

“SOCIALISM OF SENTIMENT:” CULTURE, PROGRESS AND COMMUNITY IN THE
EARLY ROMANIAN LEFT 1870-1914

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation questions the traditional assumption of the absence of an indigenous socialist tradition in Romania prior to the Soviet takeover in 1944 by exploring the cultural and intellectual history of early socialism between 1880 and 1914. Moving away from the unimpressive political and institutional history of Romanian socialism, I argue that in conditions of limited political space, socialism was refashioned in a powerful and attractive cultural orientation, particularly visible in the fields of literary criticism and the popularization of science. Using quantitative methods and examining periodicals, memoirs, correspondence, literary and scientific works, as well as archival sources, my study ascertains and documents the previously contested presence of a sizeable and cohesive socialist intellectual community. Prominent within this community was Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a Russian-born socialist theoretician and literary critic, who founded a deeply influential school of cultural criticism. Equally important for this community's intellectual profile was a fascination with science which I explored along two axes: programs for the popularization of science and campaigns for public health and social hygiene. Both are indicative of socialist intellectuals' deep sense of social mission and their practical appreciation for science as a vehicle for improving everyday life. Together, these cultural endeavors enhanced the visibility of the socialist movement and established its identity.

Socialism of Sentiment brings together four previously unconnected historical fields and bodies of scholarship: the history of political ideologies, literary history, history of science and the history of everyday life. By placing these literatures in conversation with each other, I create a complex portrait of my subjects as socialists, intellectuals, and private individuals. Looking at

these fields together allows me to bring new insights to each. Examining the lives of prominent scientists and writers not usually remembered for their socialist activism I fill the gaps of the Romanian socialist pantheon and recover the ideological commitments of the politically unaffiliated. Placing the specialized analyses of literary history in the broader social, cultural and national environments in which Gherea and other socialist literary critics operated I trace their visibility to their involvement in the making of a national literary canon. This contribution is both unusual for Marxist critics, who generally examine already consecrated Western classics, and very relevant in the context of a nation-building young state. Going beyond the apparently antagonistic relation between socialism and nationalism, I show that socialism was vulnerable to, and compatible with, nationalist agendas. Looking at influential socialist researchers whose laboratories became important nodes in transnational scientific networks, I question the distinction between alleged scientific centers and peripheries and integrate Eastern Europe in wider European and global cultural and intellectual histories.

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INTRODUCTION

Was there a socialist tradition in Romania prior to the communist takeover in 1944? With a feeble socialist movement before World War One and the smallest communist underground in the Balkans during the interwar era, Romania seems the paradigmatic case of communism arriving in Eastern Europe ‘on the back of Soviet tanks.’ Following 1989 this view became both intellectually respectable and politically convenient. In the recent decades, the Romanian scholarly community has built its legitimacy on the rejection of the communist past. The demonization of the communist era has been accompanied by the denial of the existence of an indigenous socialist tradition in general. The supposed absence of the Left is doubly convenient, as it reinforces the alien character of the communist regime while unproblematically explaining the rise of the Extreme Right in the interwar period. A country that allegedly failed to experience political debate across the entire ideological spectrum was vulnerable to radical solutions, personal dictatorships and foreign interventions. While partially justified by the political weakness of the Romanian communist movement before 1944, the confusion between the postwar communist regime and the historical Left has maintained the “illusion of anti-communism,”¹ as one critic characterized the present academic climate, but also proved intellectually paralyzing. The very few works on prewar socialism published after 1989 focus on the poor fortunes and limited appeal of socialist parties and working-class movements and distinguish clearly between social-democracy, in its institutional, classic German-like form, and

¹ Vasile Ernu, Costi Rogozanu, Ciprian Șiulea and Ovidiu Țichindeleanu, *Iluzia anticomunismului* (Cartier: Chișinău, 2008).

both other prewar leftist orientations or phases, and postwar communism, understood as a perversion of original social-democratic ideals.²

My dissertation argues that a strictly political and institutional history of prewar socialism in fact obscures the emergence of an influential leftist tradition that evolved parallel to and sometimes independently from formal political organizations. In the closing decades of the nineteenth century socialism made a striking entrance on the Romanian cultural scene through its intervention in high profile debates on the relation between literature, art and society and its commitment to the popularization of science. By identifying and exploring this early leftist tradition in Romania, my dissertation claims that under circumstances of limited political opportunities, socialism was refashioned in a powerful and attractive cultural orientation.

The political scene of prewar Romania did not encourage the emergence of an organized Left. A young state with an overwhelmingly agrarian population, Romania came into existence in 1859 through the unification of the principalities of Moldova and Wallachia. By then the two main political parties which would control Romanian politics until the end of World War One were beginning to coalesce. While the Liberals represented the successors of the generation of 1848 and a growing urban middle class committed to social and economic reform, the Conservatives also aspired to ‘catch up with the West’ but first worked to preserve the privileges of the landowning elites. The position of the two ‘historical’ parties, as they came to be known, was solidified in 1866 with the ascension to the throne of the German prince Carol (Karl) of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen and the promulgation of the new constitution. An essentially liberal document, the 1866 Constitution guaranteed equality before the law, individual rights and freedoms (including complete freedom of conscience, of association, of the press, and of public

² Vasile Niculae, *O istorie a social-democrației române* 2 vols (Bucharest: Editura "Noua Alternativă," 1993); Nicolae Jurcă, *Social-democrația în România, 1918-1944* (Sibiu: Editura Hermann, 1993).

meetings), made provisions for representative government, declared ministers accountable, and reinforced the separation of powers. At the same time, it also gave considerable power to the monarch who was entrusted from the beginning with military and foreign affairs but would gradually come to play a crucial role in internal politics as well. By the time Romania attained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1881, the king, in close cooperation with the heads of the Liberal and Conservative parties, perfected an efficient and reliable political machine. The king and the leading politicians would elect the prime minister who, in turn, selected the Cabinet and mobilized the lower branches of his party to make sure it won the elections for the legislative chambers. Between 1881 and 1914 the elections provided no surprises and the king “rotated” the Liberal and Conservative parties in government every four years, to ensure both political stability and the preservation of his own power. The system safeguarded the rights of the citizenry and especially the freedom of the press, where most of the real political debate took place. However, it also built a very strong and extensive bureaucracy which was politically indebted to one of the two parties. Combined with the fact that the right to vote was restricted to a minority of propertied males, this meant that no other party (which were legal and emerged occasionally) managed to break the monopoly of the Liberals and the Conservatives until after World War One.

The short-lived socialist parties were two such political projects with little support and negligible impact on national politics. The first socialist party, established in 1893, came apart in 1899 following internal disagreements, declining membership, and finally the defection of several leading socialists to the left wing of the Liberal Party in a move traditionally known as the “treason of the generous.” The remaining socialists, together with the new, younger, incoming sympathizers, gradually regrouped and formed first the Socialist Union in 1905 and

eventually the second socialist party in 1910, to last until the outbreak of war in 1914. While parties stumbled, however, a leftist culture centered around key journals and personalities flourished, inspiring debates around social issues and translations from Western and Russian social and political theory, shaping literary tastes and standards, and promoting science and innovation. In doing so, it also carved a specific public sphere, a space shared, often informally, by intellectuals attracted to the literary and scientific agenda of the early Romanian Left, but also committed to its emancipatory ideals of progress, equality and social justice.

A cultural and intellectual history of early Romanian socialism moves away from the traditional question of the challenge of adapting an ideology of the proletariat to the predominantly agrarian countries of the Balkans and focuses analytical attention instead on the activity of socialist intellectuals in the realm of culture. In turn, this approach contributes to the broader literature on the shape and meaning of socialism, the role of intellectuals and the conceptualization of the periphery. Early socialist intellectuals belonged to a transnational movement that encompassed regions as different as Russia, Western Europe and the Americas. Its Romanian representatives read and translated the latest works in foreign literature and social thought, wrote and published their own theoretical ideas, founded a plethora of left-wing journals and associations, delivered lectures and sponsored campaigns for social welfare. Their cultural interests ranged from the nature of aesthetics to advancements in medicine, literature to public hygiene, philosophy to gender equality. More than any other intellectual group in Romania at the time, these thinkers were in tune with Western ideas, tendencies and debates. Exploring their writings, projects and connections, my dissertation locates them in the larger European cultural milieux, especially among materialist, progressivist and scientist circles and mentalities.

The interest in broader cultural networks informed my decision to look at Romanian leftist intellectuals as a community. By leftist intellectuals I understand a group of intellectuals who shared a sense of social mission and a deep commitment to fundamental socialist principles. They were devotees of progress and equality and believers in the potential of science and education to improve everyday life. Their sympathy and dedication went to the lower classes, to the workers and, in Romania's case, the large masses of peasants. As doctors, teachers, lawyers and journalists, they sought to educate and inform, provide legal and medical assistance, and report abuses of the state, the military, the factory owners, and the estate holders. Many socialists immersed themselves in the lives of the poor, in villages and working-class neighborhoods in the cities, from where they reported on squalid living conditions, epidemics, distraught families, and what they perceived as outdated mentalities. As intellectuals they had a particular stake in literature, seen as a social document that both reflected and could indirectly impact social conditions, and science, a progressive, liberating force yet free of problematic implications.

This community was not defined by formal political commitments. Some intellectuals were members of the socialist parties, but others were not. They were instead held together by a network of journals, circles and key individuals. Many of them knew each other personally, and were friends, colleagues, relatives, and sometimes rivals. They shared the same social and moral beliefs and, in many cases, the same intellectual and aesthetic tastes. They occasionally referred to themselves as belonging to the same "socialist family."³ In their memoirs and occasional recollections, they often talk of the "sentiment" that brought them together or characterize themselves or others as "sentimental." In many cases the term captures an enthusiastic devotion to ideals of social equality and development, and feelings of affinity with the socialist movement. When connected to literature, the word evokes a predilection for certain themes and a specific

³ Ion Pas, *Aducere aminte* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1972), 11.

style of writing. Most of the poets or novelists associated with the socialist movement were characterized at some time or another as sentimental, for their poignant verse and prose depicting the misfortunes of the poor.⁴ Some individuals self-identified as sentimental. Benzion Liber, a Jewish socialist later turned American anarchist, characterized his youthful adherence to the movement as such.⁵ Jean Bart, a socialist writer, and Garabet Ibrăileanu, a famous literary critic, talked of the “romantic socialism” that contributed, with its “generous and humanitarian ideas,” to the formation of the “spiritual structure” of their generation.⁶ Ioan Dafin, a writer and journalist, recalled that he grew “spiritually close” to the socialists of his youth, and still considered himself a socialist “in his soul” even after joining the Liberal Party in the late 1890s.⁷ Alexandru Vlahuță, a classic nineteenth century realist novelist, was never involved in politics but, in the words of fellow writer Gala Galaction, who tried to follow his example, was tied to the socialists by his “strong sentiment of justice and philanthropy.”⁸

Seasoned activists or disillusioned former members of the movement also used the term accusingly or condescendingly. In the 1930s, Constantin Graur, a lifelong socialist journalist, wrote of the “lukewarm sentimentalism” that characterized Romanian “socialism’s adolescence.”⁹ Around the same time, Constantin Titel Petrescu, member of the interwar social-democratic faction and author of an important work on socialism in Romania before World War Two, described various individuals from the first party as “sentimental socialists” who lacked “firm, doctrinaire beliefs.”¹⁰ Vasile Morțun, one of the early leaders of the movement, was

⁴ Teodor Vârgolici, *Dimitrie Anghel* (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1966), 12; Alexandru Melian, *Traian Demetrescu* (Craiova: Editura Scrisul Romanesc, 1983), 246; Valeriu Râpeanu, *Alexandru Vlahuță și epoca sa* (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1966), 172.

⁵ Benzion Liber, *A Doctor’s Apprenticeship: Autobiographical Sketches* (New York, 1956), 248.

⁶ Jean Bart, *Însemnări și amintiri* (Bucharest: Editura Literară a Casei Școalelor, 1928), 212.

⁷ Ioan Dafin, *Iașul cultural și social: Amintiri și însemnări* (Iași, 1928), 14-15.

⁸ Gala Galaction, *Oameni și gânduri din veacul meu* (Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1955), 88.

⁹ Constantin Graur, *Cați-va inși* (Bucharest: Adeverul, 193?), 42.

¹⁰ Constantin Titel Petrescu, *Socialismul în România, 1835- 6 Septembrie 1940* (Biblioteca Socialistă), 117.

characterized by several fellow socialists as a “sentimental” individual who had the “intuition of social injustice” and understood the “sentimental dimension” of social questions without being “a connoisseur or theorist of socialism.”¹¹ Morțun was not alone, as many others “did not waste their time ruminating on Marx’s *Capital*” and understood socialism from a “sentimental perspective” which, even bitter and disappointed former socialists conceded in their old age, “did not hurt them in the least.”¹² Another ex-socialist, Dimitrie Anghel, a poet whose own eagerness later turned into cynicism, condemned the sentimental socialists who joined the movement out of friendship and attachment to other members.¹³ Traian Demetrescu, a “proletarian poet” later disowned by the socialist movement and portrayed as sentimental himself, thought that many “young sentimental socialists” volunteered as members of the party only to desert it not long after.¹⁴

Whether nostalgic or resentful, most of these remarks express a certain lack of seriousness on the part of the individuals concerned. Those who reminisce wistfully about the romantic socialism of the late nineteenth century depict almost an age of innocence, when young, idealist, selfless but naïve individuals sought to rectify the social wrongs and build a better world with little awareness of the practical realities of their society. Reaching maturity and having faced repeated setbacks and challenges to their noble project, they curbed their enthusiasm and their expectations, abandoning “sentimentality” in favor of a more pragmatic understanding of the possibilities and limitations of social reform. To those who never wavered in their commitments, the “sentimentality” of former comrades who supported the social and cultural agenda of socialism without committing to or even understanding its theoretical substance

¹¹ Artur Gorovei, *Alte vremuri: amintiri literare* (Folticeni: Tipografia și Librăria “J. Bendit”, 1930), 138.

¹² Ibid., 141, 152.

¹³ Dimitrie Anghel, *Fantome* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice și Editura “Minerva”, 1911), 74.

¹⁴ Traian Demetrescu, *Profile literare* (Craiova: Editura Tipografiei D. I. Benvenisti, 1891), 76.

borders on frivolity and shallowness, regardless of the latter's various degrees of dedication to social justice. In either case, "sentimentality," but also "sentiments" have a negative connotation, implying either immature idealism or superficial, and ephemeral, emotional connections.

My goal is to emancipate early Romanian socialists from the self-imposed restrictions of their discourse on sentimentality. I want to retain their characterization but take it seriously, even if they did not. While the "sentimental" label is at best indulgent, the sentiments that brought this community together were valuable and deserve credit. In the face of political failures and slow social change it is easy to underestimate the emotional connections that linked socialist intellectuals with one another and to the goals of the movement. After all, even if they may not have lived to see a social revolution or radical improvements in the daily lives of the masses, many of the individuals under study worked faithfully, for decades, for smaller advances: in improving working and living conditions, providing better access to healthcare, education and information, establishing the foundations of a social security system, increasing the visibility of the lower classes in the public sphere, in politics and in culture. These are important achievements, brought about by a genuine, and emotional, commitment to the same values and social mission. It thus makes sense, I argue, to think of them in terms of Barbara Rosenwein's "emotional communities,"¹⁵ which she most recently defined as "groups of people animated by common or similar interests, values, and emotional styles and valuations."¹⁶

The informal and affective character of this community is crucial in distinguishing it from other apparently similar movements. In his important study of workers' cultural associations in late imperial Germany, Vernon Lidtke refers to the extensive network of workers'

¹⁵ Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹⁶ Jan Plamper, "The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns," *History and Theory* vol. 49 (May 2010), 253.

clubs, libraries, cultural societies, and sports and leisure circles as an “alternative culture.”¹⁷

While retaining his emphasis on the impact of this rich and effervescent cultural life, the very different context of my case-study does not allow me to appropriate Lidtke’s term. Apart from the significance disparity in sheer size and resolute working-class character, the German socialist “alternative culture” is most different from the Romanian socialist community in that it emerged on the bases of pre-existent political organizations. The large German Social-Democratic Party, with its complex web of local sections and subsections, was able to generate a parallel associational life, where members of the party created their own cultural and recreational sphere. In Romania this socialist culture emerged independently of political organizations and at least in the period under study did not have a clear-cut class character. It was a mostly intellectual community, kept together by shared principles and personal relationships, but which nevertheless left an imprint on the country’s culture, and deserves to be explored on its own terms.

