministry of Propaganda in the late 1930s/early 1940s Codarcea contributed to the expanding of the state's oversight of cultural administration. Daily "normative" instructions given to the press and doctored news designed for, and strict censorship of, the media channels took the logic of preventive censorship and state intervention to new extremes. Through the postwar purges and de-fascization the administrative power of the state was further increased. Codarcea proved to be one of the most effective instruments of "cultural de-fascization."

Although people like Codarcea had not been previously inspired by socialist ideals and were not wholeheartedly accepting of the Stalinist cultural pattern, they put their expertise into carrying out the cultural revolution. Neither Ardeleanu's poor ideological education nor Codarcea's interwar anti-communism were viewed as obstacles against a career as a communist censor. Expertise such as Codarcea's and established practices were far more instrumental in the institutionalization of the new communist censorial policies.

Yet the ideological orthodoxy required a mechanism of substantial internal surveillance. The Party was reassured by the presence of prominent communist figures from the underground years. Ardeleanu's deputies, Bujor Sion and Ion Vidrașcu,[75] were also high-profile communist cadres. However, although trusted Party members, they never held prominent positions in the high

[75] For Ion Vidrașcu's biography see ANR, Colecția 53, file V 78, vol. 1.

circles of power, nor were they were closely associated with high Party politics.[76]

The heads of directorates were usually lesser known Party members of middle-class background. Even in the rare instances when censors with a "healthy" origin were promoted to heads of directorates, they seldom kept their position for long. For instance, in 1949 a censor with a "poor peasant" origin was made head of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervision, but amidst growing tensions with the leadership over ideological issues, he was with a "petit-bourgeois" intellectual in less than a year.[77] As of 1950, 11 out of 13 deputies and employees within the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing were regarded as "bourgeois elements,"[78] whilst the Directorate for Foreign Press comprised six "petit-bourgeois elements" out of ten full-time staff.[79] At the conclusion of the Party's verification campaign (1951), the censorial board claimed an

[76] Party members with strong cultural credentials were generally unwilling to work for the GDPPM. Nevertheless, some young communist writers, such as the future literary critic Paul Georgescu, did have short career spells as censors.

[77] A case in point is Flaviu Schäffer, one of the landmark figures of censorship in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Schäffer became a censor in 1948, at a time when the official censorial agency belonged to the Ministry of Arts and Information. In 1949, he was among the censors to be recruited by the newly established GDPPM where he would be the most active censor in the book purging campaigns. The archives of the GDPPM for the years 1949-50 feature many elaborate reports sent by Schäffer following his inspections of various libraries in Bucharest and in the provinces. Both handwritten and typewritten, they meticulously review the number of books purged and problems encountered while undertaking his work, whilst also making suggestions and future recommendations. Sometimes Shäffer comes across as overzealous in front of his superiors in his keenness to do more than merely carry out assignments. For example, he liked to raid the places where sellers of used books traded illegally in order to seize their stock. One of his reports tells of some sellers he had been watching who managed to flee by the skin of their teeth, leaving behind piles of Sherlock Holmes books during one of his inspection. However, Schäffer eventually managed to take the sellers to the Police (although the archives do not offer details on how this happened). Having managed to seize the sellers, Schäffer enthusiastically reported to his seniors: "In the morning I walked along the 6 Martie, Republicii, and Bălcescu boulevards to see whether the used books sellers were still selling detective novels. I found no one there". See ANR, Fond CPT, file 8/1949, 179). See also Corobca, *Controlul Cartii*, 28-29.

[78] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 285; report on the activity of the GDPPM, compiled by the Office of the Director.

[79] Ibid., 283.

"overall improvement of the social composition of the institution."[80] However, as the documents make clear, the censors with "unhealthy" origin still constituted the backbone of the body of cadres.

In their theorization of the "rhetoric of the official," Max Weber, and more recently the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, introduced the notion of "ethical prophets." This designates social agents who speak in the name of a social whole, that is "the founders of a discourse designed to be unanimously recognized as the unanimous expression of the unanimous group."[81] The ethical prophet's discourse rhetorically relies on *prosopopoeia,* a verbal device that implies speaking on behalf of an absent person or object, and in the name of something that can be a person, the people, the public, the Party line, History etc. Prosopopoeia undergoes institutionalization when the speaker has the mandate to voice and perform this trans-personalization.[82] When, for instance, writers expressed their doubts regarding a censor's report, their critique targeted not the censor but the institution of censorship. By embodying the collectivism of the Party-line, "the censor" had become an "institution." As ethical prophets of the state, censors acted like persons to whom the collective "delegates the utterance of the 'must-be' that a group is obliged to recognize because it recognizes itself in this official truth."[83]

Looking at censors as ethical prophets is useful because it invites questions of how the "legitimate voice" in the system of cultural control was

[80] Ibid., 294.
[81] Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State. Lectures at the College de France, 1989-1992,* trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 45.
[82] Ibid., 45-46.
[83] Ibid., 47.

constructed. Ardeleanu's and Codarcea's biographical details, as scattered and incomplete as they are, allow us to question the "institutionalization" of the censor in our representations of communist culture. They take us beyond the questions of "who is speaking" and "in whose name he/she is speaking." But, in so doing, they also laid bare the need to examine in detail the first decade of the censorial board and its historical context, erased from social memory with the routinization brought about by the "institutionalization" of the censorial act.

In 1964 the GDPPM's human resources office compiled lists of censors who had received state decorations and medals since the establishment of the institution. The lists are interesting sources because they reveal that the leaders of the censorial agency cleaved its history into two distinct periods. Towards the end of the 1960s, they used to refer to the period stretching from the establishment of the GDPPM (1949) to 1955 as an inconsistent and erratic "beginning". Their way of "remembering" the first decade was not helped by the fact that, according to the lists of decorated censors, those hired between 1950 and 1954 made up less than 10% of the censors still active in 1964, whilst from amongst those who joined the GDPPM in 1949-50, only 3 stayed on.[84] The absence of staff hired during the decade of the birth and growth of the censorial board coincided with the "period of the professionalization" of the censors which came with the 1960s.[85] The demarcation line between the 1950s and the 1960s, although institutionally tenable given the implementation of programmes aiming to professionalize censors, nevertheless renders opaque

[84] ANR, Fond CPT, file 10/1957, 110-116 (although the file is listed in the official records as corresponding to the year 1957, part of the records are from 1964).
[85] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1967, 12-24; transcript of a meeting of the GDPPM's Collegium, 6 May 1967; ANR, Fond CPT, file 78/1967, 8-28; transcript of a meeting of the GDPPM's Collegium, 7 October 1967.

the institutional beginnings of censorship. As such, the tensions, contradictions, and struggles inherent in the process of establishment were taken over, in the minds of the leadership, by its later, more 'successful' history of efficiency and professionalization. Again, we are told, successful institutionalization implies an amnesia of its own genesis.

Educating Censors

Generally speaking, the censors were enrolled in the same standardized "enlightenment program" as the other cadres in the Party-state system. Various courses offered through the Party's educational institutions (lasting from a few weeks to two or three years); socialist competitions; exposure to Party propaganda tools (daily mandatory readings of the Party's newspaper *Scânteia,* collective attendances at films, theatre and various cultural events), and collective meetings of censors with their leaders (*şedinte*) formed the backbone of the program.[86] Censors were also given regular lectures by members of the Central Committee and professors of the Party university. Topics stressed the current political events, as well as various themes in the history of the RCP and the international workers' movement and were intended to provide the censors with the critical skills necessary to grapple with political messages in publications.[87] Additionally, the censors were expected to attend courses in Marxism-Leninism, Romanian language and literature, as well as Russian

[86] ANR, Fond CPT, file 7/1951, 83-4; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, May 1951.
[87] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1949, 2-3; report of the Directorate for the Press in the Provinces discussing the raising of the political-ideological level of censors, September 1949.

language. Another form of pedagogy was "modelling by example," meaning sessions of collective debates on the most important censorial interventions and professional exchanges between fellow censors. Denunciation and unmasking of "enemies," featuring accusations of wrongdoing, were also part the educational efforts.[88]

Who was an educated censor? As a senior censor saw it, good progress in the enlightenment program provided the censors with a new political vocabulary which translated into high quality censorial interventions. A revolutionary education, they firmly believed, would also build a new institution. Conceived as a cultural training space, the work environment was a space for the formation of subjectivities through the production and consumption of cultural forms.

When in 1952 a senior censor confidently asserted that the institution had gone from "a simple to a superior censorship," he was referring to the GDPPM's efforts to consolidate the institutional work culture, which in turn re-shaped the quality of the censorial act. He pointed out that the raising of the ideological level of the censors, socialist competitions, and regular meetings for work assessments were the mechanisms which had taken "censorship to a superior level."[89] Directed by the Agitprop, the enlightenment program was

[88] Denunciations and unmaskings typically occurred during meetings organized by the directorates. They became more frequent at the height of the Verification Campaign (1950-1). For example, the deputy of the Directorate for the Central Press was dismissed in 1952 as a result of an anonymous denunciation revealing that "his wife's family is hostile to our regime (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1952, 43-4; secret note sent by Agitprop to GDPPM, 26 February 1952). Another censor was denounced for her private life "totally incompatible with a job in the ideological sector" (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 88; transcript of a meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, October 1952).

[89] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 110-11; activity report for the period 1 October 1951 – 15 January 1952 of the Directorate for Book Authorizing, 31 January 1952.

designed to provide the censors with a "digestible" version of Marxist-Leninist theory. Its aim was not to build erudite students of Marxism but "practical" political personae. The censorial body was subjected to the same educational programmes which the Agitprop was running for the building of cadres in the other branches of the communist bureaucracy. Hence the rather elementary, almost rudimentary, training in Marxist theory imposed on censors.

Because a censor was expected to be able to engage with the political connotations of texts, the Agitprop considered that elementary Marxist knowledge would suffice. For example, in early 1950 the GDPPM ran a five-month bi-weekly study group on Marxism-Leninism for both senior and junior censors. Topics debated included "the meaning and significance of Marxism-Leninism," "the Marxist theory of class and the class struggle," "essential features of philosophical materialism," "the causes of the First World War and the Marxist-Leninist party on war, peace, and revolution," and "the Marxist-Leninist teachings about the state and the national problem."[90] A follow-up note from 1951 described the group as having "a weak attendance with poorly structured sessions."[91] The study of Marxism proved challenging for censors outside the institutional reading groups too. In 1953 a censor of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing failed his university finals in Marxism twice – from documents we find out that this person was not the only censor to have failed the exam – [92] whilst a censor of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising

[90] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 158; course handout for the "Marxist-Leninist study circle".
[91] ANR, Fond CPT, file 11/1951; transcript of a meeting of the Directorate for the Central Press, 17 November 1951.
[92] ANR, Fond CPT, 24/1953, 89; transcript of a meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, October 1953.

failed to even sit her final in Marxism.[93] Well into the 1960s, the new appointees were not tested for their Marxist knowledge but for their eagerness to comply with the Agitprop requirements for "political training."[94] In practice the latter meant "basic political knowledge enabling the understanding of domestic and foreign political events."[95]

The revolutionary language employed to redefine the nature of work was itself an instrument of political and social change. In this sense, socialist competitions, the favourite pedagogical tool in the beginning, should be seen as a form of charismatic rhetoric embodying the revolutionary transformations. As elsewhere in the bureaucratic and economic sector, labour competitions were imposed both to raise productivity and redefine the nature of work. Of course, in the postwar years public language was incrementally turned into an agitational tool, yet obtaining the collaboration of the workers in its unprecedented social and economic transformation was key to the Party. As a historian of Eastern Europe finely put it, labour competitions were seen as the solution for overcoming the Party's anxieties related to the workers' poor commitment to the job, as well as a means of remaking the working-class

[93] ANR, Fond CPT, 25/1953, 167; transcript of a meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, August 1953.
[94] "Comrade Frăteanu came to us straight from school with a high school diploma … here [in the censor's office] he has been taught basic elements of Marxism-Leninism; he currently works with other censors on the most difficult materials ... however, he has still not yet developed a strong ability to make sense of the political character of our censorial actions". See ANR, Fond CPT, file 24/1957, 45; activity report of the Directorate for Book Authorizing, June 1960 (in the archival collection this file is catalogued as corresponding to the year 1957, but it contains documents pertaining to the year 1960).
[95] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 101; report of the Directorate for Book Publishing for the first quarter of 1952, March 1952.

tradition in factories. Productivity "had to be made both predictable and politically useful."[96]

Although theoretically the nature of censorial work differed in training and approaches from work on the shop floor, to take an example, in the official ascription the censors were also assimilated to the working class. Learning how to work was more than a question of quantitative fulfilment. For the censors too, socialist competitions were posited to make political agitation an integral part of the labour mobilization. The institutional workspace meant more than merely offering censors the space to conduct their work; it was a cultural training ground.