Cultural and intellectual histories of early socialism are conspicuously absent from both Romanian and Western historiography on the Balkans. Shaped by the regime’s concern with legitimacy, Communist-era scholarship predictably assigned an exaggerated importance to a barely emerging working-class movement.¹⁸ While literary historians have produced valuable monographs especially on the work of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, the leading socialist thinker and literary critic, their writings fail to contextualize literary criticism within the broader cultural milieu.¹⁹ Following 1989, the few accounts of early socialism focus on the supposed

¹⁷ Vernon L. Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

¹⁸I. Căpreanu, *Mișcarea muncitorească în luptele politice din Romania între anii 1900-1914* (Iași: Junimea, 1983); Nicolae Copoiu, *Le socialisme Européen et le mouvement ouvrier et socialiste en Roumanie, 1835-1921* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1973); M. Roller, *În legătură cu mișcarea muncitorească din România. Contribuție la istoria României* (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Comunist Român, 1945).

¹⁹ Z. Ornea, *Curentul cultural de la Contemporanul* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1977) and *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea* (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, 1983).

failure of social-democracy to take root in Romania²⁰ or attempt to reinterpret the political and sociological doctrines of socialist leaders.²¹ Michael Shafir's important articles on Dobrogeanu-Gherea represent an exception, squarely locating the Romanian theoretician among the leading Marxist thinkers of the time.²² While recovering Dobrogeanu-Gherea's legacy, however, Shafir also inadvertently decontextualizes it. For Shafir, Dobrogeanu-Gherea's presence on the European periphery is both exceptional and unfortunate. By contrast, rather than seeing Dobrogeanu-Gherea as the gifted thinker in the "wrong place" at the "wrong time", I aim to show that his work was very much part of the broader culture in which it emerged.

Western literature, in the apt words of Augusta Dimou "has failed to inscribe into the history of international socialism the standpoint of its own peripheries."²³ Even the valuable works of Georges Haupt, a historian keen on internationalism and particularly sensitive to the Balkans, ultimately reinforce the compartmentalization of national variants of socialism.²⁴ Alternatively, historians of the region, like Jochen Schmidt in his meticulous and well-researched study on Romanian socialism and populism, continue to focus on local adaptations of Marxism and their political evolution.²⁵ More recently, Dimou has revisited the topic in her innovative comparative study of socialist movements in Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. While addressing the role of discourse and the intellectuals, Dimou is nevertheless concerned with the political and

²⁰ See Niculae and Jurcă.

²¹ C. Preda, *Staulul și sirena* (Bucharest: Nemira, 1996).

²² Michael Shafir, "Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea: Wrong Time, Wrong Face, Wrong Place." *Studia Universitatis Babes Bolyai European Studies* vol. 2 (2007): 5-48; "'Romania's Marx' and the National Question: Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea." *History of Political Thought* vol. 15, no. 2 (1984): 295-314; and "Sociology of Knowledge in the Middle of Nowhere: Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea." *East European Quarterly* vol. 19, no. 3 (1985): 321-336.

²³ Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2009), 7.

²⁴ Georges Haupt, *Din istoricul legăturilor revoluționare româno-ruse 1849-1881* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1955); "Rôle de la critique dans la naissance du socialisme: la Roumanie." *Le Mouvement social: Critique Littéraire et Socialisme* vol. 59 (1967): 29-48; and "Rôle de l'exil dans la diffusion de l'image de l'intelligentsia révolutionnaire." *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique* vol. 19, no. 3 (1978): 235-249.

²⁵ Jochen Schmidt, *Populismus Oder Marxismus: Zur Ideengeschichte Der Radikalen Intelligenz Rumaniens, 1875-1915* (Tubingen: Verlag der Tubinger Gesellschaft, 1992).

institutional evolution of socialism in the three countries and the extent to which it succeeded or failed to become a viable alternative to competing ideologies, primarily nationalism. Whereas Dimou is interested in the fortunes of institutionalized socialism, I am concerned essentially with the emergence of a leftist sensibility and its imprint on the cultural debates of the time.

Alternatively, scholarship on left-wing literary criticism and the rise of the scientific discourse on the European periphery is equally limited. Western scholarship on leftist literary criticism centers on the representative names of the Western tradition and on Russian populist and Marxist figures. The 1967 special issue on literary criticism of the journal *Le Mouvement Social* is a rare attempt at comparing the socialist literary traditions of various countries, including those on the periphery. In the realm of the popularization of science, the recent edited collection by Papanelopoulou, Nieto-Galan and Perdiguero on the dissemination of science on the margins of Europe represents a similarly unusual exception in a literature otherwise centered on Western Europe.²⁶ More generally, scholarship on socialism and science is circumscribed by the questions of the broader relation between socialism and evolutionism and the competition between socialism and rival ideologies for the appropriation of scientific discourse. Consequently, scholars are interested either in the impact of Darwinism on the formulation of various forms of socialism²⁷ or in the ways in which socialists sought to appropriate “bourgeois” science for socialist ends or to create a rival, “proletarian science.”²⁸ Whereas I retain these

²⁶ F. Papanelopoulou, A. Nieto-Galan, and E. Perdiguero, *Popularizing Science and Technology in the European Periphery, 1800-2000* (Burlington: Ashgate Pub, 2009).

²⁷ Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), K. Bayertz, “Naturwissenschaft und Sozialismus: Tendenzen der Naturwissenschafts-Rezeption in der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung des 19. Jahrhunderts,” *Social Studies of Science* vol. 13, no. 3 (1983): 355-394; D. Stack, *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism, 1859-1914* (Cheltenham, England: New Clarion Press, 2003).

²⁸ George Cotkin, “The Socialist Popularization of Science in America, 1901 to the First World War,” *History of Education Quarterly* vol. 24, no. 2 (Summer 1984): 201-214; N. Hopwood, “Producing a Socialist Popular Science in the Weimar Republic,” *History Workshop Journal* vol. 41, no. 2 (1996): 117-153, and S. Macintyre, *A Proletarian Science: Marxism in Britain, 1917-1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

scholars' important insights on the role of science in shaping ideology, my aim is to examine how the association of socialism with science shaped the form, content and reception of socialism in the Romanian context.

The first chapter sets the stage for the rest of the dissertation by introducing and defining the community that comprised the early Romanian Left. I deliberately employ broad definitions. In this case intellectuals include nonobvious individuals, like self-taught writers and journalists or workers who later acquired an education and played a significant role in the leadership of the movement. The definition of the Left has proved the crux of my research from the beginning. Throughout the dissertation I sometimes use “socialists” and “leftists” interchangeably because that is how they were used at the time. More particularly, people who associated themselves, through personal relationships or contributions to specific journals and projects, with the self-confessed members of the socialist parties or movement, were usually also perceived as and referred to, in jest or in earnest, as socialists. While the term “Left” was not commonly used at the time, I employ it here in the broad understanding of an ideology centered on socialism but not exclusive to it, concerned with equality, progress, and democratic citizenship. In the case of Romania of the time, the Left was made up of the socialists (who, except for the occasional anarchists expelled from the party, identified themselves as Marxists), the *poporanists*, one of the two Romanian versions of the Russian populist movement, who shared the emphasis on social justice but focused on the peasantry, the minority left wing of the Liberal Party, and the Radicals, a fringe progressive party concentrated on the expansion of the franchise.

The representatives of the early Romanian Left did not leave a rich documentary trail. The archives of the two socialist parties, which were previously housed by the Institute for the History of the Communist Party, had been misplaced or lost following 1989. Using newspapers,

memoirs, biographies of socialist leaders published under communism, and biographies of literary and scientific figures not primarily known for their socialist allegiances, I assembled a group of one hundred and sixteen individuals about whom I could find enough information to complete a prosopographical questionnaire. Looking at issues like social origin, ethnicity, education, profession, political activism, and duration of affiliation with the socialist movement, I construct a portrait of this community which shows both the impressive diversity of its members' social backgrounds and experiences, and the endurance of socialist ideals, even in the case of individuals who left formal socialist organizations. This chapter also addresses the question of the foreign character of the socialist movement, showing that statistically foreigners and Romanian Jews (usually considered to be overrepresented in socialist movements) were actually a minority. However, even if it was not comprised of foreigners, the socialist movement was, predictably, influenced by developments in international socialism, and I identify three phases: Russian, French, and German, in the evolution of socialism in Romania before 1914. I conclude the description of this community with a discussion of the "women's question." Although the socialists in Romania were among the earliest and most vocal advocates of women's emancipation, the movement had very few women among its members and rarely allowed them in positions of authority.

Chapter Two explains the attractiveness of this community by exploring its unofficial headquarters, the restaurant of the train station in Ploiești, an important town in Wallachia. From 1882 to 1920 this restaurant was managed by the leading figure of the early Romanian Left, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a Russian Jewish émigré widely known as the main theorist of socialism in Romania and one of the country's most influential literary critics. Gherea's career as administrator and chef is easily obscured behind his more impressive intellectual achievements.

At the time, however, his presence at the helm of a restaurant that became so famous that patrons travelled from other towns just to dine there, was crucial in the visibility of the Romanian socialist movement. The reputation of the place was helped by the strategic location of the town, home to Romania's large oil fields and a growing working-class population, close both to the capital Bucharest and the royal residence at Sinaia, on the main railroad linking Romania to Austria-Hungary and Western Europe. Under Gherea's leadership the restaurant acquired many layers of significance. Gherea's own personal charisma, fame, and accessibility attracted large numbers of intellectuals, writers, journalists and students, while his well-known dedication to the socialist cause ensured that the restaurant was a meeting (and sometimes hiding) place for fellow revolutionaries of all kinds. His many friends, acquaintances and colleagues turned the train station into a main node in socialist literary and scientific networks. The combination of culinary delights and the presence of one of the country's towering cultural figures, which by extension guaranteed the company of other well-known writers or politicians as well, proved irresistible to the larger public. The very character of the train-station, permanent, lively, open to everyone at every time, made it a particular kind of public space which, by its very accessibility, brought its own political opportunities. I argue that by marking it strongly as theirs, Gherea and the socialists took ownership of this space and transformed it into the center of a socialist public sphere, open to multiple publics but nonetheless bearing the stamp of a visible socialist culture.

Gherea's better known theoretical and literary career is the subject of the third chapter. Here too the question of visibility is paramount. I am less interested in discussing Gherea's literary works for their own sake, or in debating Gherea's place among pioneers of Marxist literary criticism, than I am in understanding the space he inhabited in the cultural arena of Romania at the time. I contend that Gherea's rise was facilitated by the country's intellectual

climate, which was in part typical of young nation states, but was also shaped by Gherea's direct predecessor. The Eastern European literary critics of the second half of the nineteenth century analyzed much more than literature. Their critiques concerned culture, society and politics, diagnosing structural ills and providing models of development. In Romania the founder of literary criticism had been Titu Maiorescu, an educated, intelligent and very talented writer who nonetheless throughout his life remained an outsider to the academic establishment of literary studies, thus paving the way for strangers of all kinds to make their intervention in Romanian literature. Gherea, a foreigner, a socialist and an innkeeper, all antithetical traits to traditional intellectual production, benefitted from the rules of the cultural field instituted by Maiorescu. Gherea's rising popularity and that of the main socialist cultural journal, *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), were mutually reinforcing. In the 1880s, *Contemporanul* was the most widely read cultural periodical in Romania, publishing many of Gherea's studies, but also attracting readers by engaging in controversial subjects like the relation between religion and science, and instituting an original rubric dedicated to exposing plagiarism from foreign sources in recently published Romanian books. Gherea established a school of socialist and later *poporanist* literary critics who looked at literary works as mirrors of the society and tools for its transformation. He also advanced the field of literary criticism by introducing its first, in the Romanian case, embryonic methodology. His importance, however, lies elsewhere. Even while rigorously applying Marxist principles to literature, Gherea intervened in the construction of a national canon, discovering some authors and dismissing others. Even if occasionally proved wrong, in general his judgement served him well enough that many of the writers he promoted became classics. Writers and journalists congregated at Gherea's restaurant not only because they liked

his approach, but because his studies addressed the very real and far-reaching question of whose literary work best represented an emerging nation.

Chapter Four looks at the Romanian socialist community from the perspective of its attraction to science and its potential to improve everyday life. This affinity translated practically in two projects: campaigns for the popularization of science, undertaken mostly in periodicals and occasionally in public lectures, and campaigns for public health and social hygiene, generally conducted by socialist doctors. The latter in particular brings forward again the emotional attachment to the cause and the strong sense of social mission which sent socialists “to the people,” in rural areas ridden by disease or poor urban neighborhoods, and led to their sustained advocacy for access to healthcare and new, better enforced, sanitation laws. I locate the popularizing endeavor both within the broader European and American “epidemics of popularization” which reached its heights in the 1880s and 90s, and along a specifically socialist fascination with science, based on a common methodology of rational inquiry, experimentation and the elaboration of deterministic laws. In Romania, like elsewhere, the popularization of science was accompanied by the questioning of religious dogmas and, less obviously, faith in general. However, the Romanian socialists went back and forth in their proclamations of atheism, probably wary of alienating a still predominantly traditionally religious population. In this chapter I also look at the process of circulation of knowledge and question the distinction between alleged scientific centers and peripheries. Using the example of Emil Racoviță, a socialist active in both the French and Romanian movements and a world-famous pioneer in the exploration of cave flora and fauna, I show how Romania became a scientific center of this new field, biospeleology, attracting in turn foreign specialists and becoming a crucial node in scientific networks.

The following chapter traces the intersection between the leftist community and the broader national one. The attitudes of Romanian socialists evolved from initial ambivalence towards nationalism to staunch commitment to internationalism in the 1890s, and an inadvertent but unmistakable growing engagement with nationalism after the turn of the century. Locating socialism in the broader political and cultural debates of the time, I argue that belonging to the Romanian public arena forced socialists to become increasingly more sensitive to the challenges of nationalism. Especially after 1900, the rise of very influential competing nationalist ideologies, as well as the necessity to address the Jewish question and the problem of ethnic Romanians living abroad, turned Romanian socialists into opponents but also implicitly partners of dialogue in debates on nationalism. As they engaged the popular nationalistic trends of the time, socialist journals eventually resorted to the same language, concepts and imagery they were so vocally dismissing. In putting forward different, but essentially no less nationalistic, projects for the future, socialist intellectuals were not anti-nationalist but, they would argue, the *better* nationalists, as they sought to integrate their nation in a world governed by universalist and humanitarian principles.

Going back full circle, the final chapter, originally conceived as an epilogue, returns to the individuals introduced in Chapter One and explores the evolution of former socialists who left the movement at various times. In doing so, it revisits the question of the “treason of the generous,” and questions the traditional periodization of prewar socialism as well as the pernicious dichotomy between a first “intellectual” movement and a second “working-class” one. I examine the move of the “generous” in light of the political structures of the time, the modernizing agenda of the Liberal Party, and the limited political opportunities of organized socialism. Focusing on the evolution of five prominent “generous,” I argue that their subsequent

careers and actions show that they retained their initial leftist convictions. On the other hand, the period between 1899 (the dissolution of the first party) and 1905 (the establishment of the next official organization, the Socialist Union) was characterized by the activity of the socialists who chose to stay in the movement and continued to write, publish and gather together. For most part, these were still intellectuals, although the general growth of industries also led to an increase in the number of socialist workers. With few exceptions, both the trajectories of those who stayed and those who left confirm the longevity and cohesion of a socialist cultural community that questions the alleged absence of a prewar Romanian Left.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PORTRAIT OF THE ROMANIAN INTELLECTUAL AS A YOUNG LEFTIST

Only with difficulty could today's generation understand the types of apostles produced, half a century ago, by the idealist and generous atmosphere of the old Moldovan capital (Jean Bart)¹

I recognize, in these generous outpourings of the heart, the great generation between 1880 and 1900. I grew up in the sound of this noble fanfare. Who could understand today this pure humanitarian inspiration (Gala Galaction)²

If the early Romanian Left should not be reduced to the feeble prewar workers' parties and the dozen names of acknowledged socialists, then what does it consist of? How does one define this community that transcended the boundaries of the political and how can one determine who belonged to it? What is the Left when construed beyond organized socialism and considering the historical specificities of time and place? Who qualifies as an intellectual within this Left and who, for that matter, is Romanian? This chapter provides answers to these questions by defining key terms, selecting relevant features, and reconstructing the image and dynamics of a fluid and complex forgotten community. In doing so it both explains ambiguous designations and restores ambiguity in previously oversimplified categories. Building upon an inclusive understanding of 'leftist intellectuals,' the chapter centers on a prosopography of Romanian leftists, a study concerned not so much with personal biographic details, but with patterns and connections within a group including all the relevant individuals for whom specific biographical information could be ascertained. While a quantitative method, the purpose of this prosopography is paradoxically to humanize and give substance to the vague entity referred to as

¹ Jean Bart, *Însemnări și amintiri*, 164 (my translation).