In this sense, the question of whether or not the socialist competitions were indeed successful in raising productivity and censors' enthusiasm is less consequential. More important is to acknowledge that they changed the workplace culture and the old labour process quite radically. The socialist competitions differed structurally from other labour competitions taking place under capitalist regimes: they did not necessarily celebrate the triumph of the winner, but the raising of all participants to the level of the winner.[97] The mobilization for work promoted by the socialist competition was intended to provide the environment with a new work ethic.[98]

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[96] Pedraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland. Workers and Communists, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 237-238.
[97] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 204.
[98] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 83-84; transcript of the Sub-Directorate for Books Authorizing's evaluation meeting for the work in the third quarter of 1952, October 1952.

Labour competitions in the GDPPM were organized between individual censors, between groups of censors/internal directorate, and between the provincial branches of the censorial agency. The trade union was a prominent presence in the organizing of socialist competition, although its role had been drastically redrafted compared to its life under capitalism.[99] The leadership supervised the process and registered the results, but it was during union meetings that many of the individual challenges and contracts for socialist competitions were agreed upon.[100] For example, a typical socialist competition between the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing and the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising in the first quarter of 1950 was called to fulfil challenges such as the "quality and the political correctness of the book reviews," to "achieve a 100% attendance at the study group," and "strengthening of the work discipline." The heads of the two sub-directorates were appointed referees. They both kept the score for each team and assigned readings to competitors "for the raising of the ideological level."[101] The proposed readings usually replicated those from the general enlightenment programme: readings from Lenin (for example "Lenin on literature"), Stalin, Makarenko, and the Party's chief ideologue, Leonte Răutu.[102]

[99] The new order, it was emphasized by the authorities, was no longer about owners exploiting the workers to their profit. The trade unions, in their strive to defend the workers' interest, had to focus on the raising productivity since the working conditions strictly depended to the rate of production; censors who joined the union were put in charge of advertising and organizing labour competitions, conducting on-site cultural work etc. (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1948, 55-56).
[100] In the period November 1951-May 1952, 70% (140) of the censors were involved in different types of socialist competitions; in the same period were formed eleven teams involving 47 censors. (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 174; report of the GDPPM Collegium for the period 1 November 1951 – 31 May 1952).
[101] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1950, 1; report about a socialist competition between the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising and the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, March 1952.
[102] Ibid.

Other forms of labour competition challenged individual censors to compete. For example, in 1950, two censors from the Sub-Directorate of Book Authorizing competed to beat the daily reading norm of the most "difficult" manuscripts, novels, literary magazines. The norm stated a reading pace of 40 pages per hour, which the censors aimed to beat by increasing it to 50-60 pages.[103] Points were also awarded for punctuality at work, for "maintaining a proper work ethic", and for individual study. In 1952, the local branches in the cities of Timisoara, Oradea, Arad, and Craiova challenged each other to a year-long socialist competition with festive rounds on 23 August, 7 November, and 30 December (Republic Day).[104] The criteria and the means of measuring their performances focused on the fulfilment of "practical tasks" such as: "the checking of the local press in order to prevent political errors", "the checking of all scripts at the Radio station," "the raising of the political level through individual study," "the checking of street posters in order to prevent spelling mistakes," etc. The most severe penalty, a "deduction of at least five points," was, of course, applied for the failure to spot a political error.[105]

The labour competitions gave the leadership of the censorial board access to the work process, and the tool to infuse work with communist values. They also helped check on the censorial staff in further ways.[106] First, a legitimate concern of the seniors was that given the low salary scale and the job's lack of prestige the new appointees would perform substandard work

[103] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 161; report on a socialist competition in the Directorate for Book Control, November 1950.
[104] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1949, 129-30; report of the Directorate for Staff Training, 10 May 1952.
[105] Ibid.
[106] ANR, Fond CPT, file 1/1950, 161-2; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, December 1950.

which would further blemish the prestige of the institution. Socialist competitions, with their bonus awards, offered a way to supplement the low pay.[107] Second, poor discipline and high staff turnover were common problems throughout the bureaucratic sector and the censorial agency was no exception. For the management, the labour competitions were equally important in the controlling of the workforce's often unpredictable behaviour.[108]

The censors, however, were not just passive consumers of the leadership's cultural design. They pushed for their own understanding of work. By late 1952, socialist competitions had become formulaic and routinized, with participants lacking enthusiasm. As such, they began to lose much of their importance as the main pedagogical tool. The leadership admitted, albeit reluctantly, that the censors relied on "simple and formulaic answers" while the socialist competitions "have stagnated and, because of their reliance on fabricated outputs, have acquired a formal aspect."[109] The fluctuations in staff turnover sometimes made the concluding of competitions impossible. It was, thus not uncommon for teams of censors to withdraw and for socialist competitions to be called off because in the meantime part of the staff had either left or had been transferred to other directorates.[110] In addition, the senior censors often criticized the winners of the competitions for not "doing enough

[107] ANR, Fond CPT, file 11/1951, 4-6; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, 17 November 1951.
[108] The lack of discipline seemed to remain a critical issue even in late 1950 (although this was an issue mainly in the provinces). For example, sometime in 1951, a censor from Bucharest asked for unpaid leave. Upon refusal, he took the initiative to stop going to work. The censor's office had no trace of him for a good couple of weeks and when he was eventually located in a provincial city in Moldavia he only received an institutional reprimand (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 50/1951, 35, report of the Directorate for Book Control).
[109] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 85; quarterly report of the Direction for Book Authorizing, January 1952.
[110] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 175; report of the GDPPM Collegium for the period 1 November 1951 – 31 May 1952.

to assist those who lagged behind."[111] After 1953, socialist competitions were slowly faded out, a course of action which seems to confirm the words of a senior censor back in 1951: "the socialist competitions had such a faint echo among censors and were undervalued by them precisely because of the latter's feeble ideological level."[112]

The censors also ran red corners, kept their own wall gazettes and collectively discussed recently released books and films, and political events. Although the red corners became the focus of the leadership's campaign to stir up the censors' cultural engagement, frequent reports show that informal activities predominated. Most often, censors used the red corners for relaxation and small talk and the reports typically complained that "the red corners have ceased to be places for political education."[113]

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the censors' work was regularly assessed in relation to the quality of their interventions (reports). Whereas the system of censorship guaranteed the censors' anonymity in relation to authors, for the senior censors a good report was the ultimate exercise in political maturity. Ideally, it had to negotiate and counteract the argumentation of the censored text through clear examples. As one censor put it: "the report is a matter of substance not of form, it is the mirror of the political maturity and judgment we achieved and of one's sense of responsibility."[114]

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[111] ANR, Fond CPT, 5/1952, 85; quarterly report of the Direction for Book Authorizing, January 1952.
[112] ANR, Fond CPT, file 9/1951, 5; report of the Office of the Director, June 1951.
[113] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 176-78; report of the Office of the Director, May 1952.
[114] ANR, Fond CPT, file 24/1953, 67; report of the Directorate for Book Authorizing, August 1953.

If the intervention was unwarranted, it signalled a mechanical approach towards, or low engagement with, work and/or possible excessive reasoning. Conversely, when the censor enforced the regulations with excessive zeal or when a correctable error was judged to be a structural political one, the seniors regarded these practices as "abusive".[115] By the same token, the censor would also commit an error if he asked for minor amendments to texts which the seniors subsequently assessed to be structurally "deficient". Of course, the censors were often tempted to play it safe, namely instead of trying to correct errors and thus exposing themselves to criticism, they preferred to turn down an entire manuscript.[116] At times, the censors tried to avoid responsibility by attempting to pass the decision to a superior.[117] But, aware of these habits, the seniors were eager to fight them. These practices were doubly harmful, the officials contended. On the one hand, they weakened the power of the political message transmitted by the publishing industry and, in so doing, they implicitly acted against the reader's interest. On the other, they inflicted damage on the institutional prestige of the censorial agency.[118]

Thus, in the eyes of the senior censors the equation was simple: the quality of the reports signalled the political-ideological education of the censors, whilst the ideological improvement and the broadening of the cultural horizon of the censors promoted effective working relationships and a proper

[115] Ibid., 89; report of the Directorate for Book Authorizing, September 1953.
[116] A report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing from late 1953 expressed concerns with the censors' "tendencies to turn down manuscripts for unwarranted reasons … because of this, some manuscripts had to be re-read by different censors". See ANR, Fond CPT, file 25/1953, 7-8; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, November 1953.
[117] ANR, Fond CPT, file 25/1953, 14; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, November 1953.
[118] ANR, Fond CPT, file 24/1953, 165; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Control, October 1953.

institutional life.[119] If anything, education was the mark of the politically conscious censor. Valued censors had always been praised for their reports. For example, when Corneliu Codarcea's work was assessed at the end of 1952, his seniors also praised his reports: "[he] knows very well his work and he writes substantial reports."[120]

A good report was "convincing, with a clear argumentation which offers a correct political solution to the reviewed materials," the senior censors argued."[121] Conversely, an inadequate report was hastily written, had little to no structure with no "clear argumentation and weak conclusions, and lacked proper suggestions."[122] A politically conscious censor would avoid unnecessary interventions precisely because consciousness opposed (self)interest and it elevated his actions, saving him from errors such as de-contextualization/poor contextualization, mechanical approaches towards work, and political (mis)interpretation of texts.[123] Mastering the writing of reports was an education in itself.

The heads of directorates assessed the censors' reports and led collective meetings with censors to discuss their conclusions. Organized either at the level of the branches and directorates or as periodical meetings in Bucharest with the censors from the provinces, the meetings were also part of the efforts to increase

[119] "A good or a bad report reflects the political training of a censor", claimed Rosen Rosentweig, the head of the Directorate for Book Control (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 22; transcript of a meeting of the Directorate for Book Control, 12 December 1952).
[120] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1951, 16; transcript of a meeting of a Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, February 1951.
[121] ANR, Fond CPT, file 24/1953, 82; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing, August 1953.
[122] Ibid., 83.
[123] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1953, 8; the annual report of the Office of the Director, December 1953.

the educational level of censors and to forge new work relations. As Ardeleanu put it in the opening remarks of the first national meeting with the censors from the provinces, "these periodical meetings provide us with the opportunity to assess better our censors' political and ideological training … as a result we learn where we need to expand our political-ideological education."[124] Like education and the verification of censors, surveillance was also seen as a form of pedagogy. The new work relations were premised to function above individual interest and informal collaborations among censors. A common form of "dangerous personalism in work" was, in the eyes of the leadership, the censors' inclination towards discussing among themselves the reports or their work in progress. By seeking each other's advice, they were sidestepping the leadership and hindered hierarchical control over the workspace. It showed an "individualistic," thus an anti-collectivist habit.[125]

Because relationships steeped in personalism were perceived to be remnants of an old work ethos which had the potential to increase tensions among co-workers, they were denounced: "it is dangerous to turn criticism into gossip … criticism has an educational role only when it is pursued in collective meetings, otherwise it is gossip which brings tension in the workplace."[126] This was a frequent concern of the GDPPM's leadership. For example, in 1953, after he had attended a professional meeting in Bucharest, a censor from Timisoara spent an extra night at the GDPPM's dormitory where he "discussed with fellow

[124] ANR, Fond CPT, file 2/1952, 19; minute of a meeting of the Sub-Directorate for Book Authorizing (Ardeleanu's speech), January 1952.
[125] "Success in work can be achieved only through a close, constant, and authoritative control of work" (see ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 292; report on the activity of the Directorate for Central Press, April 1952).
[126] ANR, Fond CPT, file 24/1953, 56; report of the Directorate for the Central Press, February 1953.

censors the hardships he encountered in his work in Timisoara."[127] As a result, he was laid off and transferred to a high-school as a teacher.[128] The educated censor would have known that it was only in the collective that critiques could fulfil their educational role.

Conclusion

The peculiar conditions of the censorial work environment, requiring both absolute secrecy and high ideological standards and intellectual awareness, meant that censors were not ordinary bureaucrats. Ideally, they should harbour an enthusiasm and a voluntarism to match in formulation the interpretative reasoning of the Party elite. They worked in an institution with a leading role in the production of educated persons (the formation of subjectivities through the mediation of the consumption of cultural forms), yet they needed "cultural enlightenment" and the Party's guidance in learning how to "speak Bolshevik" themselves. They too were part of the cultural production of the educated person, i.e. a person endowed with maximum cultural capital. In other words, censors were being educated as they were educating. In the words of a senior from the Directorate for Printed Materials, "purging from the market the old books was a relatively straightforward procedure … now that new books are being produced

[127] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1953, 4; report of the Directorate for Staff Training, June 1953.
[128] Ibid.

we need a solid political-ideological education to match the difficulty of the task… and this means that the censor should be a political activist too."[129]

In defining the educated, the authoritarian pedagogies of the education programme also produced the "uneducated censor". The latter failed to keep up with the political-ideological training, made unwarranted interventions in texts and, not least, situated himself against the "values of the collective." A good working environment came to be defined by the reimagining of labour relations, which sought to channel loyalty away from the familiar and the personal towards the Party.[130] When the censors circumvented the "charismatic impersonalism" of the Party, they established patterns of personalistic ties, reprimanded by the leadership as "instigating gossip" and "undermining the collective work."[131] "Familiarity," and "personalism" were markers of the old with no place in the work environment.

Various lists and charts highlighting the censors' social origins, age, their Party membership status, length of service in the institution, and state decorations received were not just banal bureaucratic undertakings. The strategic compromises in the recruitment of censors in the early days needed, in the eyes of its seniors, a steady control of the work space accompanied by a continual assessment of the educational program.

The newspapers, the news released through the press agencies, the books, and the artistic performances had not only to inform or inspire the people.

[129] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1951, 11; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, May 1951.
[130] Kligman and Verdery, 189.
[131] ANR, Fond CPT, file 4/1951, 21; report of the Sub-Directorate for Book Supervising, May 1951.

They were expected to organize the way people looked at the world. That was the major task to which the censors were assigned. Censors, however, were only imperfect replicas of an ideal-type. Instead of being educators they themselves had to be educated. Instead of receiving clear directions, they were trapped within a labyrinth of clashing jurisdictions and evolving standards. In time, censorship became, to a certain extent, a powerful and far-reaching tool. In its beginnings, however, implementing an infallible censoring mechanism proved no less utopian than the socialist new world it was supposed to help bring about.

Under the postwar socialist state, the relationship between censors and producers was less antithetical than the dominant historiographical narratives suggest. The tensions between the cultural producers and censors did not stem from the state sponsored repression, but they were the result of clashes for pre-eminence in realizing the cultural agenda. The next chapter will focus on the most important institution of the communist mass-media, the Radio Station, to further explore the tensions between the political control and the production of a socialist culture.

Chapter 5. Broadcasting Socialist Culture: Radio and the Politics of Culture

The previous chapters have explored how communist authorities governed, organized, and regulated the institutional conduct and the practices of cultural production. As transmitter of the Party-line, the Agitprop both set the rules and norms of cultural governance and constructed the acceptable limits of thinking in cultural politics. Yet despite its intricacies and certain oppressive mechanisms, the relationship between culture and politics was less oppositional than it is usually depicted in the historiography. As the analysis of the Agitprop's far-reaching bureaucratic network has demonstrated, at its core the communist cultural project was constructive. The formal censorship had limited jurisdiction in the shaping of cultural products. Disciplined bureaucrats, the censors remained largely unknown to writers and journalists. They monitored the media, negotiated arguments, interpreted and counteracted argumentation and, at times, intervened to refine the language of cultural products.

By focusing on the Radio Station, this chapter explores further the relationship between political control and the production of a socialist culture. The radio is an apt case study for several reasons. First, across the branches of cultural production, radio production was the most supervised.[1] Although in the

[1] When my five-hour long discussion with Pavel Țugui, the former head of the Agitprop's Sector for Literature and Culture in early 1950s, reached the issue of radio, Țugui rushed to say: "O, the poor guys from the Radio Station! They were so drastically and relentlessly censored!" (my discussion with Țugui, 22 July 2013).

Bolshevik tradition the written word had been central to political communication with the masses, the agitational potential of the radio in the postwar years was unparalleled.[2] For the Bolsheviks, the ideal type of newspaper fulfilled a threefold mission: it was a collective propagandist, a collective agitator, and a collective organizer.[3] In the agrarian and largely illiterate Romania, textual media such as newspapers and pamphlets had limitations in reaching out and disseminating information over remote distances. In addition to making possible an almost instantaneous access to political information, the radio promised to play the role of a collective organiser which none of the other media institutions could perform. In this regard, it outstripped the print newspaper. Hence the attention the authorities – the Central Committee and censorship agency – paid to the radio.

Second, most of the studies on Romanian radio are written from the perspective of former radio professionals or collaborators. In their accounts radio wins praise for its role as a foremost cultural authority and for its highly skilled staff.[4] In depicting the postwar period and the 1950s, the studies unanimously and uncritically contrast the professionalism of the staff with Party officials' constrictive understanding of culture. For Eugen Denize, the author of an influential history of the radio, "the Radio Station did whatever it was

[2] Stephen Lovell, "How Russia Learned to Listen," *Kritika: Exploration in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 3 (2011): 591-92.
[3] Mark Hopkins, *Mass Media in the Soviet Union* (New York: Pegasus, 1970), 57-60.
[4] Filaret Acatrinei, *Radiodifuziunea Română. De la Înființare la Etatizare (1925-1948)* (București: Tritonic, 2008); Eugen Denize, *Istoria Societății Române de Radiodifuziune, Vol. I 1928-1944, Partea a II-a, 1938-1944* (București: Editura Casa Radio, 1999); Eugen Denize, *Istoria Societății Române de Radiodifuziune, Vol. II. Instaurarea și Consolidarea Comunismului (1944-1965)* (București: Editura Casa Radio, 2000); Vasile Ionescu, *Istoria Trece, Cuvântul Rămâne* (București: Editura Casa Radio, 2008); Silvia Iliescu, Octavian Silivestru, and Agota Szentannai, *Radio-Istorii, 1928-1945. Articole din Publicații Radiofonice și Mărturii de Istorie Orală Păstrate în Arhiva Radio România* (București: Editura Casa Radio, 2013).

possible to resist the policies of national annihilation … it succeeded in promoting those fundamental values which give meaning to Romanian culture."[5] Because the airways came under intense official scrutiny it was a hard-fought battle, yet, Denize went on, "the true Romanian radio professionals constantly overcame the communist censorship and provided the people with trustworthy programmes."[6]

In this chapter, I attempt to complicate this received image of the radio by exploring the control and monitoring of the radio's programmes. By focusing on the interplay between the censorship organs and the demands for professionalization, I argue that the narratives which posit two antithetical radio cultures obscure the struggle for the authority to define a socialist radio culture. The formal censorial mechanism was often redundant because the radio developed its own system of quality control and radio professionals sought to assert authority in programming decisions. The way in which the communist authorities conceptualized radio's social and political role did not differ significantly from the interwar practices. Indeed, I argue, the interwar and wartime reforms of the radio system provided the communists with an efficient ready-made propaganda instrument. They did not abolish the radio tradition; rather they assimilated it into their project to realize socialism in practice. In the 1950s the radio was simply reconceived as a revolutionary medium for socialist collective progress and political and moral education.

[5] Denize, *Istoria Societatii Române, 1944-1965,* 6.
[6] Ibid., 113.

Following Raymond Williams, I consider the Radio Station to be an aggregation of practices. I see it as a socially constructed technology actualized through institutional decisions and actions, in their turn shaped by economic, cultural, and aesthetic norms, and filtered through the reception of the audience.[7] Of course, how listeners make sense of the radio programmes is a question which transcends the institutional relations of production (how programmes reach them). Equally important is the active consumption of radio culture, namely how the audience appropriates cultural patterns and integrates them into daily life routines.

Radio contributes both to the production of space and spatial relationships. This is what the literary critic, Jody Berland, argues when she discusses the intertwined nature of textual and spatial production: "we are not simply listeners to sound, or watchers of images, but occupants of spaces for listening or watching, who, by being there, help to produce definite meaning and effects."[8] Radio as a cultural institution and radio as a listening experience can often be different.

I further understand the radio not as the transmitter of a static and transparent message, but as underpinning a "communicative circuit," where the sender becomes a producer and the receiver a consumer.[9] In this chapter I will be looking at how the institutional structures of broadcasting and their practices and networks articulate the productive end of the radio's communicative circuit

[7] Raymond Williams, *Television. Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Routledge, 1974).
[8] Jody Berland, "Angel Dancing: Cultural Technologies and the Production of Space," in *Cultural Studies,* Lawrence Grossberg, eds. Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Routledge, 1992), 39.
[9] Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language,* eds. Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Wills (London: Routledge, 1980), 118.

(programmes). In Stuart Hall's terms, this is the "labour process" of the discursive mode of the radio, the "encoding" of dominant cultural values into discourse.[10]

Institutionalizing Radio

Like elsewhere, in the beginning, the development of the radio in Romania owed much to the amateur radio clubs' experiments in sending out radio signals and to their advocacy work for the establishment of a state radio station.[11] The first experimental transmission took place in July 1925 and, shortly after, the radio enthusiasts and technophiles from the Association of Radio Friends built the first experimental radio station in Bucharest.[12] It would take another three years before the Romanian Radio Station was established by the government.

Yet, well before its opening, the Radio Station had been a key political question. The Parliament first discussed the Radio Law in 1925 amid fierce debates about the "disruptive powers" of an unregulated radio. In the words of a Romanian MP, the power of radio surpassed that of fire weapons: "the revolvers can at most take the life of a single man, while the radio can threaten the security and existence of the state."[13] Whilst some regarded the radio as a

[10] Ibid.
[11] In 1925, they established "the Association of the Radio Friends" which edited "Radiofonia" magazine.
[12] Victor Craăciun, "Introducere – Manuscrise si Voci. Scriitori Romani la Radio," in *Manuscrise si Voci. Scriitori Români la Radio,* ed. Victor Crăciun (București: Editura Eminescu, 1977), 12-14.
[13] Quoted in Holly Case, "The Media and State Power in South-East Europe Up to 1945. A Comparative Study of Yugoslav, Romanian, and Bulgarian Media," in *Ottomans into Europeans. State and Institution Building in South-East Europe,* eds. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi and Wim van Meurs (London: Hurst, 2010), 299.

threat, others saw it as a tool for national unification and centralization of state authority: "the entire nation can listen to the voice of its enlightened leaders who will lead it to redemption … radio gives to communities across country an unprecedented chance to unite in aspirations and to pursue similar political aims."[14]

The Radio Station was under state monopoly since its first broadcast on 1 November 1928. Its president, Dragomir Hurmuzescu, a long-standing supporter of a public broadcasting station, assigned the radio a prominent role in the mediation and circulation of the narratives which upheld the symbolic order of the national identity. His inaugural address firmly placed the radio in the cultural repertoire of nation-building: "because of its penetration into places as remote as the peasant hut, the radio has a major social and cultural importance. It surpasses the importance of the theatre in spreading culture and contributes to the unification of souls. Soon, it will become a barometer for the level of development of a nation."[15]

Hurmuzescu's words resonated with the majority of Romanian intellectuals, who also welcomed the advent of the radio as a cultural unifier.[16] Representatives of cultural bodies were appointed to a Committee for Programmes which assessed the quality of cultural and musical programmes.[17]

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[14] *Radio-Difuziunea. Lămuriri cu Privire la Necesitatea și Utilizarea Radio-Difuziunei* (București, 1926), 5.
[15] Gheorghe Enciu, *Poșta si Telecomunicațiile in România* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984), 45.
[16] The poet Tudor Arghezi, one of the most vocal supporters of the radio, had a premonition in 1932: "it will not be long until the governments will debate laws, reforms … at the microphone. The microphone will become so present in our lives that the debate of every public issue will originate with it" (Tudor Arghezi quoted in Victor Crăciun, "Introducere," 19).
[17] Prominent intellectuals also delivered radio speeches and read from their works.

This was mainly possible because during the 1930s the Radio Station depended less on the selling of advertising than on the generous financial aid coming from the state. As the Director of Programmes argued, "to think of the Radio as a … commercial arena, with music-hall programmes and connected to an advertising agency would be more than a heresy … the Radio Station must be in the service of the people and, through this wonderful and mysterious medium [the airways], it must provide them with the gifts of culture".[18] A member of the Committee for Programmes struck a similar tone: "the difference between us and a commercial radio is like the difference between the National Theatre and the private companies … the private theatre companies' aim is to generate profit, they are commercial enterprises. On the other hand, the National Theatre is not interested in profit but, like us, it focuses on developing a cultural repertoire. What matters for both of us is moral success."[19]

In this context, the daily programming, a mix of cultural-educational material and entertainment, was meant to provide a connection with the collective national community in a more subtle way than the overt state propaganda afforded.[20] In the words of the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti, the head of Radio Programmes, "we must not develop our programmes in an arbitrary, haphazard, and subjective manner, because the radio programmes must overlap and fulfil the social and political needs of our state."[21] Beyond technological and

[18] Emanoil Bucuță, "Radiodifuziunea – Unealta de Educație" in *Radiofonia,* March, 1932, 22.
[19] Henri Blazin, "Organizarea Generala a Programului Vorbit la Radio-București," in Crăciun, *Manuscrise si Voci,* 57.
[20] The daily programming started at 5 a.m. with a traditional Romanian folk song - *Hai, lelita, in deal la vie* (Come Sweetie Up On the Hillside Vineyard). The opening ritual went on with the Romanian Kingdom's anthem – *Traiasca Regele!* (Long live the King), and ended with the most known religious Orthodox Prayer, *Tatal Nostru* (Our Father). See Ionescu, 45.
[21] Dimitrie Gusti, "Menirea Radiofoniei Românești," in *Manuscrise si Voci,* 65.

institutional consolidation, this was also the time when traditional broadcasting programmes were established. The self-proclaimed mission of the Radio Station, to be "a true school for the nation," was also fulfilled through cultural rubrics – language classes, theatre, music, science, book reviews, religious programmes, etc.[22] Among the most celebrated cultural programmes was the *Radio University*, introduced in 1930 and promoted as a "superior cultural programme, [and] an unparalleled means of direct education for the people, given its encyclopaedic nature".[23] The programme consisted of one-hour daily rubrics featuring lectures delivered by public intellectuals on a wide array of topics, ranging from poetry to economics, political ideologies, foreign policy, and music to art history.