² Gala Galaction, "Duhul poeziei lui A.Toma," in *Oameni și gânduri din veacul meu*, 116 (my translation).

the ‘early Romanian Left.’ It suggests the scale and diversity of this community and seeks to determine its characteristics. Predictably the picture that emerges from this analysis is not uniform. There is not one ideal type leftist, but several, and the ‘portrait’ is a multifaceted one. That there is a ‘portrait,’ however, is evidence that this community existed in the first place. The analysis of its evolution, moreover, shows an endurance of leftist principles that goes against the orthodoxy of a weak, fragmented and ultimately ineffective prewar Romanian socialism.

Leftist Intellectuals

“For a century after the 1860s, [...] two complementary principles held good: socialism was always the core of the Left; and the Left was always larger than socialism.”³ Geoff Eley’s simple but compelling characterization of the European Left is particularly apt for a timeframe that largely coincides with the golden age of socialism and a space generally associated with the lack of a formal socialist tradition but which on closer scrutiny displays a variety of leftist tendencies and influences. In the history of the Left, the period before World War One stands out through its richness of ideas, debates and myriad interpretations on the theory, targets and tactics of various social “isms.” The Romanian case mirrors this pattern in the considerable and often unacknowledged variation of opinion within the circles of individuals associated in one way or another with socialism. Romanian intellectuals successively, or sometimes simultaneously, embraced the teachings of Lassalle, Lafargue, Guesde, Jaurés, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Marx or Kautsky, and pledged their allegiance to various trends from pre-Marxist and Christian socialism to anarchism, French socialism, German-style social-democracy and revisionism. Involvement in the Left, however, was not restricted to varieties of socialism. As Eley reminds us, “socialists

³ Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8.

never carried their goals alone. They always needed allies, whether in fighting elections, forming governments, organizing strikes, building community support, conducting agitation, working in institutions, or professing ideas in a public sphere.”⁴ In Romania they found these allies in the liberals, the radical democrats and the populists. Scholars have carefully separated these groups from the socialists, while at the same time rarely acknowledging the wide range of divergences present within the socialist groups themselves. A history of the early Romanian Left would be incomplete without the inclusion of these distinct political factions which both shared some of the theoretical tenets of socialism and actively collaborated with the socialists in the public and political arenas.

The populists in particular pose interesting questions, as in the Romanian case the term “populist” has been equally applied to two related, but nevertheless distinct, and highly antagonistic, cultural trends: “*sămănătorism*” (named after its emblem journal “*Sămănătorul*”- “The Sower”) and “*poporanism*” (from “popor,” the Romanian for “the people”), a movement closer in mission and outlook to Russian *narodnichestvo*. While the “*sămănătorist*” movement was essentially nationalistic (even xenophobic at times) and thus at least in theory antithetical to most forms of the Left, “*poporanism*” could be legitimately defined as deriving or descending from socialism. Just like Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855-1920), the leading theoretician of Romanian socialism, Constantin Stere (1865-1936), the mastermind behind *poporanism*, represented the classical figure of the Russian revolutionary émigré, who ‘went to the people’ in the heyday of the Russian *narodnik* movement, was persecuted by the imperial authorities, went into exile and eventually settled in Romania, where he continued to develop his ideas.⁵

Moreover, most prominent *poporanists* began their careers as committed socialists and some,

⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵ The main work on Constantin Stere is Z. Ornea, *Viața lui C. Stere* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2 vols., 1989, 1991).

intriguingly, did not stop considering themselves as such, in spite of significant differences between *poporanism* and socialism.⁶ After all, the social mission of the two camps was largely similar and the commitment to the peasantry, while exclusive in the case of *poporanism*, was less incompatible with socialism than it may seem. Aware of the centrality of the “rural question” in slowly industrializing Romania, socialists had been developing programs for the peasantry since the mid-1880s. Some later socialists went as far as characterizing, exaggeratedly, this initial period as the “peasantist phase” in the evolution of the Romanian movement.⁷ The Romanian socialists only reluctantly gave up the rural programs after the turn of the century when a more visible working-class and a growing commitment to Marxist orthodoxy relegated the peasantry to the background. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, though, the socialist movement eagerly embraced the incipient *poporanist* theses, published at the time in socialist journals by intellectuals who were then known as leading fellow socialists. The party leader Ioan Nădejde later explained this attitude by referring to the “duty” felt by most socialist intellectuals to redeem themselves in front of the peasantry, whose hard work made it possible for most early socialists to acquire an education and better station in life.⁸ The *poporanist* ideologue Constantin Stere himself started out by praising the Romanian socialists for their revolutionary egalitarian aspirations and urging them to reconsider the notion of “proletariat” beyond the narrow Western European sense of poor industrial workers.⁹ Prompted by necessity, other Romanian socialists had already taken this step, coming to refer in their writings to the “agrarian proletariat” (i.e. the peasantry) who shared the misery of the much smaller urban working-class. As historian Ștefania

⁶ For a comparative analysis of Romanian socialism and *poporanism* see Jochen Schmidt, *Populismus Oder Marxismus: Zur Ideengeschichte Der Radikalen Intelligenz Rumaniens, 1875-1915*.

⁷ I. Sion cited in Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Poporanismul și mișcarea socialistă din România* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1988), 16.

⁸ I. Nădejde, “Nereușita socialismului în România,” *Noua revistă română*, May 1, 1901, 395.

⁹ C. Scorțescu (C. Stere), “Răspuns d-lui Doniroff,” *Evenimentul*, September 4, 1893.

Mihăilescu points out, Stere described his ideology in “a broadly democratic, humanitarian sense,”¹⁰ describing it as more of a “general sentiment, an emotional and intellectual attitude, rather than a well-defined doctrine and ideal.”¹¹ These vague terms recall the equally broad, elusive and sentimental depictions of early socialism, some belonging to otherwise rigid and committed socialists. Even as he began to distance himself from mainstream socialism and set forth his ideal of Romania as a rural democracy, Stere continued to refer to *poporanism* as a form of ‘peasant socialism.’ While socialism, in its proper shape, was not appropriate for Romania’s social and economic state, *poporanism* was a wider, more inclusive ideology still conversant with socialism:

Poporanism, as a social phenomenon, is both narrower and broader than socialism. Narrower, because it includes only the educated strata of the society; obviously socialist workers and peasants cannot be *poporanist*. Broader, because while all educated socialists are *poporanists*, not all *poporanists* are socialists, because being a socialist, rather than a *poporanist*, requires, apart from the elements shown above, something else: a social-historical theory and a very well determined ideal.¹²

Stere’s explanation highlights two noteworthy features of *poporanism* as he envisioned it. On one hand, *poporanism* was to be a trend embraced exclusively by intellectuals. On the other, it would lack the specificity and purposefulness of dogmatic socialism. As many scholars noted, Stere rediscovered the tenets of the *narodnik* trend, in a different space and long after the initial Russian movement had run its course. But the Romanian *poporanist* understanding of ‘going to the people,’ centered particularly on educating the masses, was similar to the pedagogic impulse of the socialists. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Romania socialism and *poporanism*

¹⁰ Mihăilescu, 22.

¹¹ C. Șărcăleanu (C. Stere), “Poporanismul,” *Evenimentul literar*, March 15, 1984.

¹² *Ibidem.*, March 28, 1984.

shared goals, activities and people. More than the occasional overlap, this semblance justifies the inclusion of select *poporanists* as leftists alongside the socialists examined in this work.

The Romanian liberals are equally relevant for a comprehensive study of the Romanian Left. In spite of the subsequently imposed chasm, the socialists and the liberals of the 1880s and 90s had more in common than future socialist leaders and historians of the communist era liked to believe. As Augusta Dimou notes, in Eastern Europe socialism and liberalism contended simultaneously for political recognition. Arguably, local conditions were no more suitable for liberalism than they were for socialism. In the absence of a strong middle class, liberalism became the banner of the lower gentry in Hungary and Romania and of the emerging educated elite in the rest of the Balkans.¹³ In general scholars have been harsh in their assessments of Balkan liberalism, mostly because they compared it with an ideal-type Western liberalism. Confronted with the latter, liberalism in its Balkan version became, in Leften Stavrianos's words, a "meaningless label without underlying principles,"¹⁴ or, according to Joseph Rothschild, an accurate one only to the extent in which it was vaguely associated with the legacy of 1848.¹⁵ As the fief of the powerful Brătianu family, which dominated Romanian politics until the interwar period, the Romanian (if in name only according to some) Liberal Party is usually considered emblematic of the "deviations" of liberalism in Eastern Europe. According to Andrew Janos, unlike in the West, the lesser gentry that became the backbone of the liberal movement in Romania were not "agrarian entrepreneurs"¹⁶ seeking to subvert the monopoly of large landowners and facilitate the rise of a commercial economy. Instead, they were representatives

¹³ Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans*, 12.

¹⁴ Leften Stavrianos, cited in Victoria Brown "The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State: The Case of Romanian Nationalism," in *Romania between East and West: Historical Essays in Memory of Constantin C. Giurescu*, edited by Stephen Fisher-Galati, Radu R. Florescu and George R. Ursul (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1982), 269.

¹⁵ Joseph Rothschild cited in Brown, 269.

¹⁶ Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 65.

of a declining, impoverished class which sought and found alternatives to economic activity in “political entrepreneurship,”¹⁷ more precisely in the newly expanding bureaucracies. However, Janos is likely going too far in attributing the liberals’ efforts towards national unity and independence to the unstated goal of “protecting bankrupt landowners from economic ruin.”¹⁸ In her well-known, more nuanced reevaluation of Romanian liberalism, Victoria Brown argues for a more sympathetic understanding of the liberals’ goals and the limitations under which they were forced to act.¹⁹ In spite of their occasional disingenuousness, Eastern European liberals were keen modernizers and sincere upholders of liberal programs. The liberals’ goals and attempts, rather than necessarily their results, should constitute the criterion for assessing them. As Diana Mishkova argued more recently, these will show that the very purpose of Balkan liberalism was not theoretical or philosophical, but essentially an “activist, socially and politically engineering one.”²⁰

Romanian liberals and socialists shared more than a modernizing and progressive agenda. The sons (and rarely daughters) of wealthy landowners and the rising middle class shared the same background, education and social networks. From their first publications, the Romanian socialists declared their admiration for the liberals of the 1848 revolution and viewed themselves as their legitimate successors. The death of C. A. Rosetti, a veteran liberal leader and a socialist sympathizer, in 1885, received extended coverage in the socialist press and his funeral, attended by more than ten thousand people, occasioned the first public display of the red flag. Before the

¹⁷ Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 151.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Brown, 269.

²⁰ Diana Mishkova, “The Interesting Anomaly of Balkan Liberalism,” in *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, edited by Ivan Zoltan Denes (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006), 401.

emergence of the party and even afterwards, when they did not run for elections themselves, Romanian socialists often publicly supported the Liberals and promoted their program.

The last relevant group, the Radicals, were the singlehanded creation of the brilliant journalist and lawyer Gheorghe Panu (1848-1910). Member of socialist circles during his studies in France and Belgium and later prominent liberal, Panu broke away from the Liberals and formed the Democratic-Radical Party in 1891. An extension of the popular and virulent newspaper *Lupta* (The Struggle), known for its strong language and often extreme demands, the group of “Panu’s radicals” stood out through its uncompromising anti-monarchical stance and forward-looking social demands, which included universal suffrage, agrarian reforms, and progressive taxation. His vocal support for the workers and his intellectual commitment to positivism brought him close to the socialists, especially in the last decade of the nineteenth century, even if mainstream socialists did not share in the radicalism of all his goals, as they did not, for example, endorse universal suffrage at the time. Panu himself, perpetually dissatisfied, later temporarily joined the Conservatives in yet another failed attempt to bring his political agenda closer to fruition. Sometimes considered a political chameleon, Panu nevertheless displayed remarkable consistence in his convictions, which throughout his life remained mostly leftist. Both he and his close supporters, many of whom started out as socialists, therefore belong to the prewar history of the Left.

While centering on socialism, the early Romanian Left thus included several political orientations, which shared a commitment to social justice and social progress. Especially before the turn of the century this Left was characterized by a strong utopian drive, manifest in the social engineering projects of the liberals, the egalitarianism of the populists or the almost messianic belief in science of the socialists. Like their counterparts elsewhere, not only did the

Romanian leftists believe that they were building a better world but were confident that this new world would emerge soon. Contributing to its construction were a wide range of individuals, from socialists and trade-unionists to “secularists and freethinkers, feminists and suffragists, spiritualists and Christian socialists, educators and improvers, and all kinds of progressives.”²¹ Apart from leftist convictions, they shared intellectual interests and pursuits that brought them together in spite of different backgrounds and life experiences.

This analysis of the Left begs the question of who represented the Right in nineteenth century Romania. The core of the Right was represented by the Conservative Party, the other ‘historical’ party, which shared power and alternated in government with the Liberals. Although far from homogenous, the Conservative Party in general represented the interests of the owners of large agricultural estates, the former *boyars*. Until the dissolution of the party following World War One, the Conservatives tenaciously opposed land reform, the extension of the franchise, and even educational reforms aimed at increasing literacy rates, arguing instead that more diverse and advanced schooling opportunities for the middle classes were preferable and more realistic than attempts to educate the large peasant masses. In spite of these tenets, it would be inaccurate to characterize the Conservatives as retrograde. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Conservatives, like the rest of the Romanian elites, were committed to modernization and to ‘catching up with the West.’ It was after all still relatively soon after Romania emerged as a state from the unification of Moldova and Wallachia in 1859, acquired a foreign prince in the person of Carol I of Hohenzollern in 1866, and eventually attained independence following the Russo-Turkish War in 1878. The Romanian ruling classes were eager to make up for lost time and bring Romania up to European standards. They disagreed, however, on both the mode and the pace of this change.

²¹ Eley, 15.

The Liberal descendants of the 1848 revolutionaries were quick to introduce Western-style institutions in Romania, from the new Constitution and representative bodies, to academies and universities, as well as forms of information and entertainment. The rapid implementation of advanced liberal and democratic institutions in a country still characterized in many ways by feudal relations gave rise to the conservative concern for the introduction of ‘forms without substance.’ This apprehension, common among Eastern European intellectuals of the time, and best formulated in the Romanian case by Titu Maiorescu, ironically Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea’s key literary and ideological rival, stemmed from the distrust in the universality of a solution (Western-style institutions) born and proved adequate in a specific context (the economically advanced and culturally different West).²² The Conservatives, even the moderate and ‘enlightened’ ones like Maiorescu and his followers, were wary of adopting progressive laws and institutions before finding solutions to the pragmatic challenges that were likely to emerge from their application in a very different and, they would claim, unprepared, society.

But it would also be misguided to describe nineteenth century Romanian Conservatives as traditional. As philosopher and cultural critic Eugen Lovinescu pointed out in the 1930s, the critique of liberalism was itself a Western import.²³ The conservative intellectuals of the time were not preoccupied with discovering or recovering a local tradition. Even as they maintained their uncompromising stance on land reform, in the 1890s and especially after the turn of the century Romanian conservatism would turn toward the peasantry and the countryside as repositories of tradition. It thus makes sense that after World War One the few surviving conservative politicians were absorbed in the newly created Peasant Party. In their initial decades

²² Ioan Stanomir, *Reacțiune și conservatorism: Eseu asupra imaginarului politic eminescian* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2000), 156.