In the increasing authoritarianism of the 1930s, the state devoted renewed attention to the radio. On the one hand, the authorities invested in the expansion of the radio network. When broadcasting started in 1928, there were only 2,000 radio receivers in the country. Ten years later, at the end of the 1930s, subscriptions went up to 276,825 for a population of 18 million.[24] On the other, the 1936 new Radio Law placed the institution under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior and tightened political control over programming. The state's prerogatives to intervene and decide in matters of programming were

[22] Securing a devoted audience through informative yet accessible broadcasts would "mould a sense of community and national solidarity", the Director of Radio Programmes stated in an interview with the Radio Station's monthly magazine. See Emil Pătrascu, „Ce e cu Stațiunea de 150 Kw? Interviu cu D-l Profesor Dragomir Hurmuzescu," *Radiofonia,* January, 1933, 3-6.
[23] Bucuță, "Radiodifuziunea," 74.
[24] Coming to power on a platform promising friendly legislation to foreign capital, the first National Peasant government – their first election in Romanian history – passed key laws which facilitated and encouraged private participation in infrastructure projects. In this spirit, the administration of the Romanian broadcasting system was delegated to a Board of Directors, which governed a public-private partnership structure. The state held 60% of the shares in the Radio service, while the National Bank of Romania and other commercial banks retained the remaining shares. See Ionescu, 43-5.

now codified in expressions such as "state control of the broadcasts" and "required guidelines for programmes."[25]

Indicative of the political commitments of the Radio, the flagship cultural programme, *Radio University*, intensified its anti-communist stance as it began promoting right-wing authoritarian ideologies. For example, in May 1936, four rubrics aiming to introduce its listeners to the social-economic doctrines of the time were slotted in. If the first three lectures on "economic liberalism," "corporatism," and "national-socialism" were sympathetic to their topic, the fourth one, on communism, concluded with a warning against the "despotic communist heresy" spreading from the Soviet Union.[26] To a large extent, the anxieties of the elites were related to the perceived threat to a stable sense of "national solidarity." An article by the director of programmes in the radio magazine *Radio si Radiofonia* openly called for the politicization of the airwaves, to speak to the nation as one people: "our neighbours, the Russians and the Hungarians … are deploying propaganda with a highly irredentist and subversive character … we can beat their propaganda only by deploying our counter-propaganda."[27]

After the proclamation of Carol II's dictatorship in 1938 the Radio Station was incorporated into the Ministry of Propaganda which further increased control over it. During the war, the radio became more and more of a rubber stamp for official views. Strict guidelines aligned the news bulletins and programmes with the wartime regime's propagandistic effort of producing

[25] Law for the Establishment of the Romanian Broadcasting Station, *Monitorul Oficial*, 4 April, 1926.
[26] Ionescu, 58-60.
[27] Emil Pătrascu, "Propaganda Prin Radio," *Radio si Radiofonia,* March, 1930, 1.

social consent and securing moral legitimacy for military action. The German radio, *Deutschlandersender*, provided the model for programmes and news bulletins, whilst broadcasts dedicated to Germany were also a familiar presence.[28] The royal and wartime dictatorships aspired to model through the radio a nationwide culture suffused with classlessness. To reverse what they saw as an unsystematic organization of the national culture they focused on coordinated mass movements to articulate a sense of belonging based on ethnicity: "the social harmonization and the reconciliation of the classes found in our microphone the greatest stage for their manifestation."[29]

Broadcasting in Romania was centralized and hierarchical, yet the government monopoly of the airways was not uncontested. As the political parties were outlawed and the media placed under strict government censorship in 1938, clandestine radio stations were often used by the opposition to challenge the government's monopoly of the news.[30] The Romanian communist exiles ran their own Comintern affiliated station, Radio Free Romania (*Radio Romania Liber*ă). Small as it was (its editorial office consisted of 8-9 people), the station broadcast political speeches and domestic and war news.[31] Most of its propaganda was directed against the participation of the Romanian Army on the Eastern Front, it targeted soldiers with anti-war propaganda, incited listeners to overthrow the Antonescu government and portrayed the Soviets as the only

[28] Acatrinei, 261-3.
[29] Quoted in Denize, *Istoria Societății Române de Radiodifuziune, Vol. I*, 59.
[30] Acatrinei, 239-45.
[31] In two 30-minute long daily news bulletins, the communist radio station focused on war-related topics such as the Red Army's achievements and Nazi war crimes and conducted agitation for "national independence" and the "salvation of the motherland" from under Antonescu's dictatorship. See Anton Bejan (former radio employee), interviewed by Octavian Silivestru, Bucharest, 23 December 1999, transcript, Arhiva de Istorie Orală a Societății Române de Radiodifuziune (hereafter AIOSRR), Bucharest; Cristina Diac, *Zorii Comunismului in România. Stefan Foriș, un Destin Neterminat* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2014), 109-10.

legitimate allies. After the 23 August coup the wartime communist radio station was disbanded, but it was briefly re-opened ahead of the first parliamentary elections in November 1946 to serve electoral purposes.[32] It finally closed down in 1947 and the staff were transferred to the Radio Station.[33]

Communization Through De-Fascization

During the events around the 23 August coup, the Radio Station played a central role. On the eve of the coup, the King and his allies strategically relied on the radio infrastructure to connect with their allies in the provinces. The following day, the radio's director, Vasile Ionescu, was summoned to the Royal Palace to record the political proclamation of the coup. In a tense atmosphere, which culminated with the arrest of a German military contingent at the Radio Station, the proclamation of the coup was aired hourly from 9pm to 2am, then once more at the end of the day's broadcasting.[34] The Germans retaliated by destroying the main building of the Radio Station in eight air raids on the on 24 August.[35]

Following days of confusion, the Romanian authorities re-established control over the Radio Station and by 31 August regular broadcasting resumed.[36]

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[32] Elena Negreanu (former radio employee), interviewed by Marina Conovici, Bucharest, 6 March 1997, transcript, AIOSRR, Bucharest.
[33] Alexandre Cretzianu (ed.), *Captive Rumania. A Decade of Soviet Rule* (New York: Praeger, 1956), 274; Bogdan Radu (former radio employee), interviewed by Silvia Angelescu and Virginia Călin, Bucharest, 23 November 1995, transcript, AIOSRR, Bucharest.
[34] Ionescu, 117-20.
[35] It was not the first time the Radio Station found itself in the midst of military action. For example, in January 1941, it was stormed by the Legionaries during their rebellion against Antonescu. A few years before, following the assassination of then prime-minister Armand Călinescu, a legionary squad headed to the Radio Station and announced the assassination (see Ionescu, 74-76).
[36] Denize, *Istoria Societății Române de Radiodifuziune, 1944-1965,* 33-34.

Yet, as a consequence of the Armistice Agreement signed by Romania with the Allied powers, the radio was handed over to the Allied Commission of Control (ACC).[37] Among the top requirements of the ACC was the purging of staff tainted by collaboration with Antonescu's dictatorship, a demand with which the first post-23 August coalition governments, dominated by military and economic elites, were rather slow to comply. Against mounting pressure, the Radio Station's director, Vasile Ionescu, relied on personal connections and lobbied for "special legislation" to avoid purges."[38] His efforts failed.

The RCP, on the contrary, was quick to capitalize on the vacillation of the authorities. In a strongly-worded press campaign, *Scânteia* demanded the "removal of the war criminal still heading the Radio Station … [whose] place is in prison not at the leadership of the most important propagandistic institution of the country".[39] With Ionescu at the leadership, "the democratic control of the radio will be undermined," *Scânteia* further charged.[40]

After the formation of the Groza government, on 6 March 1945, the Radio Station, was transferred to the newly restored Ministry of Propaganda, as it had been in 1940. The communist veteran and Minister of Propaganda, P.P.

[37] The stipulations of the Armistice Agreement obliged the Radio Station to return to the Soviet Union the radio equipment which Romania appropriated during the war on the Eastern front (see the terms of the Armistice Agreement at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/rumania.asp, last accessed 14 November 2018).
[38] Arhiva Societății Române de Radiodifuziune (hereafter ASRD), file 15/1944, 3 in Eugen Denize, *Istoria Societății Române de Radiodifuziune, 1944-1965,* 40. Incorporated into to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after 23 August, the radio was placed for a short period of time under the control of the old political forces. The communists pressed for the transferring of the Radio Station under the control of the Ministry of Communication to which, they said, the radio *de facto* belonged (the Ministry was led by Gheorghiu-Dej).
[39] "Radiodifuziunea Română Condusă de un Criminal de Război," *Scânteia,* 6 January, 1945; "Criminalul de Război Vasile Ionescu Continua Să Uneltească," *Scânteia,* 14 January, 1945.
[40] See for example "Cum a Fost Jefuit Poporul Român de Legionarii și Fasciștii de la Radiodifuziune?", *Scânteia,* 18 October, 1944; "Manevrele Direcțiunii de la Radiodifuziune", *Scânteia,* 17 November 1944; "Directorul Radiodifuziunii sa plece!," *Scânteia,* 24 November, 1944.

Constantinescu-Iasi, hailed the radio as the most important institution in the "de-fascization" of the country. If before 23 August the Radio Station was "a means of instilling fascist poison into the souls of the workers, peasants, and intellectuals," the new government, he argued, would "democratize" the radio and use it as a means of collective progress.[41] The changes began in earnest. The Council of Administration, a body featuring representatives of both state and private capital, was dissolved. In the new Council the state increased its representation by sending in communist-affiliated members.[42] By the end of May 1945, the majority of senior staff had been dismissed under the de-fascization legislation.[43]

The new leadership team featured two prominent communist intellectuals. Matei Socor, a renowned conductor and long-time member of the RCP, became General Director. Another prominent Party member, the linguist Alexandru Graur, was appointed General Director of Programmes.[44] Under their mandate, a new Radio Law was adopted in April 1945. By requiring the purging of the staff appointed after 1940 and the trade union's approval of new

[41] Arhivele Naționale ale României (hereafter ANR), Fond Ministerul Propagandei Nationale (hereafter MPN), file 2897/1944-45, 13; internal guidelines of the Ministry of Propaganda.
[42] Ibid., 9-11.
[43] The Law no. 217 from 30 March 1945 defined the guidelines for the purge of the state apparatus: all public servants hired after 1938 could be removed, permanently or temporarily, if evidence for "supporting the war against the Soviet Union" was produced against them (see Law no. 217, *Monitorul Oficial*, 30 March, 1945).
[44] Socor and Graur were related, both trained abroad, and RCP members and as such they experienced the oppression and brutalities of the right-wing dictatorships. As citizens of Jewish origin they were dismissed from their jobs in 1940. Matei Socor was sent to prison for communist activity, while Constantin Graur became the director of the "Jewish University," an underground school set up by the Jewish community in Bucharest to bypass the authorities' ban on Jewish students attending state schools. See ANR, Colecția 53 – Dosare de Partid ale Membrilor de Partid cu Stagiu in Ilegalitate Care au Încetat din Viață (hereafter Colecția 53), files S 141 and G 133; Matei Socor's Party file and autobiography.

appointees, the law further tightened both communist and state control over the Radio Station.[45]

State ownership over broadcasting facilities and equipment was guaranteed by both the 1948 and 1952 constitutions.[46] The first one-year economic plan (1949) and the subsequent five-year plan (1951-1955) included ambitious provisions to increase the power of radio stations. The Committee for State Planning supported the project for regional long-wave transmitters in the provinces. By the conclusion of the five-year plan three local stations had been constructed in each of the historical provinces of the country. In addition to the launching of a second national channel, a considerable number of amateurs' clubs took the radio deep into the rural regions of Romania.[47]

Since radio sets were few and expensive, the Agitprop constructed wired radiofication centres and loudspeakers. Radiofication made advances in major workers' districts and listeners who could not afford a radio set could opt for a basic home loudspeaker. This picked up the signal from the radiofication centre, but offered no choice of channel.[48] Acclaimed as an innovation in the agitprop work, the first wired radiofication centre opened in May 1949 on the premises of a high-school in Bucharest. The radio came to be an important presence in people's everyday life: "the setup of the centre is proof that in our country the working-class people enjoy real freedom of speech and that our popular democracy makes universal access to culture a fundamental right of the working

[45] Decree no. 277/962, *Monitorul Oficial*, 29 March, 1945.
[46] The Radio Station was nationalized on 11 June 1948. See Law no. 119, *Monitorul Oficial*, 11 June, 1948.
[47] Denize, *Istoria Societatii Române de Radiodifuziune, 1945-1965*, 32.
[48] ANR, Fond Comitetul de Stat al Planificării (hereafter CSP), file 128/1951, 78; report of the State Planning Committee on the development of radiofication, September 1951.

class."[49] The radio network expanded sharply: if in 1949 (at the end of the one-year plan) there were 34 centres for radiofication and fewer than 10,000 loudspeakers, by the end of 1954 the numbers increased to about 300 centres for radiofication and approximately 240,000 loudspeakers.[50] In 1955, the radio leadership reported that the number of subscriptions surpassed one million, a remarkable increase from the approximately 430,000 subscriptions purchased in 1952 and 258,345 in 1948.[51]

Technological progress and network expansion of the radio was accompanied by an expansion of the broadcasting output. The statistics are telling: in 1953 radio broadcasting amounted to 14,582 hours, a dramatic increase from 4,333 hours of airtime in 1945 and 9,012 in 1950.[52] Political programmes aiming to provide the audience with domestic and foreign news and to showcase the achievements of socialist construction were given significantly more airtime than other genres. As of 1949, the radio produced 1,971 hours of "political broadcasting," but by 1953 they rose to an impressive 3,177 hours. In comparison, in 1953 the airtime hours of "cultural broadcasting" amounted to 659, an improvement on the 356 hours in 1949.[53]

Conceptualized as one of the most powerful instruments in the project of refashioning human society,[54] the radio was, unsurprisingly, strictly regulated.