²³ Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, vol. 2 “Forțele reacționare” (Bucharest: Minerva, 1992), 105.

on the Romanian political scene, however, the Conservatives did not cherish an idyllic past or imagine some rural utopia. Even Mihai Eminescu, generally considered Romania's national poet, a fierce conservative and nationalist, admitted that the western institutions introduced in the 1860s had filled in an "intellectual vacuum."²⁴ Most Conservatives of the time were not anti-urban, anti-industrial or anti-capitalist. Instead, they advocated "organic" progress and understood Europeanization as a long and gradual process by which the country would steadily acquire the attributes of Western civilization.²⁵

Accompanying the Conservatives within the Romanian Right of the time were a group of cautious Liberals which would become known as the 'old wing' of the party. They were led by the senior politician Dimitrie Sturdza and opposed the camp of the young but already formidable Ion I.C. Brătianu, who would go on to become one of the "makers of modern Romania" and most important political figures of twentieth century Romanian history.²⁶ The members of the 'old wing' disapproved of the fast pace of modernization favoured by other Liberals and generally sought to temper, slow down, and even prevent progressive social and economic reforms. Together with the supporters of the Conservative Party, which may have been less popular but was still guaranteed to succeed the Liberal Party in power once every four years, these Liberals formed the Right against which the early Romanian Left took shape.

²⁴ Mihai Eminescu, "Programul partidului conservator," in *Conservatorismul românesc: Concepte, idei, programe*, edited by Laurențiu Vlad (Bucharest: Nemira, 2006), 67.

²⁵ James P. Niessen, "Romanian Nationalism: An Ideology of Integration and Mobilization," in *Eastern Europe Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Peter F. Sugar (Washington: The American University Press, 1995), 281.

²⁶ For an account of Brătianu's career and his role at the Peace Conference at Versailles see Keith Hitchins, *Ion. I.C. Brătianu: Romania*, in the series "Makers of the Modern World: The Peace Conferences of 1919-23 and their Aftermath" (London: Haus Pub., 2011).

Leftist Intellectuals

The eclectic character of this group requires a very flexible and inclusive definition of the term ‘intellectual.’ The geographical and chronological focus of this study could easily bring to mind the sociological definitions of the ‘classical’ or ‘old’ ‘intelligentsia,’ whose characteristics were most extensively discussed by Alexander Gella.²⁷ Qualifying Karl Mannheim’s earlier definition of the intelligentsia as a specific social stratum,²⁸ Gella argues that it was only in Eastern Europe, particularly in Russia and Poland beginning in the 1860s, that the intelligentsia indeed formed a separate class, originating either in the “’déclassé’ fraction of the landed nobility”²⁹ in the Russian case, or the impoverished and legally marginalized native nobility in the Polish one. The Russian and Polish intelligentsia understood like this shared a keen sense of belonging to the same distinct social stratum, sought to differentiate themselves from the ‘bourgeois’ middle class through values, mannerisms and especially education, and were committed to “serving the nation.”³⁰ In practice they were often perceived as aristocratic and pretentious. Western intellectuals, on the other hand, were a socially diverse group, likely to come together in ‘circles,’ but never sharing a class identity whose marker was paradoxically indifference towards its own welfare:

The spiritual leaders of the intelligentsia never fought for their own group interest and never formulated an ideology of their own stratum. At the same time, they produced leaders for all other class movements, parties and ideologies. However, it should be emphasized that those who symbolized the most essential characteristics of the intelligentsia of Russia and Poland were to be found principally on the left, in the service of social progress, revolution or national independence.³¹

²⁷ Alexander Gella, ed. *The Intelligentsia and the Intellectuals: Theory, Method and Case Studies* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976).

²⁸ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Harvest Books, 1936), 10-11.

²⁹ Gella, 13.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

³¹ *Ibid.*

While the quote above accurately describes many features of the Romanian Left, essential differences set it apart from the classical intelligentsia. As a subsequent analysis of its members' social origins and status will show, the Romanian group was socially diverse, including representatives of the current or former landowning elite, but also members of the bourgeoisie, the working class and the peasantry. These individuals, while sometimes rejecting their former class affiliation, never joined together to constitute a new one and, like the Western intellectuals discussed by Gella, were connected through formal or informal 'circles' but not the consciousness of belonging to a separate social stratum. As Marian Kempny summarized in a more recent assessment of the Polish intelligentsia, "the majority was involved in more or less mundane business, as school-teachers, professors, journalists, writers or artists, but nevertheless they formed social circles and political caucuses, which provided the forum for public life."³² In a similar vein, it was informal, rather than formal education, that constituted a marker of belonging to this group. Of course, most Romanian leftists were highly educated, many of them abroad. Their very diverse educational journeys had little in common with the experience of the Polish "gymnasium," which Gella singles out as the crucial factor in the socializing of the intelligentsia. Moreover, official diplomas counted less than acquaintance with and appreciation for a shared body of knowledge which included leftist political science and economy, realist fiction or scientific and scientist literature. The leftist ethos encouraged reading, attending lectures, taking courses and learning foreign languages. As a result, quite a few members of the left were self-taught, a fact which did not prevent them from becoming successful journalists, writers and propagandists. The basic broader sociological distinction between 'intellectual' work

³² Marian Kempny, "Between Politics and Culture: Is a Convergence between the East-European Intelligentsia and Western Intellectuals Possible?" *Polish Sociological Review* no. 116 (1996), 299.

and ‘manual’ labor is therefore inadequate in this case, where an important minority engaged in both.

The timeframe that relates early Romanian leftists to the “classical” Russian and Polish intelligentsia also makes several established definitions of the “intellectual” inapplicable. The era of nation- and state-building did not provide ideal conditions for the absolute or even relative autonomy of intellectuals. The Romanian leftists neither could nor in fact desired to be the isolated intellectuals interested in and committed to truth alone, a model most famously espoused by Julien Benda in the late 1920s³³ and subject to various adaptations since.³⁴ Like Gella’s intelligentsia, the Romanian intellectuals of the time shared a sense of mission and responsibility towards the masses, rather than an exclusive vocation for the cultural sphere. Their various degrees of political commitment and activism, however, also set them apart from the model of the “political intellectual” advanced among others by French intellectuals like Paul Nizan³⁵ and Jean-Paul Sartre.³⁶ As products of different social classes linked together by common beliefs, neither were they, obviously, “organic intellectuals” in Gramsci’s sense, although the possibility of the gradual development of such a class does appear in Dobrogeanu-Gherea’s writings. Like most intellectuals in fact, the Romanian leftists defied the extremes of the strictly defined “cultural” or “political” intellectuals, acting rather as “cultural brokers in political ideas.”³⁷ The role of politics is without doubt crucial. After all, as scholars of the subject remind us, it was “the

³³ Julien Benda, *Le trahison de clercs* (Paris: B. Grasset, 1927).

³⁴ Scholars echoing Benda’s argument include Régis Debray, *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France* (Paris: Editions Ramsay, 1979); B-H. Levy, *Eloge des intellectuels* (Paris: Grasset, 1987); A. Finkelkraut, *La Défaite de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987); Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994). Alan Montefiore, for example, claims that ‘intellectual’ “refers to anyone who takes a committed interest in the validity and truth of ideas for their own sake” (A. Montefiore, ‘The political responsibility of intellectuals’, in I. Maclean (ed.), *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 201.) while Timothy Garton Ash calls for a “necessarily adversarial...relationship between the independent intellectual and the professional politician” (Timothy Garton Ash, “Prague: Intellectuals and Politicians,” *New York Review of Books*, January 12 1995, 35).

³⁵ Paul Nizan, *Les chiens de garde* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1976).

³⁶ J-P. Sartre, *Plaidoyer pour les intellectuels* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

³⁷ Kempny, *ibid.*

action of intervening in politics,”³⁸ that gained for the writers who spoke up in defense of Captain Alfred Dreyfus during the turn-of-the-century Dreyfus Affair the (in)famous title of ‘intellectuals.’ However, the many kinds of political action, the various degrees of political commitment, and the very understanding of what constitutes political involvement further complicate a definition already in need of qualification.

Consequently, in this study, by leftist intellectuals I understand a group of individuals attracted by the Left’s promise of progress and equality (conceived broadly as equality before the law but sometimes also understood as material equality), who shared a common faith in science and education, and who were committed to humanist ideals. Their goal was not so much political prominence as the fulfillment of a distinct social mission. This included educating the masses in the workings of politics and economy, shaping their taste in literature and art, and didactically appraising the potential of science to improve everyday life. While some of these individuals formally belonged to socialist organizations, others did not. However, they read the same authors, published in the same journals and supported the same causes. Apart from intellectual affinities, they were linked by personal relationships, friendships, rivalries and betrayals. They often perceived their attachment to the Left in terms of emotion and affect. Time and again they used the term “sentimental” to describe their commitment to and understanding of socialism.³⁹ They saw themselves as a community and were perceived as such by their contemporaries. Prior to becoming a political option, the Left, particularly socialism, flourished as a cultural outlook and an ethical choice.

³⁸ Jeremy Jennings and Anthony Kemp-Welch, eds. *Intellectuals in Politics: From the Dreyfus Affair to the Rushdie Affair* (London: Routledge, 1997), 7.

³⁹ Those who specifically use the term “sentiment” or “sentimental” in relation to their connection to socialism include Dimitrie Anghel, Jean Bart, Ioan Dafin, Artur Gorovei, Constantin Graur, Benzion Liber, Eugen Herovanu, Constantin Kirițescu, Ion Pas.

Officially Political: The Institutional History of Prewar Romanian Socialism

The political history of the prewar Romanian Left is unimpressive. The first informal socialist circles emerged in the early 1870s, mostly inspired by Russian émigrés. Initially the movement coalesced in Iași, the Moldovan capital and an important station in the traffic of illegal literature from Western Europe to Russia. In 1879 the short-lived newspaper *Besarabia*, generally considered the first ‘socialist’ journal, although its socialism was ambiguous and problematic, was published in the same town. The 1880s witnessed a diversification of leftist publications and circles. By far the most important was the literary and scientific journal *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), titled after the Russian *Sovremennik*. In-print throughout the decade (1881-1891), *Contemporanul* was the journal that published some of the first and most important socialist contributions to literary criticism and the popularization of science, and would long remain a cultural flagship and reference point for future socialist periodicals. In 1883 the Romanian students in Paris formed a ‘revolutionary group’ and published their own “socialist-irredentist” journal, *Dacia viitoare* (The Future Dacia), which would prove short-lived as well. In the same year the journal *Emanciparea* (The Emancipation) was published in Bucharest, signaling the emergence of a second socialist center, which for the next ten years would compete with Iași for supremacy and political rectitude. The rivalry between the two centers is visible in the not always amicable contest between their respective journals. From 1884 to 1887 Iași was the home of *Revista socială* (The Social Magazine), the first declared Marxist periodical in Romania, followed from 1887 to 1889 by the journal *Muncitorul* (The Worker), subtitled “Newspaper of the Workers’ Party,” although no such party existed yet. The group in Bucharest, on the other hand, could boast the publication of the first “socialist” daily,

Drepturile Omului (Human Rights) which would appear in an initial series in 1885, followed by a second one in 1888-1889.

A trend towards the institutionalization of socialism is discernible throughout the 1880s. In 1884 the *Circle for Social Studies* was founded in Bucharest, launching a series of lectures on politics, ethics, science and art that would become well-known at the time and prove instrumental in recruiting new adherents. In 1887 “workers’ circles” emerged in Bucharest and Iași, followed by similar groups in neighboring towns and even village peasant associations under the guidance of the Workers’ Circle in Iași. The most notable political event during this time was the election, in 1888, of two independent socialist candidates as deputies: V.G. Morțun (1860-1919) in the Second College⁴⁰ in Roman (Moldova), and Ioan Nădejde (1854-1928) in the Third College in Iași. While V.G. Morțun, a wealthy landowner who would later join the Liberal Party, most likely owed his election in his home district to his own popularity, rather than association with the socialists, the election of Ioan Nădejde, a socialist leader but otherwise a poor former high-school teacher fired for socialist propaganda and without means to support his campaign, was indicative of the visibility of the socialist group, at least in Iași.

The last decade of the nineteenth century started with the conversion, in 1890, of the “workers’ circle” in Bucharest into a Workers’ Club, with the explicitly stated intention of forming a platform for a future workers’ party. Following the example of the Bucharest group, workers’ clubs with similar agendas sprang up throughout the country.⁴¹ In the same year the

⁴⁰ There were three electoral colleges for the Chamber of Deputies in Romania at the time. The first two represented the rich population of towns and the countryside, while the third represented the peasantry, and elected considerably fewer deputies. Franchise was severely limited by property and income requirements. For details see Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 92-93.

⁴¹ In Roman, Botoșani, Ploiești, Craiova, Galați, Iași, Tecuci, Targu Frumos, Turnu Severin, Bacău, Brăila, Tulcea, Alexandria, Barlad, Călărași, Constanța, Focșani, Giurgiu, Pașcani, Piatra Neamț, Pitești, Sulina, Turnu Măgurele, Zimnicea.

Workers' Club in Bucharest started its own weekly journal, *Munca* (Labor), the most clearly politically oriented periodical founded by Romanian leftists so far. The Romanian socialists' desideratum would finally be accomplished in 1893 with the founding of the *Romanian Social Democratic Workers' Party* (PSDMR), accompanied since 1894 by its official daily newspaper *Lumea Nouă* (The New World). The members of the party identified themselves as decidedly



Figure 1.1: The Circle of Social Studies in 1892

Marxist. In fact, a trend towards the edification of Marxism as the central doctrine of Romanian socialism, at the expense of other socialist orientations, was noticeable since the mid-1880s, when socialist journals, aided by Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theoretical and polemical writings, started to describe and promote Marxism while denouncing utopian or anarchist tendencies. The party would consistently hold its annual congresses until 1899, when the sixth

congress would confirm the disintegration of the party following the transition of many socialist leaders to the Liberal Party, an act which became known at the time and in subsequent historiography as “the treason of the generous.”⁴² Apart from brochures documenting the agenda and discussions of the annual congresses, and of course the Party’s newspapers, no records of the Party’s activity have survived. As such, its membership is difficult to ascertain, although it was definitely very small.

According to one source, in 1887 the party had 6000 members.⁴³ This, however, does not correlate directly to its potential base. It is clear that the party built on already existing structures, like the workers’ clubs, which simply adhered to the party, and on many trade unions, not yet organized in a unified body, which joined the party separately at various times during its existence. An additional influx of supporters was brought by the founding, following a campaign in 1898-1899, of approximately 200 “peasant socialist clubs,”⁴⁴ which was representative of Romanian socialism’s concern for the peasantry.⁴⁵ At the time of its dissolution in 1899, however, PSDMR was clearly in disarray, with only forty-three members in attendance at its final congress.⁴⁶

While brief and fraught with conflict, the pre-1900 political history of the Romanian Left is not devoid of accomplishments. Most prominent among them was the establishment of an international presence. The Romanian socialists sent delegates to the Congresses of the Second

⁴² The term “generous”, in use since the late 1880s, designated the wealthy landowners who joined the movement out of “generosity” and dedication for the working masses. Only after 1899 did it become derogatory and came to refer not only to the affluent former socialists but to everyone who left the party at that date.

⁴³ Vasile Niculae, *O istorie a social-democrației române*, vol.1, 108-109.

⁴⁴ The standard work on the Romanian socialist village clubs is Gheorghe Matei, *Cluburile socialiste la sate* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1968).

⁴⁵ This concern was not unique to Romanian socialism. The peasant question figured prominently in debates among socialists in Russia and Bulgaria, for example, but also in France, where a successful less dogmatic approach to socialism in rural areas was documented in Tony Judt’s well-known study of socialism in Provence. See Tony Judt, *Socialism in Provence, 1871-1914: A Study in the Origins of the Modern French Left* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁴⁶ Niculae, vol.1, 193.