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[49] ASRD, file containing the news-bulletins from 6 to 15 May 1949, no page number.
[50] Figures taken from Cretzianu, *Captive Rumania*, 277; see also ANR, Fond CSP, file 128/1951, 119-23; a RCP decree from August 1951 on the improving of the radiofication network.
[51] Denize, *Istoria Societatii Române de Radiodifuziune, 1945-1965*, 32.
[52] ASRD, *Documentar Privind Trecutul Radiodifuziunii Române,* 38; unpublished manuscript.
[53] Ibid., 44.
[54] In the words of a writer working for the radio, "the popular radio is no longer an outlet which broadcasts news quicker than the newspapers. The radio is an instrument of thought, of a civilized language … the radio microphone is like a tiny stage opening up towards an infinite audience. Our orally transmitted culture has nothing to hide". See "Scriitorii la Microfon," *Secolul Radiofoniei,* January 1948, 5.

The institutional control of broadcasting originated with the General Director who managed relations with the government and the Central Committee, whilst the General Director for Programmes had undisputed jurisdiction over the editorial agenda. The three main departments of the Radio Station – the Department for Domestic Politics and Foreign Broadcasting, the Department for Cultural Broadcasting (overseeing the musical, literary, theatre, and children's broadcasting), and the Department for Administrative Affairs – were each led by deputies.[55]

Building cadres was crucial to building the institution itself. Echoing the other media institutions, the leadership focused on promoting young cadres. Because youths were traditionally more radical and politically committed, the radio's leadership proudly linked their dynamism with the radio's drive for social change: "as youths, we associated the idea of revolution with the idea of change … we were captivated by the generous political ideas of the time and we tried to translate this enthusiasm into work … on the contrary, the old staff had a mistrust of the new times and socialism."[56] For Matei Socor, the director of the Radio Station, the youthfulness of the staff offered yet another proof of the superiority of the communist radio in comparison with the "agedness" of the Western radio stations:[57] "in France, for example, a meeting like today's would

[55] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație (hereafter PA), file 80/1950, 3; report of the Agitprop's Sector for Radio.
[56] Tania Lovinescu (former radio employee), interviewed by Marina Conovici, Bucharest, 6 April 2003, transcript, AIOSRR, Bucharest.
[57] Indeed, like in other parts of Eastern Europe, the communists seemed to be the beneficiaries of youths' increased participation in politics. Apart from the argument that as young persons they should be more radical and more politically committed, one should not forget they had a strong memory of the Great Depression, clear memories of the right-wing dictatorships and it is not too far-fetch to believe that their faith in capitalism and Western-style democracy was deeply shaken (see Bradley Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation. Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 32-35.

have had an audience dominated by long beards and boredom."[58] In one of her visits to the radio's Department for Cultural Broadcasting, Nina Cassian also recalled a workplace suffused with young spirit: "it's amazing, the office is packed with 19 to 23 year-olds who are chatting all the time."[59]

Finding competent staff with political credentials was close to impossible and, while the Party could not provide them, they agreed to compromise by easing off the ideological intransigence. Whereas both the radio directors and the Agitprop officials criticized the "poor class composition of the staff," in practice they had no choice but to consent to it. To maintain ideological control, the radio leadership collaborated with the Agitprop in the surveillance of the cadres. For instance, in one of the periodical reviews of the staff conducted by the Agitprop, more than 50% of the personnel within the Sub-Department of Foreign Languages, were found either to have lived abroad or to have relatives living in "capitalist countries."[60] Since the staff's class credentials did not offer enough assurance, the Agitprop's instructors sacked 14 editors, put seven of them under "tight scrutiny," and asked for a pre-recording of all programmes.[61]

The Agitprop also sent in a few trusted Party workers, although this could not make up for the radio's shortage of cadres: "an improvement in the cadre composition is necessary. But I want to make it clear that the help of the

[58] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1949, no file number; transcript of board meeting, November 1949.
[59] Nina Cassian, *Memoria ca Zestre. Cartea I, 1948-1953* (București: Institutul Cultural Român, 2003), 223.
[60] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 18/1953, 4; report of the Agitprop's Sector for Radio, March 1953.
[61] Ibid., 7-8. For example, Carol Stieber, an English language speaker and programmes' supervisor, was suspended for her supposedly pro-Zionist orientation. "With so many relatives abroad, she cannot stay in her current job", the commission concluded in the case of another editor whose relatives left Romania for Palestine in 1947.

Party will consist only in giving you a man to sit on your board (*om de răspundere*). We cannot and indeed it is not our duty to give you cadres … you have to build your own cadres, they cannot be given at present."[62] The building of cadres was rather a long-term process to be pursued through institutional and Party training, as Leonte Rautu pointed out during a meeting at the Agitprop: "I say that the comrades should not expect to have suitable cadres tomorrow, but instead they have to think in the long-term and rely on working-class young elements."[63]

Cultural conflict was inevitable when the older and sometimes more intellectually-inclined staff regarded the new editors as unfit for radio work. In the Sub-Department for News Bulletins, the tensions between journalists were presumed to stem from the "totally unhealthy" social composition of the editorial office. Paul Luchian, the head of the Radio Programmes, commented on the marginalization of staff with solid working-class credentials: "we hired working-class elements, but this resulted in disagreements and frictions between the working-class elements and the intellectuals."[64]

Iosif Ardeleanu, the future head of the censorial body, at that time the director of the Sub-Department for News Bulletins, was held responsible for the tensions in the office. Ardeleanu came to the radio in November 1945 after a brief spell as an editor at *Scânteia*, where he wrote almost exclusively propagandistic and polemical pieces against the oppositions' leaders.[65] He

[62] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1950, 179; meeting with the Radio Committee held at the Agitprop central office on 17 February 1950.
[63] Ibid., 168.
[64] Ibid., 164.
[65] See Iosif Ardeleanu, "Construcția Stalinistă", *Scânteia,* 22 December, 1944 and "Metodele Fasciste ale lui Maniu", *Scânteia,* 7 January, 1945.

reluctantly accepted his transfer to the Radio Station to work first as the editor of a radio programme, *the Domestic Chronicle,* and then as the coordinator of the news bulletin (with "certain bitterness," he would later recall).[66] Because he considered his previous job at *Scânteia* to be pivotal for his career and newspaper journalism to be more prestigious than radio journalism, Ardeleanu regarded the transfer as a relegation in the system of propaganda.

Dismissed from *Scânteia* for his "lack of ideological combativity," his political judgement was questioned by his radio supervisors too. Luchian and Socor wrote to the Agitprop to complain about Ardeleanu's failures to rear the working-class cadres, his "intellectualist" approach towards work, and his inability to impose a correct ideological line in the office.[67] He defended himself in "non-political" terms: "because of our social composition, we cannot even know for sure when the errors are committed on purpose or when they occur due to superficiality and negligence."[68] The case was reviewed by an internal commission and, shortly after, in late 1950, Ardeleanu was transferred to the censorial body.[69]

Reversing what they considered to be a "deformation" of the role of the Radio under the previous governments was as much a matter of staff purging and building new cadres as it was a project of reconfiguring the programming policies. Well-known rubrics such as the Radio University, theatre broadcasts, musical programmes, children broadcasting etc. were kept in the broadcast. But,

[66] ANR, Fond Colecția 53, 45-8; Iosif Ardeleanu's party file and autobiography.
[67] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 73/1949; letter of Socor to the Agitprop board, 1949.
[68] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1950, 172; transcript of a meeting with the Radio Committee held at the Agitprop, July 1950.
[69] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 73/1949; letter of Socor to the Agitprop, 1949.

as we will see in the next section, they were now used for new political ends: to increase popular involvement and as a tool of de-fascization. More important, in the early postwar period, the presence of the familiar prewar rubrics allowed the communists to present themselves in continuity with the Romanian culture.

In a country with almost 40% of the population illiterate, combating illiteracy and political ignorance was a medium and long-term project.[70] The charismatic vocal presence of the radio matched the Party's short-term objective, to accustom the audience to socialist ideas through "spoken newspapers". As an article from the Radio's magazine, *Secolul Radiofoniei,* enthusiastically put it: "yesterday, in fascist or fascistic times, the radio microphone was tainted by bogus and tabloid-like information only to cater to the vanity of the bourgeois man … today, the same institution, after cleaning up its closet, has achieved a high social and cultural utility."[71]

As we have seen, the Radio Station had already been a heavily state-monopolized structure well before the communist takeover. The early postwar de-fascization only extended and, in part, developed the logic of state interventionism. Yet, through de-fascization, the communists did not cynically clear away their rivals and "crush" the Radio Station. Instead, the RCP appropriated the interwar and wartime Radio traditions and selectively filtered them through reconstruction and de-fascization. In accordance with the pan-European logic of reconstruction, they expanded the authority of the state and weakened the idea of non-state actors in the media. Inscribed into the postwar

[70] It was estimated that, in the 1930s, around 40% of the population was illiterate and around 20% semi-literate (Sorin Toma, *Republica Populară Romană pe Drumul Revoluției Culturale* (București: Editura PMR, 1951, 29).
[71] "Din Ideologia Microfonului," *Secolul Radiofoniei,* February 1948, 6.

reconstruction trend, the Radio Station became an early example of cultural production in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe that was "socialist in form, national in content."[72] The early postwar reconfigurations, therefore, should be seen as a necessary precondition for the changes which occurred after 1948.

Radio Programmes and the Mastering of Cultural Problems

In February 1948, the Radio Station's magazine, *Secolul Radiofoniei,* published a letter from a listener from Slatina, a city in the southern part of Romania. The listener expressed criticism at the "obvious qualitative differences between the radio's programmes." The differences, the letter went on, made "some of the programmes at times really excellent, at other times just good, but sometimes subpar." The end of his letter, however, came with a suggested solution: "the programmes which do not meet a certain level of quality must simply be cancelled."[73]

The Radio Station's officials did not share the listener's concerns: "at a first glance you are right to argue this way. But only at first … because we will demonstrate to you that even the programmes which lag behind in quality must be broadcast."[74] A democratic culture, the radio officials' reasoned, had the mission to turn the new working-class talents into masters of "high culture": "would it be fair on our part to do that [to remove the lower quality

[72] Kyrill Kunkhovich, "Reconstruction as Revolution. Cultural Life in Post-World War II Krakow and Leipzig," *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures* X (201X): 17.
[73] "Ascultătorii au Cuvantul!," *Secolul Radiofoniei,* February, 1948, 11.
[74] Ibid.

programmes]? No, because we would dash the hopes of beginners … There are so many talents among the people who were not given chances in the past … But we are at the beginning and we are aware that our programmes sometimes do not match the highest standards; but, on the other hand, we are happy to offer the young talents the environment to grow and develop."[75]

The radio professionals portrayed the qualitative transformation of the radio by contrasting it to radio in the West. The cultural superiority of their programmes, they argued, was the most important marker of difference. The question of the radio was an epistemological one, of true or false cognition. If the class character of social construction in the West made the radio a tool of mystification in the hands of the dominant class, the communist radio reversed the logic of cultural production and re-established a "true cognition."[76] "The broadcasting culture is closely related to the question of popular participation and democracy," Socor argued during a meeting.[77] It was a matter of striving to put the radio in the service of the people. The Norwegian radio, Socor added,

> is conducting interviews with random people in the street; the people are asked about their wellbeing, they comment on politics. Indeed, they are encouraged to say anything they feel like saying and they can be listened to both at home and abroad. This is what the Norwegians call democracy … But our approach to radio, the Soviet approach, is different. This is

[75] Ibid.
[76] Because of its corporate culture and aggressive advertising, the American radio was perhaps the most loathed. Quoting Gorki, the director of the Radio once compared the music broadcast by the American radio with "neighing of the horses and snort of the pig" (Paul Luchian, "Radioficarea Țării – Armă Puternică de Educare a Masselor," *Contemporanul,* 8 May 1951, 1).
[77] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1950, no file number; transcript of a meeting of the Radio Station board, February 1950.