International in Paris (1889), Brussels (1891), Zurich (1893) and London (1896).⁴⁷ At the congress in Brussels Constantin Mille (1861-1927) was asked to preside over the session of August 21, 1891, the highest honor bestowed on a Romanian socialist in an international context in the nineteenth century. The Romanian socialists were vocal during the Zurich Congress in 1893 as well, focusing in their report on the question of the peasantry and insisting that the agenda of future congresses include discussion of the “agrarian issue,” a resolution that was adopted, even if reluctantly, as eight countries voted in its favor.⁴⁸

The reorganization of the Romanian socialist movement after the debacle of 1899 started with the restructuring and strengthening of the same workers’ circles that formed the base of the first party. The Bucharest workers’ club, renamed *România Muncitoare* (Working Romania) took the lead in 1901, followed by towns with a previous activist history or an emerging working-class. In 1903, the Circles for Social Studies were re-established, providing the same lectures, classes and propaganda activities as in the past. The year 1905 marked the second, this time successful, publication of the main socialist newspaper of this period, *România Muncitoare*, after an aborted attempt in 1902. In its nine years in print, the weekly *România Muncitoare* would resemble the former *Munca* in its focus on social and economic issues, now supplemented with extended coverage of the activity of emerging trade-unions. The heightened role of the trade-unions was visible to contemporaries, who this time referred to the movement as “syndicalist” rather than socialist.⁴⁹ For its adherents, however, the character of the movement was clear, as evidenced by the successive names of the party, first reconstituted in 1907 as *Uniunea socialistă* (The Socialist Union) and then changed in 1910 into *Partidul Social-*

⁴⁷ While delegations of 5-7 members were sent to the first three congresses, only one delegate, the future liberal I.C. Atanasiu, represented Romania at the London Congress of 1896.

⁴⁸ *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România, 1893-1900* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975), 153-157. Hereafter DDIMMDR.

⁴⁹ Niculae, vol. 2, 22.

Democrat (The Social-Democratic Party). If *România muncitoare* mostly covered political and economic issues, other journals took over from *Contemporanul* and *Lumea nouă* as carriers of a leftist culture. *Viitorul social* (The Social Future), *Calendarul Muncii* (The Calendar of Labor) and especially *Facla* (The Flame), directed by the socialist leader and novelist N. D. Cocea (1880-1949), continued its predecessors' mission of promoting a leftist-oriented literature and showed the same commitment to the popularization of science. Predictably, the new socialist party did not excel in electoral politics, but neither did it intend to. This time, in a programmatic document, the party expressed its commitment to building and strengthening a working-class base before venturing into politics. Internationally, however, it became visible again through participation at the congresses of the International in Basel (1912) and Copenhagen (1913), where it endorsed pacifist stances, and especially through the presence of Christian Racovsky (1873-1941), the main new leader, in the International Socialist Bureau.

Connecting Sketchy Portraits

The thin chronology of the births and deaths of short-lived newspapers and unremarkable parties does not do justice to the life story of the leftist community defined in the first sections of this chapter. Obscured in the dry language of the reports of congresses attended by few is the presence of many whom official history has either forgotten or more often failed to connect to mainstream socialism. This omission is sometimes explained by the unusual nature of the ties bringing together very different historical actors. The devout Orthodox priest and writer Gala Galaction (1879-1961), for example, is not the most likely choice of a close friend of militant

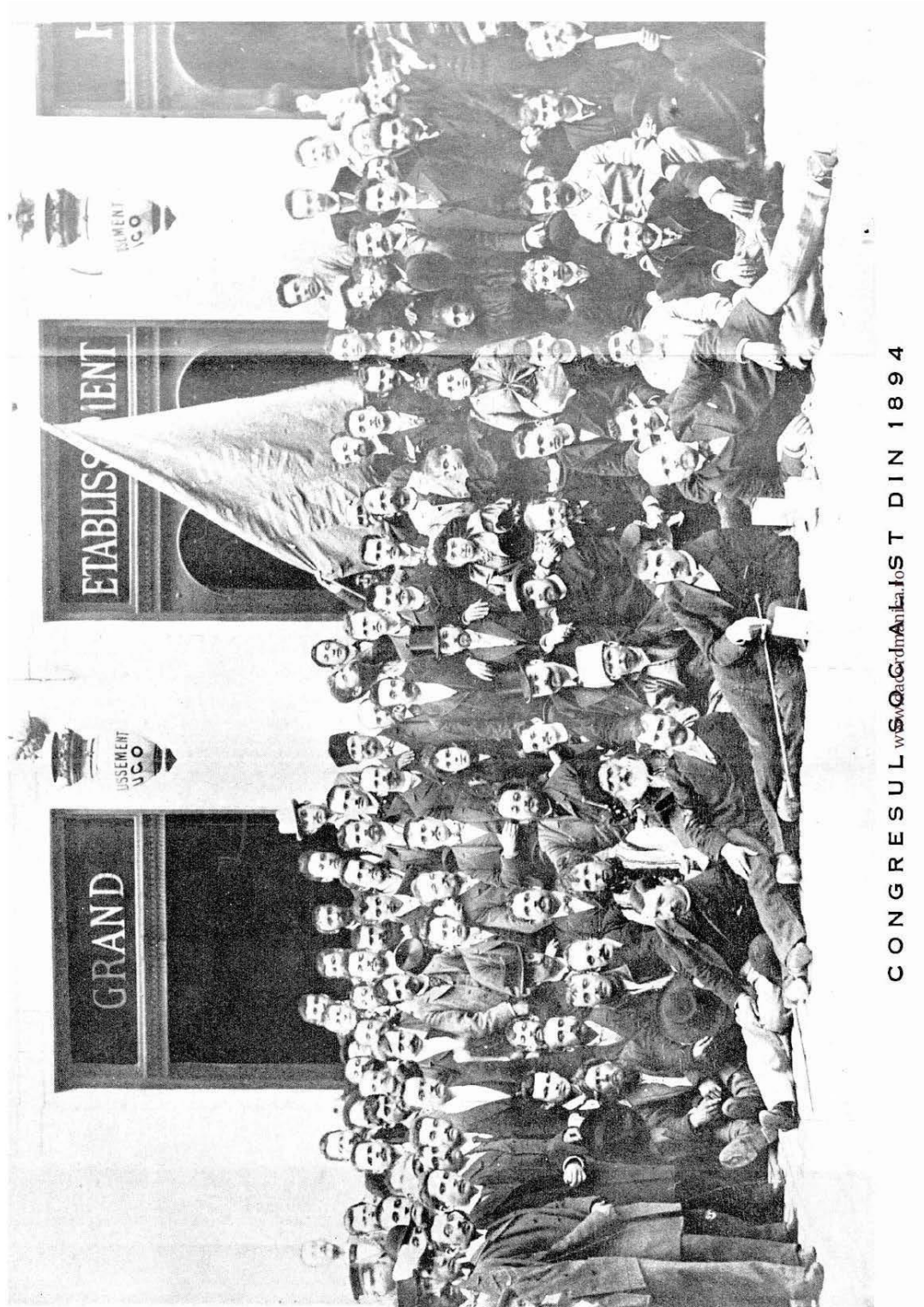


Figure 1.2: The Socialist Party Congress in 1894

socialists.⁵⁰ Still, “for over forty years,” as he told his friend, the communist journalist N. D. Cocea, in 1942, he has “shepherded his apostolic lambs next to [Cocea’s] revolutionary goats.”⁵¹ His religious convictions did not prevent Galaction from identifying himself with socialist causes, in spite of obvious divergences. The moving article written at the death of his close friend, the prominent socialist leader I.C. Frimu (1871-1919), is suggestive of this compatibility:

My beloved friend, tender heart and apostle’s soul! You wanted to save your brothers, you wanted the good of the people, you wanted to level with your chisel- sublime carpenter- the nodes and scratches of the cursed social stem. I’ve always looked at you with love and admiration. I loved your enthusiasm, I worshipped your holy honesty and I bowed deeply, like I will always bow, before your socialist creed. [...]
The red pole shines in the setting sun and consumes me. Are you a random sign, here, in the cemetery, or a prophecy? How I’d like to nail a horizontal bar in your middle and turn you into my familiar and sacred sign. But let’s not ruin our unity of feeling over this detail. I will accept this red pole over your head, along with everything that it proclaims and symbolizes.⁵²

Galaction’s close connection with mainstream socialists can be inferred from his writings and theirs, not from official documents or even socialist periodicals. A notable personality in his own right, he is not first and foremost identified with the socialist movement, although he shared many of its principles. This is also true of other literary and scientific figures whose ties with socialism have been insufficiently explored, often because of a rigid definition of the Left. Apart from indirect connections, a further challenge is posed by the presence of more obscure leftists, whose activity was not registered in traditional histories that usually center on a handful of recognized individuals. A prosopography provides a way of integrating these people in a more inclusive history of Romanian leftists. Basically “an attempt to bring together all relevant

⁵⁰ I use the term “militant” as it was used at the time, referring to individuals who were active in the socialist movements, either as party members, participants at socialist meetings, or contributors to socialist periodicals and organized activities.

⁵¹ N. D. Cocea, *Jurnal* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970), 153.

⁵² Galaction, “La mormântul lui Frimu,” in *Oameni și gânduri din veacul meu*, 37 (my translation).

biographical data of groups of persons in a systematic and stereotypical way,”⁵³ the prosopographical method entails selecting relevant individuals (ideally as many as possible) according to previously clearly defined criteria, developing a questionnaire of key ‘variables’ considered important for the study in question, and finally interpreting the data in a way that would emphasize the connections and patterns within the group. Unlike biography and collective biography, to which it is related, prosopography is “not interested in the unique but in the average, the general and the ‘commonness’ in the life histories”⁵⁴ of its subjects. In turn, it provides a context for the famous, who no longer emerge as unfortunate exceptions in the “wrong space” at the “wrong time,” as historian Michael Shafir referred to C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea,⁵⁵ but as integral parts of the milieu in which they evolved.

The prosopographical method has traditionally been “closely connected to the problem of scarcity of historical data.”⁵⁶ This explains its frequent employment in studies of ancient and medieval history and its lack of popularity for the modern period where historical data is supposedly ample.⁵⁷ Indeed, in most cases, the challenge faced by the historian of the modern period is often that of discerning between abundant and superfluous information, rather than finding basic data. The case of the early Romanian leftists, however, is among the exceptions to this rule. The most prominent members of this group have been the subjects of detailed biographies, although the reason of their prominence sometimes had little to do with their

⁵³ Koenraad Verboven, Myriam Carlier and Jan Dumolyn, “A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography,” in *Prosopography: Approaches and Applications*, edited by K. S. B. Keats-Rohan (Oxford: Occasional Publications UPR, 2007), 37.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Michael Shafir, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea: Wrong Time, Wrong Face, Wrong Place,” *Studia Universitatis Babeş Bolyai European Studies* no.2 (2007): 5-48.

⁵⁶ Verboven, Carlier and Dumolyn, 36.

⁵⁷ Among the few examples of prosopographies of the modern era see Helena M. Nicolaysen’s PhD dissertation *Looking Backwards: A Prosopography of the Russian Social Democratic Elite, 1883-1907* (Stanford, 1990) and Anna Beerens, *Friends, Acquaintances, Pupils and Patrons: Japanese Intellectual Life in the Late Eighteenth Century: A Prosopographical Approach* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2006).

temporary or permanent leftist affiliations which therefore received little coverage. Among firmly established leftist intellectuals, the biographies of socialist leaders like Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin Mille, Christian Racovsky or Nicolae Sudzilovski-Russel (1850-1930) usually adequately address their ideological and political evolution, as well as providing answers to the specific biographical questions asked by prosopography.⁵⁸ The standard



Figure 1.3: Alexandru Ionescu (left), V. G. Morțun, Ioan Nădejde (right)⁵⁹

⁵⁸ See Z. Ornea, *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu Gherea* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1982); Damian Hurezeanu, *Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea: Studiu social-istoric* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1973); Tiberiu Avramescu, *Constantin Mille: Tinerețea unui socialist* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1973); Martin Veith, *Unbeugsam- Ein Pionier des rumänischen Anarchismus- Panait Mușoiu* (Lich/Hessen: Verlag Edition AV, 2013); Francis Conte, *Christian Rakovski (1873-1941): A Political Biography* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1989); Pierre Broué, *Rakovsky, ou, La révolution dans tous les pays* (Paris: Fayard, 2006); M. Ios'ko, *Nikolai Sudzilovski-Russel': zhizn', revoliutsionnaia deiatel'nost' i mirovozzrenie* (Minsk: BGU, 1976).

⁵⁹ Source: I. C. Atanasiu, *Mișcarea socialistă*, 379.

biographies of the radical and populist leaders Gheorghe Panu and Constantin Stere share the same attributes.⁶⁰ On the other hand, monographs on well-known scientists, writers and literary critics associated either formally or informally with the socialist movement, tend to provide considerably less biographical data and information on their ideological choices. The main studies on biologists Paul Bujor (1862-1952), Ion C. Cantacuzino (1863-1934), Emil Racoviță (1868-1947), and Dimitrie Voinov (1867-1951) understandably focus on their scientific achievements at the expense of their political activism, usually undertaken during their youth.⁶¹ Similarly, the monographs dedicated to rather well-known writers like Dimitrie Anghel (1872-1914), Panait Istrati (1884-1935), Ștefan Petică (1877-1904), or Alexandru Vlahuță (1859-1919) largely center on their literary work and its reception rather than on their socialist sympathies.⁶²

By contrast, the short monographs on acknowledged socialist and working-class leaders published in the communist period as part of the *Evocări* (Recollections) series, often eschew important biographical information, focusing mostly on the prime time of militant activity and formal association with socialism. Even the works dedicated to celebrated working-class and trade union leaders like Alexandru Constantinescu (1872-1949)⁶³, Alexandru Ionescu (1862-1929)⁶⁴, Dimitrie Marinescu (1882-1916)⁶⁵, Ștefan Gheorghiu (1879-1914)⁶⁶ and Teodor

⁶⁰ Corneliu Mateescu, *G. Panu și radicalismul românesc la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1987); Z. Ornea, *Viața lui C. Stere*.

⁶¹ Olga Necrasov, *Profesorul Paul Bujor: Biolog progresist și luptător pentru dreptate socială (1862-1952)* (Bucharest: Editura medicală, 1955); Petre Tăutu, *Ion Cantacuzino* (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1964); Motaș and Constantin Ghica, *Emil Racoviță, fondatorul biospeologiei* (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1969); Gheorghe Racoviță, *A ști sau a nu ști : Adevărurile vieții lui Emil Racoviță* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1999); Radu Iftimovici, *Dimitrie Voinov* (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1971).

⁶² Șerban Cioculescu, *Dimitrie Anghel: Viața și opera* (Bucharest: Publicom, 1945); Vergiliu Ene, *N. D. Cocea* (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1966); Al. Oprea, *Panait Istrati: Dosarul vieții și al operei* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1976); Zina Molcuț, *Ștefan Petică și vremea sa* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1980); Valeriu Râpeanu, *Alexandru Vlahuță și epoca sa* (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1966).

⁶³ Nicolae Huscariu, *Alexandru Constantinescu* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970).

⁶⁴ Vasile G. Ionescu, *Alexandru Ionescu* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970).

⁶⁵ Constantin Pârvulescu and Georgeta Tudoran, *Dimitrie Marinescu* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971).

⁶⁶ M. Gh. Bujor, *Ștefan Gheorghiu și epoca sa* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1968).

Iordăchescu (1884-1958)⁶⁷ lack important information, especially about their background and early life. Things become more complicated in the case of controversial individuals like Anton Bacalbaşa (1865-1899), one of the most talented and vocal socialists of the 1880s and early 1890s, who left the movement following divergences with the other leaders and joined first the Conservatives and then a Liberal faction, while continuing to identify himself as a socialist.⁶⁸ Neither is the story of other problematic socialists complete. A case in point is Ecaterina Arbore (1873-1937), a prominent physician and militant for public health and the improvement of working conditions, who was very active in Romania from the late 1890s until the end of the First World War.⁶⁹ The sources are less explicit about her life after 1918, when she fled to Russia as an enthusiastic supporter of the Bolshevik Revolution, rose to high position in the Soviet administration in Moldova and Ukraine and became Minister of Health in Moldova, but starting in the 1920s was suspected of Trotskism and was finally killed in 1937 during the Great Purges. Other monographs in the series leave out inconvenient information as well. The study dedicated to Nicolae Codreanu (1852-1878), the Bessarabian physician who started the first revolutionary circles in Romania in the 1870s, understates his Russian *narodnik* affiliations and convictions and refashions him as a precursor of Marxist socialism.⁷⁰ Likewise, the book on Panait Muşoiu (1864-1944), the main self-identified representative of anarchism in Romania, expelled from socialist circles in 1892, focuses mostly on his activity prior to his exclusion, thus leaving out a prestigious career as a leftist militant and journalist that extended well into the interwar period.⁷¹

Information is even scarcer when it comes to individuals otherwise well-known at the time, who either did not leave a lasting legacy or whose exploits failed to interest future

⁶⁷ Ion Felea, *Teodor Iordăchescu* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975).