> not how we understand to put the radio in the service of the people … We prepare programmes for workers, we popularize the workers and the advancements of socialism in our country. This is our socialist way to put the radio in the service of the people![78]

In the words of a radio journalist during a professional meeting in April 1949: "our enemies dislike the language we are using here, in the communist radio. They say it is rough and forthright. But our radio just calls on things in a truthful and rightful manner."[79]

Reversing the informational and cultural bias of the prewar regime was a question of redefining the inner quality of public culture and of the cultural product. Artistic superiority ("ensuring a superior artistic form in programmes") came not spontaneously but resulted from technological and ideological planning. For example, the music sub-department considered the cultural product to be the result of five inter-related factors: the ideological and professional level of the staff, the appeal of the programme to the people, variety, the selection of contributors, and the sound quality of the recordings.[80] Its staff took part in collective listening meetings where the choice of musical materials was discussed in advance. Workshops at the Composers' Union discussing hot political and cultural topics of the day (e.g. melodic line, the reflection of national specificity in music, people's engagement with music,

[78] Ibid.
[79] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1949, no file number; transcript a meeting of the Department for Domestic Politics and Foreign Broadcasting, September 1949.
[80] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 106 (II)/1949, 64; report of the Music Sub-Department on the methods of achieving a superior ideological and artistic content in radio programmes.

realism, formalism, cosmopolitanism etc.) complemented the training. The new musical formats required adjustments in musical execution which the sub-department backed by investing in new instruments and by expanding the choirs and the orchestras.[81] The head of the music sub-department felt subsequently entitled to claim: "as regards the artistic execution, our radio is ahead of the other cultural institutions in the West … the difference is both ideological and artistic."[82]

An impressive amount of prior planning went into the programmes in order to infuse them with socialist meaning. The main departments – Domestic Politics and Foreign Broadcasting and the Cultural Department – tabled bi-annual working plans which set out the cultural-political and artistic line of the programmes. The plans circulated the topics and their individual airtime. At the end of every six-month cycle, the broadcasts were evaluated for their compliance with the agreed guidelines. For example, in 1950 the radio provided three weekly half-an-hour rubrics of youth broadcasts, which had to comply with an eight-topic working plan. The programme offered a blend of interviews with young workers and artists and carefully prepared topics such as the "artists and artistic works from other socialist countries and the Soviet Union," "youths' life under capitalism and the description of the gloomy situation of the youth in capitalist countries," and "the spirit of class struggle, proletarian internationalism and love for the Party."[83] The guiding principle, a consistent

[81] Ibid.
[82] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1949, no file number; transcript of a meeting of the Sub-Department for Music, June 1949.
[83] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 106/1949, vol. II, 88-92; report of the Youth Radio Sub-Department about methods of achieving a superior ideological and artistic content in radio programing.

and familiar cyclical thematic repertoire, was thought to help shape the listeners' habits and political understanding.[84] From the statistical data we learn that, for example, the programmes from January to June 1950 made 71 references to the condition of the youth in capitalist countries.[85]

The daily cultural programme, the "Cultural Notebook" (*Carnetul Cultural*), provided daily broadcasts, each 15 minutes long, with the aim of "transposing the listener into the midst of the ongoing cultural revolution."[86] It delivered a daily cultural chronicle of literary, artistic, and musical events, in addition to film and book reviews.[87] As was the case with the youth programmes, the editors had to include the topical formulations of the Party-line. As an example, the central topic of the literary debates for 1949 – the critical revision of the Romanian literary heritage – was covered five times in the first six months of the year.[88]

The news bulletins compiled by the Department for Domestic Politics and Foreign Broadcasting were the programmes most tightly monitored by the radio leadership and Agitprop officials. Unlike the optimism of professional meetings recorded by the archival documents, the meetings with the Agitprop officials were often both more fraught and critical of the structure and ideological content of the broadcasts. In terms of political and economic news

[84] Victor Adrian, "Convorbiri pe Marginea Programului de Radio," *Contemporanul,* 22 October, 1948, 4.
[85] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 106/1949, vol. II, 106; report of the Sub-Department for Artistic and Educational Programmes.
[86] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 106/1949, vol. I, 45; report of the Cultural Department.
[87] Josette Majdanek (former radio employee), interviewed by Silvia Angelescu, Bucharest, 24 February 1999, transcript, tape C917, AIOSRR, Bucharest.
[88] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 106/1949, vol. I, 167; report of the Cultural Department.

the Party newspaper, *Scânteia,* offered the professional model which all other institutions in the news economy were supposed to follow. Yet, again, the oralily of the radio medium informed a crucial distinction between the radio and the other media agencies. If in the case of the printed media the Party safely controlled production and organized consumption, winning the loyalty of radio listeners required a different approach. Radio can be switched on and off, and new stations and programmes can be tuned in. Therefore, more than in other branches of cultural production, the authorities took pains to listen to the feedback of the audience. They feared that, if not properly engaged, listeners would switch to foreign programmes. "There is a saying about the radio," Leonte Răutu highlighted in a meeting with the Radio Board in 1950: "its most useful feature is the tuning button … [but] when the listener usually switches the button, it does so in a search for radio stations like the BBC Radio London or the Voice of America. Our Radio Station must compete with these imperialist bandits. We must keep the listeners constantly interested in our programmes so they will not get bored and switch from our station. We can do this only by delivering quality broadcasts."[89]

A radio editor in Moscow during the war himself, Răutu was often disappointed with the political level of the radio news bulletins: "overall, the radio has a very low political level. I listen to the radio and I feel like I am attending a political rally in Buzau [Buzau is a provincial city in the southern part of Romania, about 150km away from Bucharest]."[90] In professional meetings with the radio seniors, the Agitprop also commented extensively on

[89] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1950, 183; meeting with the Radio Committee held at the Agitprop central office on 17 February 1950.
[90] Ibid., 180-81.

the radio journalists' training and their ability to select the most relevant material for broadcasts.[91]

In the view of the Radio officials, lack of spontaneity, declamations, and rhetorical redundancies thwarted a correct encoding of the political message in the news. As an Agitprop senior put it: "emphatic and theatrical language on the radio … may be good for poetry reading … yet unfortunately this is what we are hearing day and night on the radio; it annoys both Party activists and workers. Just listen to the broadcasts of the Soviet radio: there they speak with great simplicity because the radio amplifies dishonesty."[92] A similar point was made by the head of the Radio Programmes: "comrades, radio is not just an ordinary instrument of recording, we do not take a passive and objective stand … we are agitators and propagandists … we do not inform the public just for the sake of information … we inform the public with the aim of mobilising the masses in the construction of socialism … We do take a political stand, we are fighters in the construction of socialism."[93]

The radio staff had to grapple with the traditional Marxist question of spontaneity versus class consciousness in a distinct way. At the rhetorical level, the announcers of the Radio had to employ a style of delivery that was to be both accessible and flawless. On the other hand, the Agitprop instructors consistently

[91] For example, in early 1950, the Agitprop instructors admonished the journalists from the news bulletin for removing from the schedule political reports which portrayed the" unhuman nature of Western capitalism". In particular, the Agitprop was infuriated by the removal of two stories: one which linked the United Sates to the ongoing anti-communist propaganda at Radio Paris and one which presented the case of an English worker arrested in London for singing the Internationale in public (ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 36/1950, 12; meeting with the Radio Committee held at the Agitprop central office on 6 June 1950).
[92] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1950, 180; meeting with the Radio Committee held at the Agitprop central office on 17 February 1950.
[93] ASR, uncatalogued collection, file from 1949, no file number; transcript of a meeting of the Department for Programmes, July 1949.

criticized the radio programmes' "formalistic" style, namely the lack of charismatic oratorial spontaneity. In 1951 an Agitprop report on the activity of the radio characterized the news bulletins as "unconvincingly depicting the deep changes in the country, the revolutionary tumult [*frământare*]": "for example, whenever the announcer talks about the opening of a new collective farm, we can feel the intensity of the *revolutionary tumult* – the entire village is thrilled, the people live the *revolutionary tumult* … but only for a moment; the enthusiasm in the voice of the announcer, all the *revolutionary tumult* vanishes after we are informed that the collective farm has opened … this is not in the interest of our listeners."[94]

A "formalistic" style of delivery could ultimately cast doubts on the sincerity of the socialist project itself. But confusion could also stem from poorly conducted interviews. For example, a broadcast dedicated to collectivization of the agriculture allegedly failed to come up with the names of those who had joined the collective farm where the interview took place. The Agitprop asked for clarification: "listeners could be led to believe that the interviews were forged."[95] Overly-optimistic and "artificially celebratory" narratives attracted similar criticism: "a broadcast from 31 December discusses the case of a peasant whose life radically changed after he joined the local collective farm … but such radical change is not possible within the timeframe of a month! We cannot convince the listeners with this kind of stories."[96]

If the Radio broadcasts were expected to raise people's levels of political

[94] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 10/1952, 17; report of the Agitprop's Sector for Radio on the programmes dedicated to peasant listeners.
[95] Ibid. 18.
[96] Ibid.

consciousness, the hypnotic repetition of political formulas did not help. A subtle interplay between the individual voices and the Party was required. Mechanical acknowledgments of the role of the Party were formulaic, but the failure to involve the Party was "de-politization." For example, a report about a socialist competition held at the construction site of the Dunăre-Marea Neagră Canal was assessed as "de-politicized" because it did not reference the Party: "there is not a single mention of the Party in the reportage … yet it is thanks to the Party that the worker Dolinu Stefan [one of the workers in the competition] can fight for peace today … however, this is not mentioned in the programme and as a consequence the role of the Party is downplayed."[97] The Agitprop criticism was, of course, in accord with Răutu's previous instructions:

> When we say that it is necessary that you must emphasize the role of the Party, we do not mean that you should do this by using standard-formulaic constructions of the kind "under the command of the Romanian Workers' Party'' and "the leading political force in the Popular Republic of Romania is the Party" … instead, you must come up with materials which reveal the role of the Party in an implicit manner. Our aim is not to proclaim truths! This is simply a put off for our listeners.[98]

However, the Agitprop's thorough control of the radio programmes did

[97] Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 36/1950, 11; meeting with the Radio Committee held at the Agitprop central office on 6 June 1950.
[98] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1950, 180; meeting with the Radio Committee at the Agitprop central office on 17 February 1950.

not automatically make the broadcasts socialist. Equally important was how they reached the audience. Each of the Radio Station's departments established dedicated offices to gather and review the feedback of the listeners who, in letters or in public meetings, were encouraged to express their opinion on the quality of the programmes. In 1949, in feedback meetings with ordinary listeners, the Music Department was advised that the programme for Sunday, the only day off work, be revised in order to offer more musical variety and entertainment.[99] The staff went to factories at least once a month to listen to workers' demands and on the basis of the feedback they created popular programmes such as "Concerts for the workers' clubs" and "Music demanded by listeners."[100]

The interwar image of listening to the radio was usually woven with the idea of domestic, middle-class spaces. Families and groups of friends were usually portrayed around the radio set, having a good time or worrying about the political events. On the other hand, the postwar cultural memory of the radio is dominated by groups of workers and broad public audiences which gathered in assembly rooms, factory halls and other public spaces to listen to broadcasts transmitted through loudspeakers .[101] Local party organizations set up meetings in public halls, squares and on construction sites, so that the communities could listen to the most important broadcasts from Bucharest. Loudspeakers were also

[99] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 106/1949, vol. II, 64; report of the Music Department on the methods of achieving a superior ideological and artistic content in radio programmes.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Lenin rightly remarked the importance of loudspeakers to "deliver hour-long speeches in our halls with incredibly bad acoustic conditions, where orators used to have to burst their vocal chords in order to be heard by even half of the audience". See Lenin quoted in Stephen Lovell, *Russia in the Microphone Age. A History of the Soviet Radio, 1919-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 52.

made an important component in the May Day, October and 23 August festivities.