⁶⁸ Vergiliu Ene, *Anton Bacalbaşa* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975).

⁶⁹ Elisabeta Ioniţă, *Ecaterina Arbore* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1973).

⁷⁰ Stelian Neagoe, *Nicolae Codreanu* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970).

⁷¹ A. Gălăţeanu and Nicolae Gogoneaţă, *Panait Muşoiu* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970).

generations. This is especially the case of journalists, whose febrile activity and often sizeable writings were also usually ephemeral. The memory of authors of “hundreds and thousands of articles once cherished by the public,”⁷² as the literary historian Tiberiu Avramescu referred to the talented veteran leftist journalist Ion Teodorescu (1867-1931), has faded in the absence of written studies and recollections. Exceptions to this rule owe their visibility to their singular status or to external circumstances. This is the case of Constantin Mille (1861-1927), widely recognized as the pioneer of Romanian professional journalism, who during his leadership of the leftist publication *Adeverul* (The Truth) between 1895 and 1920 revolutionized both the content and the management of the main newspaper and its spin-offs.⁷³ On the other hand, another prominent journalist of the time, Constantin Bacalbașa (1856-1927), is remembered not for his journalistic activity but for his four volumes of memoirs spanning the period between 1871 and 1914 which remain an important historical document.⁷⁴

Not all important leftist journalists enjoyed the same attention, however. The devoted Jewish socialist Constantin Graur (1880-1940), author of some of the most evocative descriptions of fellow socialists and recollections about the disagreements that led to the disintegration of the first socialist party,⁷⁵ editor and contributor to various leftist publications until their gradual demise in the increasingly fascist atmosphere of late 1930s Romania and his death in 1940, was almost forgotten, except for a brief commemoration in the pages of the same *Adeverul* newspaper in 1946. Historians have generally ignored him, although his works are

⁷² Tiberiu Avramescu, preface to Ion Teodorescu and Izabela Sadoveanu, *Amintiri* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1980), 7.

⁷³ For an account of Mille’s activity see Tiberiu Avramescu, *Constantin Mille*. For a history of *Adeverul* see Tiberiu Avramescu, “*Adeverul*”: *Mișcarea democratică și socialistă, 1895-1920* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1982).

⁷⁴ Constantin Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altădată* 4 vols. (Bucharest: Editura ziarului “Universul”, 1927-1932).

⁷⁵ See Constantin Graur, *Renegații din istoria socializmului român : trecerea generoșilor la liberali, cum au trecut dinii Morjun, Nădejde, Diamandy, Teodoru, etc., anarhiștii de odinioara, fapte și documente* (Bucharest: Institutul de Editură “Poporul”, 1910), *Din istoria socializmului român* (Bucharest: Avântul, 1912), *Portrete socialiste* (Bucharest: Editura “Șantier”, 1929), *Cați-va înși* (Bucharest: Adeverul, 193?) and *Socialiști români în slujba Germaniei* (Bucharest: Atelierele Societății Anonime “Adeverul”, 1914).

among the most informative available. His status is particularly suspicious when compared with the publicity enjoyed by his younger brother, the prominent linguist Alexandru Graur (1900-1988), politically unaffiliated until after the war, who reached high positions in the Romanian Academy and even contributed to the expulsion from the University of Bucharest of well-known anti-communist dissenters.⁷⁶ The silence surrounding Constantin Graur can only be assigned to his overt support for Jewish rights, a perpetual source of conflict among Romanian socialists who often shied away from addressing the Jewish question on the grounds that it was an ethnic, as opposed to social, problem. Graur's opposition to this argument, as well as his disapproval of the Bolsheviks, most likely made him objectionable to scholars of the communist era, who discounted both his life and works.

A very similar fate awaited the Jewish journalists Barbu Brănișteanu (1874-1947), Adolf Clarnet (1877-1937) and Barbu Lăzăreanu (1881-1957). All three had been expelled from Romania for socialist propaganda in 1899 and lived in France or Germany for various amounts of time before returning to Romania and taking up journalism once again. The case of Barbu Lăzăreanu in particular is interesting. A prolific literary historian and journalist, author of numerous short biographies and memoirs about early socialists,⁷⁷ Lăzăreanu became a communist in the interwar period and was even the founder, in 1945, of the famous "Ștefan Gheorghiu Workers' University," later to be known as "the Party School" or simply "Ștefan Gheorghiu," the most important institution for the education of party cadres. However, there is no information on his activity between 1945 and his death in 1957 (or on his background) and his name is missing from most histories. If, as it is likely, he has fallen into disgrace at some

⁷⁶ In 1956, Alexandru Graur was a member of the committee which investigated and expelled the well-known anti-communist writer Paul Goma, who was later arrested.

⁷⁷ See Barbu Lăzăreanu, *Anton Bacalbașa* (Bucharest, 1924), *Cântăreți români ai Comunei din Paris* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1948), *Doctorul Ottoi* (Bucharest: Cercul de editură socialistă) and *Ioan Păun Pincio* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1948).

point after the war, this omission is understandable, although it unfortunately leaves many gaps in the account of his life and career.

Surprisingly sparse information characterizes the biographies of other figures celebrated by the early communist regime as well. Little is in fact known, for example, about the life and activity of the (in)famous poet A. Toma (1875-1954), a minor writer suddenly catapulted to fame after 1945. Proclaimed “the new Eminescu,” in allusion to the Romantic Romanian ‘national poet’ and given free reign over the creation of a socialist literature, the academician A. Toma became the symbol and caricature of early communism’s obtuse literary canon.⁷⁸ The ridicule which surrounds Toma’s name is deserved only in part. While not a great talent, the Jewish poet was a committed and loyal socialist and then underground communist, who lived most of his life in poverty and very likely did not envision the privileges that were bestowed upon him at a late age. A committed internationalist, moreover, he quickly fell from the pedestal when the Romanian communist leadership embraced nationalism, first under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in the 1950s and then even more decidedly under Nicolae Ceaușescu. This explains the absence of studies on his life or works but not the overall lack of substantial biographical information on one of the most acclaimed, and most derided, communist personalities. That it is almost impossible to reconstruct the details of the life of such a familiar figure like A. Toma bears evidence to the difficulty of finding enough biographical information for most early Romanian leftists, and the necessity to turn to prosopography as an alternate method.

⁷⁸ For an account of Toma’s short-lived personality myth see Lucian Boia, “Un nou Eminescu: A. Toma,” in Lucian Boia (ed.), *Miturile comunismului românesc* (Bucharest: Editura Nemira, 1998), 71-81.

The Early Romanian Left: A Prosopography

For this study, I have focused on a group of 116 leftists who were active in Romania for at least five years in the period between 1880 and 1914. After initially looking at over two hundred individuals, only this more restricted group provided enough biographical information to be included in the prosopography. Historians have sometimes referred to early socialism in terms of generations, usually identifying the two distinct groups of political leaders of the two consecutive socialist parties. The generation of Ioan Nădejde, V. G. Morțun and Constantin Mille is thus followed by that of I. C. Frimu, Christian Racovski and Ștefan Gheorghiu. This distinction is limited to political actors and well-known names. When considering a broader spectrum of figures associated with the Left, a generational approach is less useful given the diversity of individuals included and the longevity of apolitical affiliations. In selecting the relevant persons, I chose a minimum five-year engagement with socialism as a criterion because for many of these individuals socialism was not a lifelong commitment. While some hard-core veterans were active throughout this period, others left the public arena or at some point joined other parties like the radicals, liberals, or conservatives. However, tracing their subsequent trajectories, I still consider them relevant for an analysis of the Left, since many of them have continued to cherish the humanist and progressive ideals first introduced by socialism even if they decided that other political venues were more likely to speed their implementation. For all of them, I have tried to find answers to several questions, which became the “variables” in the prosopographical questionnaire: “place of origin”, “social origin”, “ethnicity”, “education”, “occupation”, “affiliation time”, “political activism”, “involvement in leftist literary campaigns”, “involvement in leftist scientific campaigns”, “leaving the movement or not,” and, in the case of

the former, “reasons for departure.” The following sections illustrate and interpret the results of this inquiry.

a. Social Profile

As noted, the wide range of social backgrounds sets the nineteenth century Romanian leftists apart from the traditional intelligentsia as identified in the Russian and Polish contexts. I divided the social origins of the leftist intellectuals in seven categories: peasant, landowning peasant, working class, petite bourgeois, bourgeois, haute bourgeois, and landowner (see fig.1.4). In the Romanian case the distinction between the peasant majority and the landowning peasants, known as *răzeși*, is a significant one, with the latter being a prosperous class, closer to the petite bourgeoisie than to the rest of the peasantry in lifestyle and opportunities. The six leftists who came from families of *răzeși*, like the future lawyers Al. Bădăraș (1859-1927) and C. Z. Buzdugan (1870-1930), likely had very different life experiences than the twelve who were children of poor peasants, like the future socialist leaders Ioan and Gheorghe Nădejde.

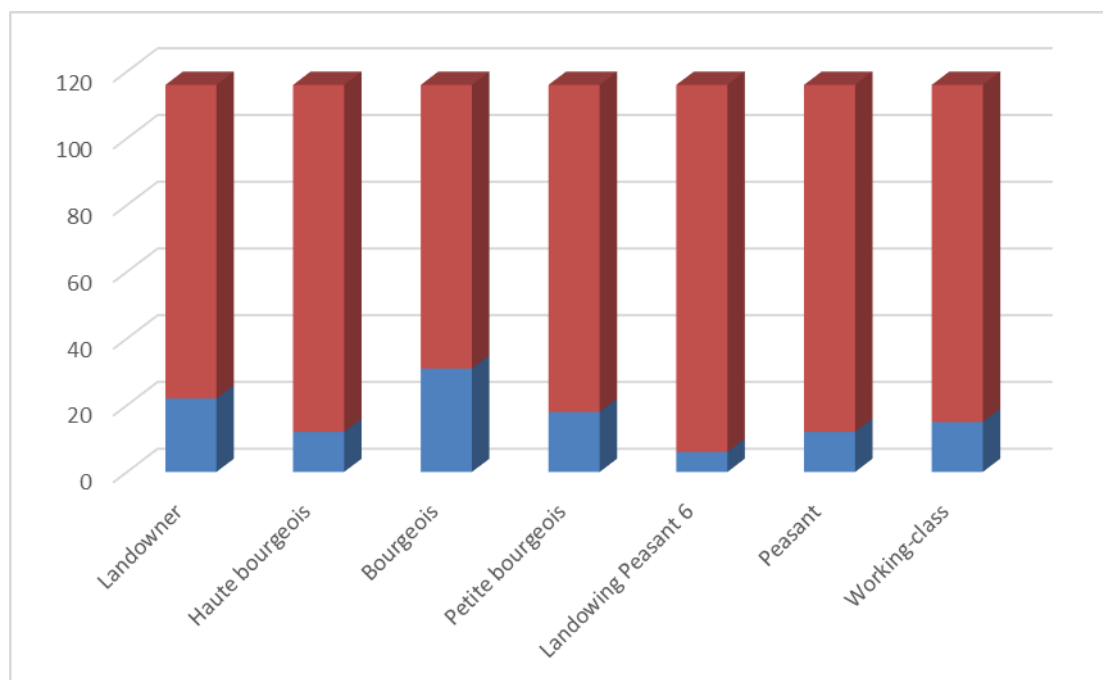


Figure 1.4: Romanian Leftists by Social Origin (by percentage)

The petite- bourgeoisie to whom eighteen individuals belong refers to small-scale merchants, poor clerks or country teachers. The largest category, the bourgeois (thirty-one), represent the typical liberal professions like doctors and lawyers, together with people in higher administrative or military positions. Finally, the haute bourgeoisie (twelve) was made up of rich bankers and entrepreneurs, or prestigious intellectuals and dignitaries, often married into families of wealth. The case of the twenty-two “landowners,” usually coming from old Moldovan boyar families, is only slightly more straightforward. Their group included individuals like the biologist Ion C.

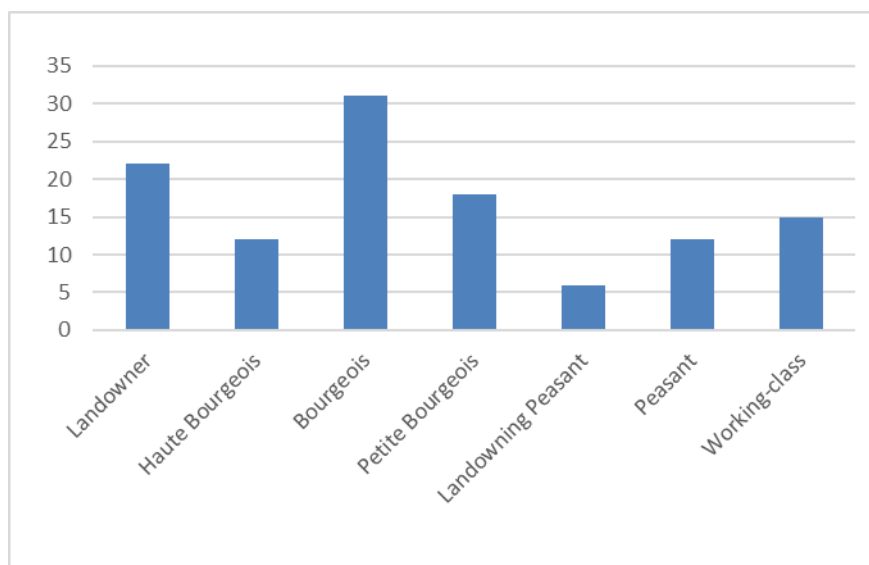


Figure 1.5: Romanian Leftists by Social Origin (by numbers)

Cantacuzino, descendent of one of the oldest and most prestigious ruling families of Wallachia and Moldova, or V. G. Morțun, whose estate funded both the first socialist party and Morțun’s later endeavors, but also people like Ioan Păun-Pincio or Ion Teodorescu, whose families had seen better times but were struggling with debt at the time they were born. To add to the complexity, in most cases, the ‘working-class’ designated in this analysis and represented by fifteen individuals does not refer to the industrial working-class but to individuals employed in manufacturing and domestic service.

The picture that emerges from this inquiry is of an extremely diverse group. While the “bourgeois” take the lead, at least statistically, the difference between them and the next categories are too small to allow for generalizations. The incomes and early trajectories of the members of the landowning class or of the various strata of the bourgeoisie varied considerably. In the face of this diversity, it is unlikely that the social background of its members played a crucial role in bringing this community together. Instead, the explanation for its cohesiveness must be sought elsewhere.

b. Education

As mentioned previously, formal education does not constitute a criterion for identifying the leftist intellectuals analyzed here, both because some of them were self-taught, and because the body of knowledge that distinguished them as members of the same community (socialist thought, realist literature, science and scientism, positivism and materialism) was more likely to be acquired outside traditional university halls. Education, however, did play an important role in the socialization of these individuals and the social prestige of the community. According to the degree of formal education and the location of their studies, I have divided the early Romanian leftists into three groups: individuals who studied abroad, individuals who studied exclusively in Romania, and self-taught individuals. By “studies” I understand university studies and in most cases degrees (either undergraduate or graduate). I have also included in this category the small number of intellectuals who did not finish their studies, based on the rationale that prolonged exposure to the influences of university centers abroad most likely left a similar impact on their cultural formation as that brought about if they had in fact completed their degrees. The group who studied abroad includes people who took university level classes in Romania as well, many of them in fact having degrees in more than one discipline. Consequently, individuals who

studied *exclusively* at home form a separate category, since they did not share the same experiences as those who went abroad. Finally, by “self-taught” I understand leftists who lacked university studies. As such, the word designates a broad category that ranges from individuals with little or no schooling at all to high-school graduates. Organizing the group according to these categories yields very even results. Exactly half of the individuals under study, fifty-eight persons, studied abroad, the remaining half being divided almost equally between those who studied exclusively in Romania (thirty) and the self-taught (twenty-eight) (see fig.1.6 below).