The Radio Committee organized periodical meetings with people in factories, clubs, and city districts. These meetings were introduced in early 1950 following an Agitprop critique of the radio programmes, to serve both as interactive discussions with the listeners and as avenues for the radio staff to develop new conceptions of audience evaluation.[102] In February 1952 the general director of the programmes, Paul Luchian, presided over a public gathering with more than 450 listeners in the Bucharest district *Steaua* (the Star), recently equipped with a radio station. The audience asked Luchian to include in the broadcasting schedule more working-class centred programmes, demanded more commentary on symphonic music, and intellectually accessible lectures and book presentations.[103]

At a meeting at the Griviţa Railways Workshop, held a few months later, the workers requested the expansion of educational programmes and asked the radio management to increase their offering of political commentaries to facilitate a better understanding of the international situation.[104] In one of the most advertised and orchestrated public gatherings, members of the board went to the Danube-Black Sea Canal to meet with 700 workers.[105] Voices from the audience criticized broadcasts about the construction site for being "dry" and

[102] "If you assemble 400 listeners, you will learn 100 times more than in any meeting you organize at the Radio Station", Răutu told to the Radio's leadership (ANR, Fond CC la PCR, Sectia Agitatie si Propaganda, file 3/1950, 179).
[103] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secţia PA, file 10/1952, 14-15; report of Agitprop's Sector for Radio, May 1952.
[104] "Consfătuire a Comitetului Radio cu Ascultătorii," *Contemporanul,* 5 October, 1951, 3.
[105] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1952, no file number; transcript of a meeting of the Radio Committee, 6 Iunie 1952.

"cold", unable to promote the transformative work experience.[106] Other workers reportedly demanded more educational and radio satire programmes, readings of Petru Dumitriu's novel, *Drum fără Pulbere* (Road Without Dust), and a wider coverage of the "life of workers on the construction site".[107] Luchian was satisfied with the public gathering and, back in Bucharest, to "strengthen our listeners' trust in our programmes", he set up a special commission to review the feedback of the workers.[108]

Wired transmission spread in urban and some rural parts of the country, but the radio was part of the daily cultural routine in holiday and health resorts as well. The Agitprop provided the resorts with loudspeakers which transmitted news bulletins, music, and various mobilizing political messages. By 1951, for example, the small town of Tușnad, a health resort in the Carpathians mountains had five loudspeakers which broadcast a six-hour daily programme (three hours in the morning and three in the evening). The authorities did not want the radio to compete for listeners with foreign radio stations. For example, in 1950 the local authorities spotted a group of young people dancing a waltz with the radio

[106] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1952, no file number; transcript of a meeting of the Radio Committee, 8 July 1952. Due to its crude working conditions and high mortality rate, the Danube-Black Sea Canal was one of the most infamous projects of the first years of communist rule in Romania. The rationale behind the project stemmed from the desire to shorten the distance to the Black Sea by circumventing the difficult-to-navigate Danube Delta. Embodying the Soviet conception of transformative labour, which inextricably links the aesthetic with the physical, the Canal was also an effort to set the prisoners and workers on a different path in life, to produce powerful examples of new men. The experience was portrayed in one of the most famous socialist-realist novels written in the 1950s by perhaps the most gifted novelist of the times, Petru Dumitriu in his novel *Drum Fără Pulbere* (Road Without Dust). See Petru Dumitriu, *Drum Făra Pulbere* (București: Editura de Stat Pentru Literatură și Artă, 1951); Discussing the type of ideological schooling which the Canal was supposed to provide the workers with, *Contemporanul* once used a suggestive title "The People Build the Canal, the Canal transforms the people" See "Oamenii Construiesc Canalul, Canalul Transformă Oamenii," 5 May, 1950, 1-2.
[107] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1952, no file number; transcript of a meeting of the Radio Committee, 6 June 1952.
[108] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1952, no file number; transcript of a meeting of the Radio Committee, 15 August 1952.

tuned in to Radio Belgrade and some Greek émigré vacationers who were listening to Radio Athens. They were requested to switch off their radio sets.[109]

In the postwar period, the expansion of the radio network reached an unprecedented level. Although the private radio stations were banned, the authorities remained anxious about the actual cultural penetration of the radio. At stake was more than the domination of the waves, which was largely resolved in the early postwar years. In striving to abolish what was seen as an artificial distinction between culture and the people, the radio provided the intellectual guidance to assist the people in developing a revolutionary consciousness. That is, by delivering socialist programmes, it was supposed to facilitate the transition from a sensuous to a scientific form of cultural understanding of the world. Although it did not mean that the radio would reach the desired impact on the population, maintaining ideological control over the editorial agenda was seen as paramount.

Censoring the Radio

In early 1950 Matei Socor went on a professional trip to Moscow where, as he put it later, "the encounter with the Soviet radio opened his eyes."[110] Upon his return to Bucharest, Socor established a Commission for Broadcasting Control to centralize authority over the supervision of the programmes' contents. Prior

[109] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 7/1950, 28; report on the cultural work in the health resorts of Tușnad and Slănic, June 1950.
[110] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1950, no file number; transcript of a meeting of the Radio Committee, May 1950.

to the setup of the commission, the radio scripts had to undergo editorial control in their own departments. The editors worked in rotation to read, listen to, and provide feedback on the materials. Yet, given the high work load, the scripts were often approved without prior reading. "Who had the time to read all the transcripts and work plans? These scripts were always approved," a radio journalist recalled in an interview almost fifty years later.[111] As Socor argued in favour of the decision to establish the Commission, "this practice did not resemble the communist principles of collective work … from a communist perspective that was not proper control."[112]

At the level of formal censorship conducted by the Radio Station's departments, the administration left almost no paper trail. It is reasonable to assume that the lack of written sources is the result of the nature of radio censorship, widely conducted at an informal level. Officially, a written script or a musical broadcast required four prior approvals: by the head of the department, the head of Radio Programmes, the Commission for Broadcasting Control, and occasionally the General Director. Yet, these approvals not only were often given verbally, but at times the announcers were asked to make changes in transcripts just before the start of the programme.[113] In addition, exercising a ubiquitous censorial instance were the Soviet counsellors, who had jurisdiction over both the editorial and technical supervision. They received the programmes' transcripts, were updated on any articles in the press about the

[111] Magdalena Boiangiu (former radio employee), interviewed by Virginia Călin, Bucharest, 29 April 1998, transcript, tape C 695, AIOSRR, Bucharest.
[112] ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 3/1950, 177; meeting with the Radio Committee held at the Agitprop central office on 17 February 1950.
[113] Radu Bogdan (former radio employee), interviewed by Silvia Angelescu and Virginia Călin, Bucharest, 23 November 1995, transcript, tape C 319, AIOSRR, Bucharest.

radio, and had unrestricted power to intervene in any aspect of the Radio Station.[114] Complementing the oversight mechanism of the radio, the Agitprop's Sector for Radio had near complete authority to monitor the activity of the Radio Station, to assess and replace its staff, to request changes in the content of the programmes, and to overhaul the work plans. In formal meetings with the radio professionals, the Agitprop set out programming strategies and offered feedback on broadcasts.

Although I was able to trace some of the Commission's reports in the holdings of the Radio Station, reconstructing the daily censorial rituals remains elusive. Interviews with former Radio employees show that editorial and technical supervisions of the programmes were conducted at three levels. First, a controller checked the accuracy of the announcers' reading from the scripts. Then, the controllers checked the music of the programmes, whilst, finally, an engineer supervised the technical delivery.[115] Because of financial and technological limitations, the majority of programmes before 1952, musical ones included, had to be broadcast live. The adoption of the pre-recording system in 1952 also resulted in an increase of control over programmes. The broadcasts were recorded on tape only after the texts received pre-approval and stricter rules on the secure storage of the scripts were subsequently introduced.[116]

Under these new circumstance, the Commission's supervising authority

[114] Cristian Popișteanu (former radio employee), interviewed by Virginia Călin, Bucharest, 25 February 1998, transcript, tape C 709, AIOSRR, Bucharest.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Marjorie Negrea and Stavrache Negrea (former radio employees), interviewed by Virginia Călin, Bucharest, 20 October 1997, transcript, tape C 640, AIOSRR, Bucharest.

was extended from the formal control of programmes to the "critical analysis of programmes." The controllers now carried out political, ideological, and aesthetic supervision of the literary, musical, and foreign language texts in two steps.[117] They first checked the broadcast scripts before recording began, after which they checked whether the recorded broadcast corresponded to the pre-approved text. Hence, the texts required both the controller's signature on each page and a paper of approval, [118] which the radio journalists used to call "the pink paper" in reference to the colour of the sheet.[119] For example, in the first half of 1952, the Commission spotted 1,710 errors – mainly of pronunciation, diction, and intonation – committed by announcers across all departments.[120] The commission reported, for the second half of the year 1952, that 35 political and cultural texts required corrections.[121]

The more rigid preliminary control inaugurated after 1952 also expanded the jurisdiction of the General Directorate for Press and Printed Materials over the Radio Station. The first two charters of the GDPPM (1949 and 1951) placed the radio censorship with the Directorate for the Central Press, which oversaw the printing and cultural production of the central media institutions in

[117] The training of the controllers involved methods characteristic for building cadres in the state cultural bureaucracy: standardized reading lists, socialist competitions, meetings for discussing the hot political problems of the day. See ANR, Fond CC al PCR, Secția PA, file 106/1949, vol. II, 110-111; work plan of the Commission of Broadcasting Control for the period 1 January – 1 July 1950.
[118] Josette Majdanek (former radio employee), interviewed by Silvia Angelescu, Bucharest, 24 February 1999, transcript, tape C 917, AIOSRR, Bucharest.
[119] Titel Constantinescu (former radio employee), interviewed by Virginia Călin, Bucharest, 22 July 1998, transcript, tape C 700, AIOSRR, Bucharest.
[120] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1952, no file number; report of the Commission for Broadcasting Control, March 1952.
[121] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1952, no file number; report of the Commission for Broadcasting Control, May 1952.

Bucharest.[122] Yet, before 1952 only political broadcasts and news bulletins (domestic and foreign language) were subject to the GDPPM's censorship. Some of the radio's programmes, such as live interviews did not follow a script.[123] After stricter preliminary censorship and political control was introduced at the Radio Station, the GDPPM lobbied for more involvement in the institutional structure of broadcasting. At the end of 1953 the censorial body established a Sub-Directorate for Radio and the censors demanded that they receive schedules and scripts in advance.[124]

At the Radio Station, the GDPPM's censors had their own separate office space. In the earliest days, even essential facilities for undertaking the censorial job, such as access to a landline, were not always guaranteed. The censors routinely complained to the main office about the difficulties they faced in working at the Radio Station. Some censors claimed they even had difficulty receiving the entrance passes to the main building.[125]

To monitor the broadcasts, the GDPPM's office at the radio followed the familiar rituals. As they did with the daily press and news agencies, before starting work, the censors held meetings to discuss the censorships conducted during the previous shift.[126] They also wrote daily reports to explain the

[122] See the charters in ANR, Fond Comitetul pentru Presă și Tipărituri (hereafter CPT), file 10/1949, 2 and 7; the 1951 charter stated that "the GDPPM oversees the radio and radiotelegraphed news programmes".
[123] The internal guidelines of the GDPPM stated that "the radio broadcasts will be similarly to the printed materials". See ANR, Fond CPT, file 16/1951, 8; internal guidelines of the GDPPM.
[124] ANR, Fond CPT, file 10/1949, 18-22; various guidelines and a selection of the laws governing the institutional censorship.
[125] ANR, Fond CPT, file 5/1952, 398; report of the Sub-Directorate for Radio, June 1952. In early 1950s, the GDPPM had at the Radio Station between six and eight censors, usually students. See Ibid.
[126] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1949, 2; the GDPPM guidelines for conducting censorship at the Radio Station, May 1949.

censorships undertaken which were subsequently forwarded for review to the GDPPM's central office.[127] However, it was estimated that the censors could exercise control over merely 30% of the scripts pre-approved by the Commission for Broadcasting Control.[128] The officials of the censorial board used to argue that their own staffing was insufficient to cope with the breadth of the material and that their work was also hindered by the Commission's failure to store up all pre-approved scripts. Needless to say, they regarded the administrative shortcomings as forms of disrespect towards the censorial activity.[129]

Further administrative tensions between the two institutions stemmed from the radio's failure to provide the GDPPM with the totality of scripts and texts. The radio representatives defended themselves by arguing that the radio work required more rapid response to daily events than in the other media institutions overseen by censors.[130] In other words, the radio's own system of internal monitoring made the censors redundant. Although the GDPPM's replies emphasized the legal requirements – all media products had to be approved by its censors – the paradox remained. How could the meticulous bureaucratic demands of censorship keep up with the immediacy of radio?