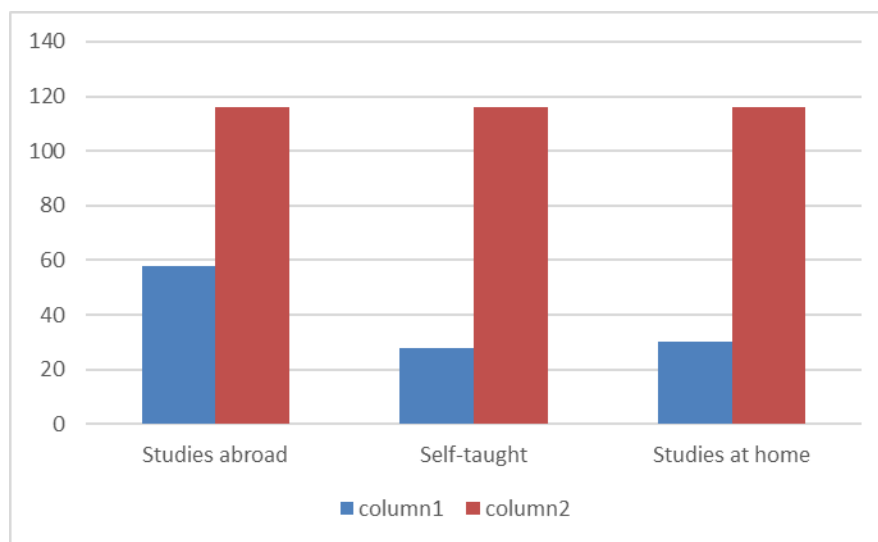


Figure 1.6: Romanian Leftists by Education

These results indicate predictably an unusual percentage of self-taught members (almost one quarter), and, significantly, a large number of intellectuals educated exclusively at university centers in Romania. While the fifty percent of studies abroad may seem high, it is in fact lower than the usual composition of elite intellectual groups of the time, which were formed in their majority by individuals educated abroad, and correlates with the more varied social origin that characterizes this particular group. In terms of the dissemination of leftist ideas, it also suggests, although no firm conclusions can be drawn, that the socialist ‘inspiration’ did not come

exclusively from abroad, but rather that local leftist centers were emerging as well. These centers were obviously the regional capitals of Iași and Bucharest, with the slight domination of the latter (twenty- seven as opposed to twenty-one students) reflecting the gradual ascendancy of Bucharest as a leading academic center in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Since self-taught leftists constitute a significant percentage of the whole, it is worth acknowledging the diversity within this group. As expected, some of them were working-class leaders forced by family circumstances to leave school early. A carpenter's apprentice, I. C. Frimu, for example, soon "became known in socialist circles as one of the workers who could 'read and understand,'" translating articles from socialist newspapers in "the spoken language" of the common folk.⁷⁹ Similarly, Alexandru Ionescu's eagerness to study impressed the manager of the printing press where he was working and determined him to hire a private tutor in French for Ionescu so that he can oversee the printing of French-language periodicals. I. C. Vissarion (1883-1951) dropped out of school when he was twelve but later exchanged letters with Thomas Edison and Henry Ford and even acquired a patent for a helicopter in 1912. The very cultured leader Ioan Nădejde, known as "Socrates from Sărărie,"⁸⁰ did not progress in his formal education past high school but was a voracious reader and acquirer of foreign languages who authored Latin dictionaries, Law studies, as well as botany, chemistry, geology and linguistics textbooks. Lastly, several relevant poets and writers were self-taught, including Dimitrie Anghel, Traian Demetrescu, and the future symbolist poet Ștefan Petică, upon whose arrival in Bucharest to join the socialist circle there the veteran Constantin Graur noted that "he had read greatly but aimlessly and in his head authors were fighting like the devils."⁸¹ Without doubt the most acknowledged "self-taught" leftist was Panait Istrati (1884-1935), a relentless "vagabond" who

⁷⁹ Barbu Lăzăreanu, *I. C. Frimu* (Bucharest, 1948).

⁸⁰ Sărărie was the neighborhood in Iași where Nădejde lived and organized socialist meetings.

⁸¹ Graur, *Cați-va inși*, 41 (my translation).

achieved notoriety in France in 1921 after sending one of his works to Romain Rolland and then attempting suicide.⁸² Rolland's enthusiasm and support propelled Istrati to fame among French writers and communists. Together with his close friend the Greek novelist Nikos Kazantzakis he was one of the first 'fellow-travelers' to the USSR first in 1921 and then in 1928-29 when disappointment with the state of affairs and the fate of old Bolsheviks made him write critical letters to the USSR's Central Committee. Upon his return to France in 1929, Istrati wrote his well-known *Confession pour vaincus* ("Confession for the Defeated," published in English as *Russia unveiled: 1927-1930*), which led to his expulsion from the French Communist Party and a sustained persecution from the influential French communist Henri Barbusse. Forced to return to Romania, where he was ironically suspected of fascism, he was deserted and led a lonely life until his death in 1935. Long before achieving fame, however, Istrati abandoned primary school in his hometown of Brăila, took up various odd jobs in the docks, made his literary debut in *România Muncitoare* in 1906, became the leader of the local working-class movement and the secretary of the PSDMR in 1910 and was then arrested and jailed together with I. C. Frimu. By the start of World War One, he was a regular contributor to most socialist periodicals and a promising writer, but one who chose to continue his education through travel, often randomly and without any money, around the Mediterranean, the Balkans and the Middle East, rather than formal schooling.

An examination of the favorite academic destinations of the leftists who unlike Istrati preferred a more traditional education reveals a penchant for French-language centers common to the Romanian elites of the time (see fig.1.7). Thus Paris leads by far, followed at a

⁸² See the classic study by Edouard Raydon, *Panait Istrati, vagabond de génie* (Paris: Les Editions Municipales, 1968).

considerable distance by Brussels. Here, young Romanians were particularly attracted by the fame of the Université Libre de Bruxelles (Brussels' Free University), established in 1834 on the

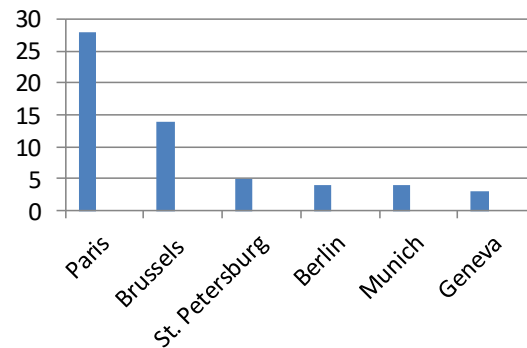


Figure 1.7: Education Abroad by Location

principle of free thought independent from the influence of the state and the church. The lawyers Alexandru Bădăraș, Eugen Herovanu, Constantin Mille, Al. Radovici and Artur Stavri graduated from the Free University, while Panait Mușoiu and Panait Zosin audited various courses in Philosophy and Natural Sciences. The presence of Saint Petersburg is explained by the number of Russian, Ukrainian or Bessarabian émigrés who studied in the Russian Empire before settling in Romania. It is notable that studying in Paris was characteristic of an early generation of Romanian socialists. As historian Victor Slăvescu notes in his comprehensive unpublished monograph on the Romanian socialist movement, no fewer than three separate generations of Romanian socialist students in Paris can be distinguished in the 1880s alone.⁸³ The 1890s, on the other hand, witness a significant diversification of destination for study and also an enhanced interest in Germany. While only Berlin and Munich figure among top destinations, Romanians attended universities in various other cities, usually studying either sciences or the increasingly

⁸³ Victor Slăvescu, *Istoria socialismului în România* (manuscript), vol.1.

popular technical disciplines. C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea’s son, Alexandru, a future socialist leader himself, was among the first to study engineering in Germany, thus establishing a new trend. Many young leftists undertook complex educational journeys, in terms of both disciplines and locations. Emil Racoviță obtained degrees in both Law and Natural Sciences in Paris. Theodor V. Ficșinescu, one of the main promoters of socialist clubs in the villages, jailed for almost two years for socialist agitation, studied Law and Philosophy at the University of Bucharest but switched careers later pursuing Engineering studies in Liège and becoming a prominent petroleum engineer. Henric Streitman, whose career will be discussed later, already had a degree in Philosophy when he embarked on the study of Physics and Chemistry in Gottingen, Zurich, Berlin, and then Stuttgart, finally acquiring a doctorate in Physical Chemistry.

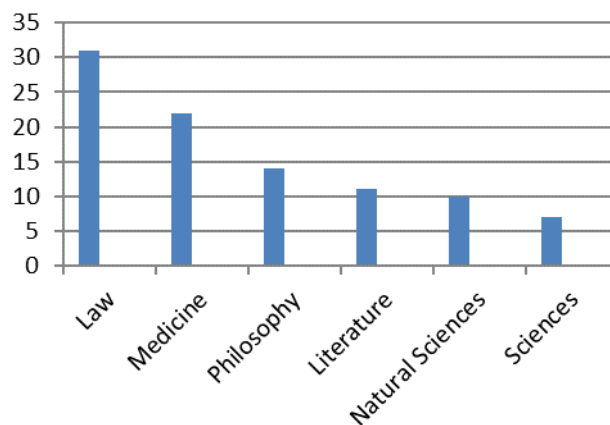


Figure 1.8: Education Abroad by Degree

An analysis of the most popular degrees pursued by this group should consider the fact that many individuals acquired more than one degree, in different disciplines, and the additional detail that many degrees, especially in Romania, were in themselves dual. In Iași and Bucharest one would pursue a joint degree in literature and philosophy, for example, while degrees in “history and philosophy”, or “physics and chemistry”, were common at many German

universities. Figure 1.8 illustrates the results of a total count of diplomas obtained in the top six degrees or clusters of degrees in the case of Natural Sciences and Sciences. Individuals who pursued two distinct degrees were therefore counted twice. The domination of Law degrees is characteristic of the education of the Romanian elites of the time in general. Both sons of the traditional wealthy landowners and the aspiring middle-class pursued degrees in Law, either for a future career in politics, in public administration, or in law. As the subsequent occupational profile of this group will show, fewer individuals actually practiced law, usually as lawyers, than those who studied and had degrees in Law. For the latter the degree offered additional social respectability and sometime a formal prerequisite for political careers that were in fact fueled by family money and connections. On the other hand, others, like Constantin Mille, used their law practice as a venue for recruiting workers. As Alexandru Ionescu recalls, Mille was known in Bucharest to represent and defend workers free of charge, which is how Ionescu and others met him and were introduced to socialist circles.⁸⁴ The high number of degrees in Medicine matches the profile of a revolutionary intelligentsia dominated by the liberal professions described by Gella and Kempny. It also serves as further evidence of the keen sense of social mission shared by this group. As the movement grew in size and resources, medical studies were supported and even funded. Ottoi Călin (1886-1917), for example, a socialist physician from a poor Jewish working-class family, was sent by the party in 1911 to Berlin and then Paris to specialize in ophthalmology and get acquainted with the international socialist movement.⁸⁵ Almost all Medical School graduates would be practitioners, and many were at the forefront of campaigns for public health. This group's inclination towards positivism is also confirmed by the relatively

⁸⁴ Al. Ionescu, *Ioniță Păcuraru: Carageale corector, Tony Bacalbașa, Nebunul-primăvara* (Bucharest: Tipografia "Speranța", 1918).

⁸⁵ See the section on Ottoi Călin in Ion Popescu-Puțuri and T. Georgescu, eds. *Purtători de flamuri revoluționare* (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1971).

high number of degrees in Natural Sciences and Sciences. Like the medical professionals, these scientists and professors of science would be instrumental in the Romanian Left's campaigns for the popularization of science which will be discussed in Chapter 4. Degrees in Literature and Philosophy, also relatively numerous, indicate either a future career in teaching or, like studies in Law, the pursuit of a passion or a source of future social status, but not necessarily income.

c. Occupation

The distribution of leftist intellectuals across professional groups illustrated in Figure 6 confirms the slight disparity between the degrees obtained by Romanian leftists and their actual occupation. Predictably, the traditional categories of the Eastern European intelligentsia, lawyers, physicians, and teachers are well represented. Specific to this particular ideological orientation, manual workers also represent a sizeable group. The individuals placed under the category “other” include those with no lucrative professions (writers, poets, artists, politicians) but also those engaged in relatively rarer activities (engineers, naval officers, clerks).

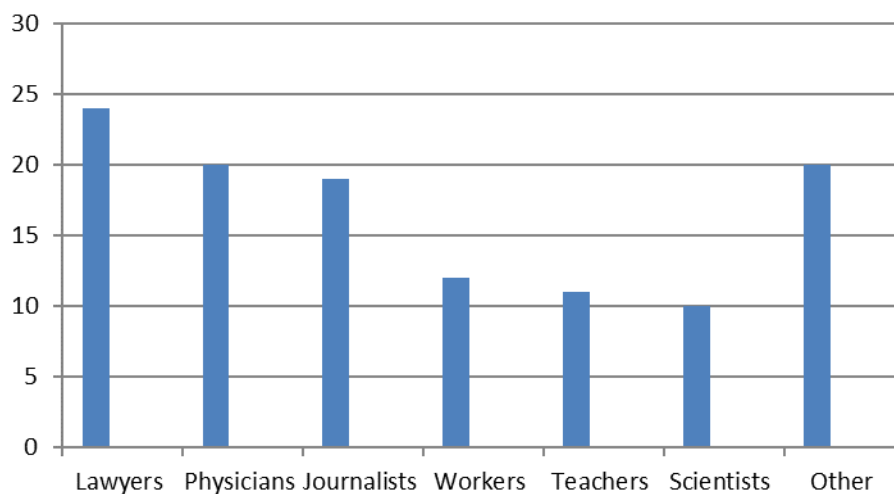


Figure 1.9: Romanian Leftists by Occupation

What is especially unusual about this group is the high number of professional journalists. Of course, most of the individuals considered here had engaged in journalism at some time or another and many had been regular contributors to socialist and democratic newspapers. The professional journalist, however, was slow to emerge. The first trade-union of Romanian journalists was formed in 1900, under the honorary presidency of Queen Maria, while the first notable professional association, *Asociația Generală a Presei* (*The General Association of the Press*), emerged in 1913.⁸⁶ Most scholars of the history of Romanian journalism agree that an exact number of professional journalists is difficult to estimate and use the data provided by the yearbooks of the well-known book editor and publisher Carol Gobl, which claim that around eighty professional journalists were active in Bucharest in 1900, followed by a rapid increase after the turn of the century.⁸⁷ In any case the comparatively high number of professional journalists within the ranks of Romanian leftists remains indicative of the public visibility of this ideological option.

Undoubtedly the most exotic and nevertheless suggestive career is that of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea himself. Prolific writer, theoretician, literary critic and unofficial leader of the Romanian socialist movement, Gherea earned his living from 1882 until his death in 1920 by successfully managing the restaurant of the Ploiesti railway station. There, in the “insane atmosphere” of “a business that was by its nature among the most difficult possible,”⁸⁸ in the constant noise of trains coming and going and the impatience of hurried customers, Gherea made a name for himself as writer and innkeeper, as famous for his signature beefsteak as for his articles. Both admirers and detractors rushed to see him at work, friends and acquaintances were

⁸⁶ *Istoria jurnalismului din România în date: Enciclopedie cronologică*, edited by Marian Petcu (Iași: Polirom, 2012), 311.

⁸⁷ Marian Petcu, *Istoria jurnalismului și a publicității în România* (Iași: Polirom, 2007).