The ongoing battles for jurisdiction in radio censorship in the provinces mirrored those in Bucharest. In April 1952 the Radio Station sent a memo to its stations in the provinces: "to avoid political errors in your work, [from now on]

[127] Ibid.
[128] ANR, Fond CPT, file 6/1952, 154; the GDPPM guidelines for conducting censorship at the Radio Station, September 1952.
[129] Ibid.
[130] ASRD, uncatalogued collection, file from 1951, no file number, report of the Commission for Broadcasting Control, May 1951.

all scripts must be approved by the local Party branch and by the local controller of programmes".[131] Because the guidelines overlooked to mention the GDPPM, some local stations were even advised that "the station can collaborate with the GDPPM censor, but his stamp of approval is not mandatory anymore."[132] Confusion reigned at the local censorial branches for days as the radio officials from the provinces ceased sending scripts for approval to the GDPPM. A local censor complained to Bucharest: "you must urgently get in touch with the Radio Station and ask them to repair the damage they have done to us … they must issue new guidelines [and ask] that no broadcast can go on air without the prior approval of the censor! … this is the only way we can restore our censors' authority over the local stations.[133]

Some censors abused their power. In late 1949, the head of the GDPPM's radio office convened the editors responsible for the radiofication stations across Bucharest to an evaluation meeting. When his example was followed by other censors in the provinces, the GDPPM leadership intervened. They reminded the censors that such practices breached the legal prerogatives of the institution, which pertained to the control and not the guidance of cultural producers.[134] Fluidity and instability played an important role in the interactions between censors and radio workers in the provinces. Since the censor's offices were located in the county centres and some of the radiofication stations were out of their reach, part of the censorial work had to be conducted by the local party

[131] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1952, 69; internal report of the GDPPM on the effectiveness of censorship at the Radio Station.
[132] Ibid.
[133] ANR, Fond CPT, file 14/1952, 69; internal report of the GDPPM on the effectiveness of censorship at the Radio Station.
[134] ANR, Fond CPT, file 13/1949, 8; the GDPPM guidelines for conducting censorship at the Radio Station, May 1949.

structures. With the majority of censors working part-time and with fluctuations in staff turnover, the overseeing of the radiofication centres in the provinces was often chaotic and personalistic. Well into the 1950s, the censors still claimed that many of the transcripts of the radiofication stations in the country had not undergone censorial control.[135]

As this section has shown, there were important mechanisms at work to censor the radio programmes well before they made it on to the GDPPM censor's desk. Editorial control, Party oversight, and self-censorship were the most effective. As a former radio controller once put it in an interview, "radio censorship was a matter of staff professionalization."[136]

Conclusion

These histories of the Romanian communist Radio may serve to challenge some of the long-standing historiographical assumptions about broadcasting under state socialism. According to the most cherished of them, communists smothered the "real" culture of radio and replaced it with ideological "cultural ersatz" to ensure their political domination. By assessing the history of the communist Radio Station as a regrettable deviation from a democratic historical development which started in 1926, such accounts contrast it with the image of the interwar radio, portrayed as non-political and a promoter of an "authentic" culture. Although such arguments are in some regards correct, they are

[135] Ibid., 58.
[136] Cristian Popișteanu (former radio employee), interviewed by Silvia Angelescu, Bucharest, 3 March 1995, transcript, tape C 208, AIOSRR, Bucharest.

unquestionably incomplete. As we have seen, the new communist authorities did not simply abolish the old Radio programmes, but, most importantly, they selectively appropriated and made use of them for new political ends. The new culture of the Radio emerged out of the interwar, the postwar state-led reconstruction, and the RCP's mission to build a new national culture as a mechanism for moral education and political mobilization. Considered in the context of the radio's nationwide project of collective listening, censorship, at least in its institutional dimension, was less decisive.

Conclusion: Socialist Culture As a Collective Writing

Read separately, each of the preceding chapters reveals institutional agendas and cultural practices of supervision and control which underpinned the postwar socialist cultural project. Considered together, they sought to demonstrate that, unlike in the dominant Romanian historiographical narratives, the postwar socialist cultural project was a distinct, productive cultural formation. As any other cultural formation, the early Romanian postwar socialist culture reconfigured and commingled residual older forms and practices with emergent and distinctive new ones.[1] Thus, the new socialist culture did not mark an absolute moment of break with the past.

In the early postwar period, the RCP had no plans for restructuring national cultural life; nor did it rely on Soviet practices. Instead, it increased and consolidated its control over the existing state structures of cultural administration. The Stalinist culture of the 1950s was therefore built on established practices. The extent of the state's cultural power cannot be understood unless the postwar state formation is understood as cultural revolution. The communists understood that the circulation of culture and knowledge on a large scale was a necessary precondition for building a socialist modernity. By early 1950 the authorities had not only reshaped radically the people's engagement with culture, but had turned culture into a tool for fashioning a socialist future. The postwar period was a story of a new cultural

[1] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 121-35.

horizon – books, music, films, radio programmes, theatre, music, exhibitions. But the new cultural horizon was framed and monopolised by the Party rules and permeated by propaganda. The socialist cultural construction was neither a story of captivity – the adoption of a Soviet masterplan – nor one of failures. Rather, it was a story of forging mental structures to see the world through socialist lenses.

Discussion of the nature of the Romanian socialist state has often focused on the issue of legitimacy and assumed that the state's adoption of repressive practices was a substitute for its lack of legitimacy. Yet, framed in these terms, the discussion has avoided the question of what was specifically *socialist* about the postwar socialist state. Much of the existing scholarship has also portrayed the Romanian socialist state as institutionally and ideologically monolithic and socialist culture as alien, inflexible and unable to evolve. By contrast, an implicit argument of the present thesis is that, in order to overcome such static and rigid descriptions of communist state power, we need a more historically contingent approach to legitimacy. By interrogating the formation of the cultural basis of the new socialist state and society through the perspective of the Party-state's bodies of cultural control and direction, I have tried to show that postwar state formation was, in essence, a struggle to construct political legitimacy with reference to the social. That is to say, the Romanian communist regime sought to establish a kind of "social contract", albeit with a new society radically reconstructed on socialist lines. In the conceptualization of the historical actors, of course, the democratic commitment had to do more with reversing class-based inequalities than with the liberal idea of a representative government. The RCP's cultural agenda, then, aimed to overturn the cultural

dichotomy of high culture/mass culture and to provide people with universal access to carefully curated cultural goods, as a means of recreating social norms and values in conformity with dominant ideological tenets, in order to legitimise the ideological state. The early socialist culture was decidedly political.

In organizing the cultural state apparatus to implement the cultural agenda of the communist Party-state, the Agitprop was key. This agency calibrated the contours of the socialist culture by advancing a mobilizing and transformative agenda, foremost in which was the promotion of workers' culture and education. Yet, contrary to the traditional accounts, this language of social utility did not inform a "pseudo-reality", but developed its own objective classificatory practices. Some of the cultural products served agitational purposes and they were designed for a quick overcoming of Romania's backwardness, whilst the traditional high culture was retained and 'democratically' disseminated to serve as a means of elevating the people into conscious political citizens. A focus on high culture and an emphasis on intellectuals' benefits or sufferings, both obscures and circumscribes the Agitprop's functioning. For all its failures, the socialist cultural project embodied a distinct system of production, distribution, and consumption which renders problematic the understanding of postwar communist culture exclusively as a negation of a normative Western culture. Thus, I have shown how the socialist culture became operative, why it became endowed with a distinct meaning, and how the Agitprop channelled it "correctly."

The Agitprop did not just censor or restrict cultural production. By relying on a far-reaching cultural apparatus it planned the cultural production,

co-opted artists and organized audiences. In the everyday practice of the Agitprop, the repressive and productive dimensions were inter-linked closely; at some moments, they were inseparable and indistinguishable. However, while acknowledging the repressive dimension of the socialist cultural project and its implementation, this thesis aims to bring into sharper focus its productive dimension: the ways in which Agitprop and other cultural agencies, especially the organs of censorship, attempted to organize and construct a common sense of a new socialist reality.

The Agitprop also overlooked the dispersing of Party members throughout the institutions of cultural production and control. The Party members were expected to translate the guidelines provided by the Central Committee into practical policies at the institutions and in so doing to reconcile the Party ideological guidance (Party-line) with the construction of specialist knowledge at an institutional level. In practice, as we have seen, this type of coordination was far from being coherent. Attempts to regulate the quality of cultural products were often undermined by the lack of defined criteria beyond the explicit statements of the Agitprop to guide the work of producers.

The communist state tightly controlled the administration of the cultural sphere, but it was not a control solely based on destruction and repression. In a cultural system oriented towards production, the state censorship offered an additional level of supervision. The General Directorate for Press and Printed Materials (GDPPM) did not act as an ideological-advisory board for the media and cultural institutions, but was designed mainly as an institution of control under the ideological supervision of the Agitprop. Technically, a censor could

only recommend the alterations be made, any actual changes had to be made by the authors and editors. Therefore, the GDPPM did not play an important role in implementation of the communist hegemonic cultural norms. Both its limited jurisdiction and the limitation of its cadres made this impossible.

The censorship agency drew on established prewar and wartime practices, although they were employed in a more radical fashion to serve a more radical political end. The interwar and wartime governments already employed radical practices of media control such as the issue of daily press advisories, doctored news articles, and a state-administrated licensing system. They linked the publishing sector to the state, and in so doing they redefined the social role of the media as an appendix of the government.

Whereas the censorial system was certainly effective in defending the state's cultural monopoly, it is an overstatement to cast the socialist culture as the offspring of the censor's pencil. Considered within the broader framework of cultural construction, the institutional censorship seem often trapped between its ambition to engage actively in cultural production and the supervisory powers granted by its charter.

By the same token, the censors, constructed by the Cold War normativity as epitomes of arbitrariness and intellectual cruelty, were in reality very imperfect replicas of an all-powerful "ideal censor." Indeed, the Party was not particularly keen on assigning its best cadres to censorship. Whereas the GDPPM consistently asked for writers and other creative intellectuals to be hired as censors, the Party officials considered that they should be given more productive tasks. Because of these constraints, the censorship body recruited

mainly fresh university graduates and enthusiastic youths with only basic political-ideological skills. Strategic compromises on the social composition of recruitment then prompted the Party authorities to resort to authoritarian pedagogies in training the censors. Instead of being educators, the latter themselves had to be educated.

By looking beyond high politics, cases of censors such as Cornliu Codarcea's can challenge the utility of the Sovietization paradigm. A censor with a past tainted by his background in the pre-communist censorial agency and his staunch Romanian ethnicist views, Codarcea was praised in the communist censorial bureaucracy for his skills in dealing with Hungarian literature. Rather than seeing it as an outside imposition, Codarcea welcomed Sovietization as a means of fulfilling his long-standing dream of combating Hungarian chauvinism. His case also indicative for an indigenization of the promoting of Sovietization.

The project of cultural coordination and integration engaged a variety of cultural institutions with the aim of synchronizing the production of culture around the Party-state's socialist program. Hence, under the postwar socialist state, the relationship between censors and producers was less antithetical than a liberal reading may suggest. The tensions between the cultural producers and censors did not stem from the state sponsored repression, but they were the result of clashes for pre-eminence in realizing the cultural agenda.

The thesis has further explored these tensions between the political control and the production of a socialist culture by focusing on the Radio Station. It demonstrated that the narratives which posited two antithetical radio cultures

– one communist and a counter-culture of the radio professions – obscure the actual struggle for the authority to define a socialist radio culture. In the event, the formal censorial mechanism was often redundant because the radio developed its own system of quality control and radio professionals sought to assert authority in programming decisions. The new culture of the Radio emerged out of a selective appropriation of the interwar tradition, a postwar mobilizing culture of reconstruction, and from a self-assumed new mission to build a new national culture as a mechanism for moral education and political mobilization.

This thesis has examined cultural production, not the reception or impact of socialist culture mediated through censorship. However, I maintain, while it is important to distinguish between the state's cultural projection of power and the social effects of state-produced culture, there is in fact a dialectical relationship between processes of production and activities of consumption. A consumer always engages in a cultural practice within a framework of pre-determined relations of production. That is to say, culture is a product of power. But, on the other hand, in confronting a cultural product, the consumer produces in use further possible meaning(s). As Michel de Certeau argued, the cultural field is a site of ongoing conflict between the strategies of cultural production and the tactics of cultural consumption, which he designated as a "secondary production."[2]

[2] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), xvii.

The communist authorities read the relationship between production and consumption 'symptomatically'. In other words, they insisted on locating meaning, ideological effect, and probability of incorporation in the mode of production: they believed that how a cultural product is produced and delivered determines its consumption and social significance. Consequently, they saw in consumption either the recognition (by the "true" socialist citizen) or misrecognition (by cultural "dupes") of their aesthetic project.

As the 1950s receded, the Party admitted that the imposed-from-above socialist culture, although people participated in it, was not transforming workers and peasants into socialist citizens. De-Stalinization marked an important move towards a (re)adjustment of the cultural project to match both the intellectuals' demands and popular discontent. The culture of the 1960s was less centred on high culture and political education and instead privileged more consumer choice and entertainment. However, the Stalinist aesthetics and practices of the late 1940s and 1950s – the radical mobilisation of culture in the service of a revolutionary dream of creating a democratic culture and society – both shaped future cultural experiments and offered fertile ground for the emergence of counter-cultural movements in subsequent years. Socialist culture made an enduring impact on people's cultural tastes and their relationship to culture, although the people appropriated the cultural commodities not always in the way the authorities envisaged. The process of building a socialist culture, which began in the late 1940s, was after all a large-scale process of collective writing.

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Discussions:

Discussion with the former journalist Ilie Tănăsache, 6 July 2014 and 5 August 2018.

Discussion with the former head of the Agitprop's Sector for Arts and Literature, Pavel Țugui, 22 July 2013.

Discussion with the former censor, Elena Doxănescu (over telephone), 3 August 2013.