⁸⁸ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1976-1983), vol.8., 178.

hosted for days in a row, and political émigrés were hidden from the police in what became an “asylum for Russian nihilists.”⁸⁹ Both a socialist activist and a capitalist employer, Gherea enjoyed a privileged status among socialists. As a founding father and honorary leader of Romanian socialism, he was allowed a unique observant role. Never a militant, he increasingly retreated from the public arena especially after 1900. While he continued to publish, was in constant communication with socialist leaders and his advice was often sought, his withdrawal allowed him to deal with the ethical dilemmas of his socialist beliefs in ways less accessible to those committed to political activism. That the latter occasionally made very different decisions from Gherea’s turns the question of allegiance and fidelity to the Left in a particularly complex and thorny one.

d. To Act, To Stay, To Leave: The Avatars of Political Activism

The attractiveness of the Left as a political option, rather than an ideological or cultural affinity, is difficult to gauge, and the absence of records about party membership represents just one in a series of several impediments. Membership records, if extant, would have only provided information concerning the lifetimes of the two consecutive Romanian socialist parties: 1893-1899 and 1910-1913 respectively. Membership in the party alone, moreover, does not necessarily imply political activism. Determining who within the group was politically active requires different and broader, if also more relative, criteria. In the absence of more concrete evidence, I consider as “politically active” the acknowledged leaders of the movement, the participants at the yearly congresses of the Party, the regular contributors to socialist newspapers who addressed political issues, the regular participants and speakers at meetings and lectures, and the individuals who self-identified as socialist.

⁸⁹Ibid., 179.

According to these criteria, 34 (29 percent) of the total of 116 individuals were *not* politically active. These intellectuals embraced the cultural agenda of the Romanian Left, and therefore joined in its literary and scientific campaigns, but did not share the political, and often even the socio-economic, perspective of the Left. These included poets like Artur Stavri, Artur Gorovei, and even Ioan Păun-Pincio, dead at a young age and later refashioned as the archetype of the impoverished proletarian artist, but who at the time joined the movement “out of sympathy rather than political belief,” and “was never heard raising his voice for a social grievance.”⁹⁰ The most celebrated case is perhaps that of the prominent novelist Alexandru Vlahuță, who was profoundly influenced by Dobrogeanu-Gherea’s writings on the representation of the social environment in literature and art, but nevertheless throughout his life refused to join any political party or even engage in political debates.⁹¹ The distinguished Law professor Eugen Herovanu (1874-1956), “reserved” socialist in his youth (because he felt no attraction to materialism and socialism’s economic organization which he equated with extreme egalitarianism and the loss of individuality), reluctant Conservative later and left wing liberal deputy since 1913, summed up his relation to socialism thus:

The influence exerted by the socialist ideology over me, over my spirit, was most profound. This is why whenever, later in my public life, circumstances made me look to the past, I considered myself as if having belonged to the socialist movement and I never cared that I did not formally figure in the registers of the club [...] To the socialist ideology and movement I largely owe my way of being, of perceiving life and its purposes.⁹²

The identification of this politically non-committed subgroup is particularly important in reconstructing the trajectory of the initial members of the community. As mentioned previously,

⁹⁰ Dimitrie Anghel and Șt. O. Iosif, *Portrete* (Bucharest: Alcalay), 19.

⁹¹ Râpeanu, *Alexandru Vlahuță și epoca sa*, 90.

⁹² Eugen Herovanu, *Orașul amintirilor* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1975), 96 (my translation).

the move of many socialist leaders to the Liberal Party in 1899, which finalized the disintegration of the first Romanian socialist party, has long been a staple of the Communist historiography. The “treason of the generous,” as it is commonly known, or the “abandonment of the intellectuals,” was also perceived as such at the time, both by the remaining members of the party and by those who would become prominent after the turn of the century. Following 1900, newspaper articles recalling the “betrayal” would even take a pronounced anti-intellectual tone. Of course, not all intellectuals, as they were perceived at the time, left, nor were they replaced exclusively by non-intellectuals (again, in the understanding of the time, not the one employed in this study). Most newspaper articles were in fact quick to point out the exceptions to the rule, as many recognized intellectual leaders of the movement did not follow the example of the “generous.”

Distinguishing between the politically active and inactive adds a further dimension to the analysis of who left, who stayed, and, most importantly in the case of the former, why. In discerning, in line with the official historiography, between intellectuals who abandoned the movement and those who did not, it became readily apparent that there was a substantial number of individuals to whom this question did not apply. For the most part this group overlaps with that of the politically inactive. A survey of the entire period between 1880 and 1914 (and therefore not only of the traditionally crucial year 1899) shows that out of a total of 116, 36 individuals left the movement at some point, 50 remained committed since their involvement up to 1914 (or up to their death), while for 30 of them this question is inapplicable since they were never actually politically engaged (see fig.1.10). The figure is very close to that of the leftist intellectuals who were not actively involved in the politics of the movement (34), the slight discrepancy being explained by the fact that several individuals who did not embrace the

socialist political agenda nevertheless later joined other political movements. Eugen Herovanu, for example, mentioned earlier, joined the Liberals without having been a member of the socialist party.

If almost a third of the initial socialists abandoned the movement, the crucial question becomes determining the rationale behind their decision. Chapter Six will analyze the options of the former socialists, as well as reconstruct their subsequent careers and ideological evolution, arguing that a commitment to the Left remained at the core of most individuals' endeavors. For

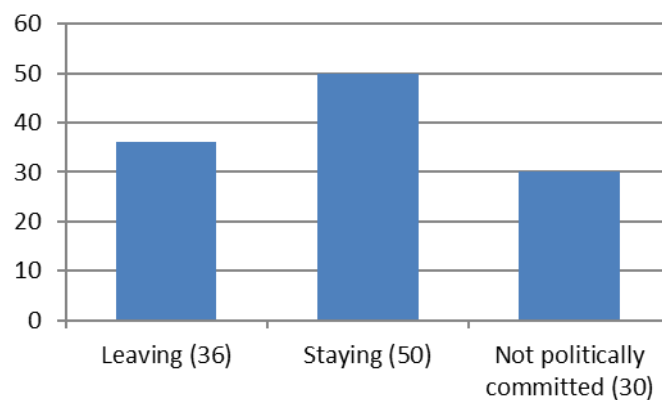


Figure 1.10: Romanian Leftists by Duration of Political Commitment

the purposes of this prosopography, however, a brief assessment of these options reveals a picture both more diverse and paradoxically more unitary in essence than previously thought. As Figure 8 shows, joining the Liberal Party represents indeed the most popular choice, although hardly to the extent suggested by the communist historiography. Not only did only less than half of those who left turn to the Liberals (15 out of 36), but they did so at various moments in time, from as early as 1891 (Zamfir Filotti) to as late as 1908 (Ion C. Cantacuzino). While 1899 remains an important date, its importance fades if seen within a broader temporal spectrum which refashions the liberal alternative as an always present and feasible political option, rather

than an abrupt strategic and opportunistic moment of “treason.” As discussed above, both affective and pragmatic considerations brought Romanian liberals and socialists together long before some of the latter officially joined the former.

Lack of commitment represents the second reason for leaving the movement. The eight individuals who make up the “never really committed” category should be distinguished from the politically inactive leftists defined previously. Unlike the former, the “never really committed” retained neither the political nor the intellectual or social and humanitarian aspirations of the Left. For most of them, socialism represented a phase of youthful enthusiasm to be later outgrown. In the only quantitative study undertaken under communism, historian Vasile Liveanu concludes, looking at sixty-seven members⁹³ of the “old socialist movement” that a majority of them were very young, usually in their early twenties, at the time of embracing socialist ideas.⁹⁴ Just as it makes sense that young people are more easily attracted by visions of radical social change, it is also understandable that some later abandon them. Time definitely plays an important role from both a personal and a historical point of view. On one hand, youngsters are more open to innovation and revolutionary solutions. On the other, the age itself, especially the 1880s and 1890s, was characterized by an unprecedented faith in progress, the power of scientific thinking and the inevitability of a thorough reshaping of the society. However, the Left represented only one option of change and some individuals who considered it eventually chose others. A less common but nevertheless present reason for a temporary and superficial association with socialism was a misdirected opportunism. A small movement poor in

⁹³ Out of Liveanu’s sixty-seven individuals, fifty are analyzed in this chapter as well. The remaining seventeen were either not affiliated with the socialists long enough or lacked sufficient biographical information to be included in this prosopography.

⁹⁴ Vasile Liveanu, “O cercetare cantitativă: tineretul în vechea mișcare socialistă din România (până la crearea P.S.D.M.R.)” *Studii*, vol.25, no.5 (1972).

resources, socialism had little to offer to those seeking social advancement, except perhaps through connections with its wealthier representatives. Once these opportunities were extinguished, the interested ones understandably moved on.

Without doubt the most strikingly inconsistent political trajectory belongs to the journalist Henric Streitman (1873-1949), highlighted earlier for the diversity of his academic

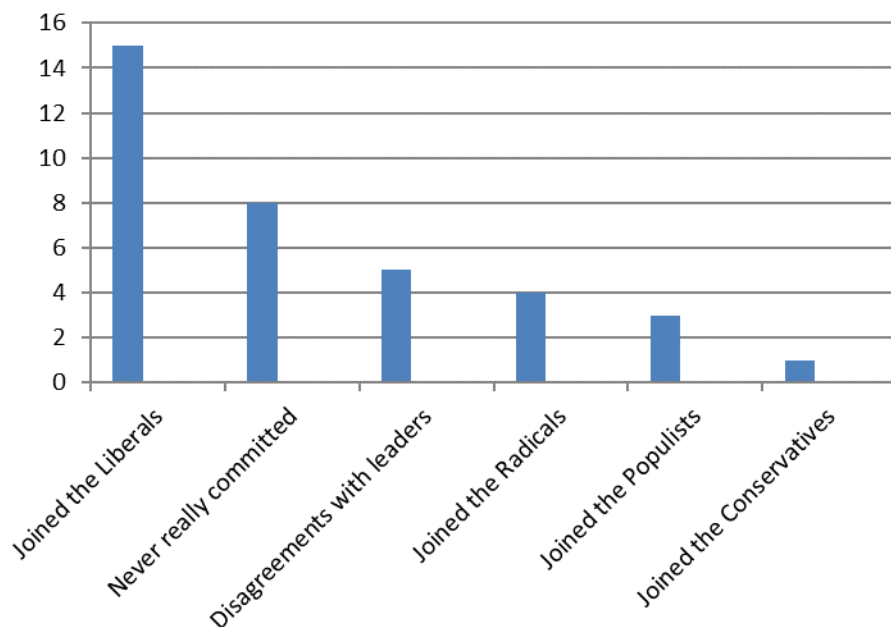


Figure 1.11: Former Romanian Socialists by Reason of Departure

interests that ranged from philosophy to physics and chemistry. Descendent of a well-off Jewish family, Streitman joined the socialist movement in 1889 as contributor and translator for socialist periodicals, member of the Bucharest socialist Circle for Social Studies and lecturer at the Workers' Club. He translated Bebel and Korolenko into Romanian and wrote extensively on the materialist conception of history, realist literature and the women's question. Affiliated to leftist periodicals until after World War One, he became editor of a liberal newspaper in 1908 and was assiduously courted by right-wing politicians. The crucial turning point came in 1917, when

hostility towards the Russian Revolution turned Streitman into a convinced anti-communist who joined the nationalist People's Party led by the war hero Alexandru Averescu. Barring occasional flirtations with the Left in the 1920s and mid-1930s, he moved increasingly to the Right, joining the anti-Semitic National Christian Party in 1934 and becoming a Nazi collaborator in 1942 when he was appointed head of the Central Jewish Office, the local organization assisting the implementation of the Final Solution in Romania. While scholars argue that Streitman did not play an active role in the deportation of the Jews, his fascist sympathies at the time were unmistakable. This allegiance, however, was typically short-lived and, having survived the war without prosecution, Streitman became an ardent Zionist. That the Communist Party did not denounce Streitman's Zionism, as it did in other cases, is perhaps evidence of his established lack of credibility. This dramatic journey across the entire political spectrum was, however, exceptional. Most of the "never really committed" were more harmless individuals whose ensuing careers after abandoning socialism were unremarkable.

The remaining reasons for leaving the movement are predictable. Disagreements with the party leaders constitute common threads in politics in general and within the infinitely divided socialists in particular. This is especially true of the first Romanian socialist party, under the political leadership of the erudite, but rigid and unpleasant, Ioan Nădejde. Ironically, before joining the liberals himself in 1899, Nădejde was instrumental in the departure of several well-known members, some of whom he expelled from the party and the socialist circles allegedly for political unorthodoxy but more likely out of an ill-understood sense of rivalry. Notably four of the five socialists that left the movement this way (Anton Bacalbașa, Barbu Brănișteanu, Benzion Liber and Constantin Mille) were prominent professional journalists and editors who would continue their prestigious career in journalism. Apart from Anton Bacalbașa, they did not

join a different political party afterwards and maintained a left democratic orientation throughout their lives.

Both joining the Radicals, who emerged in 1888 as a progressive alternative to the mainstream Liberals, and the Romanian Populists, who emerged after the turn of the century mainly in response to the agrarian question, represent sensible options across the Left political spectrum. The exception, the physician and chemist C. I. Istrati who joined the Conservatives in 1885, is less dissonant when considering the doctrinal ambiguity characteristic of the time (which even allowed for the emergence in 1884 of a Conservative-Liberal Party) and Istrati's future political career as an unconvinced, dissident and ultimately remorseful conservative.

e. How Romanian was the Early Romanian Left?

Following 1989, scholars have capitalized greatly on the foreign (mostly Jewish) origins of the initial postwar Communist leaders as a way to emphasize the alien, Soviet-imposed, and non-Romanian character of communism. The case of early socialists is even more complex. In spite of Communist historians' best efforts to infuse them with a patriotic conscience, many initial leaders of the socialist movement in Romania were not Romanians, but Russian, Polish, or Bulgarian émigrés who facilitated the traffic of illegal literature from the socialist centers of Geneva and Zurich to the Russian Empire. Moreover, what is remarkable about this group, if not its foreignness, is its exposure to foreign influences. Out of 116 individuals, 25 were not ethnic Romanians, including 19 Jews. While this ratio is by no means exceptional, what is more revealing is that out of the entire group, only 28 lacked studies in foreign countries or extended periods of living abroad. As ascertained, it was definitely within the custom of the time that members of the upper-class be educated abroad. It was unusual, however, for workers to travel

extensively abroad, spend long periods training in different countries, or engage in constant correspondence with foreigners.

Building on the analysis of Romanian intellectuals' favorite travel destination (or in some cases origin), and to the appeal of the respective brand of socialism, I identify three certifiably 'foreign' phases in the development of the Romanian socialist political and cultural outlook: the Russian, the French and the German. While these stages correspond broadly to the evolution of European socialism in general, they are also indicative of country-specific circumstances.

Romania's geographical location made it an ideal stop on the route of illegal literature destined for Russia, whereas cultural and linguistic affinities made France appealing to Romanian elites of all political orientations. Likewise, while a stronger influence of individual trends can be noticed in given decades, for the most part these foreign influences overlap and are visible not only in the incipient phases of Romanian socialism, but throughout its prewar history.

By looking at leftist intellectuals as a transnational community, I aim to contribute to the scholarship on socialist internationalism, which largely concentrates on the avatars of institutional internationalism. Thus most works examine internationalism's rhetoric and symbolic practices, but often also note the limited effective action of the International Socialist Bureau.⁹⁵ While studies document the socialists' common stance on colonialism, imperialism, strikes and shared tangible goals like working hours and conditions, they also routinely emphasize the failures of working-class solidarity across national boundaries.⁹⁶ Within the latter, the question of French-German relations is the most notorious but by no means only case.⁹⁷ Focusing instead on

⁹⁵ Georges Haupt, *Bureau socialiste international: Comptes rendus des réunions manifestes et circulaires* (Paris: Mouton, 1969).

⁹⁶ Frits von Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden, eds. *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830-1940* (Brill: Leiden, 1988).

⁹⁷ Jolyon Howorth, "French Workers and German Workers: The Impossibility of Internationalism, 1900-1914." *European History Quarterly* vol. 15 (1985): 71-97.

the informal activities, connections, friendships and rivalries of socialist intellectuals across national and political boundaries provides a different lens for understanding the maligned socialist internationalism, as well as showing how international influences helped define a national brand of socialism.

Traditional histories of socialism in Romania associate its beginnings with the activity of Russian revolutionary émigrés who facilitated the traffic of illegal literature from the socialist ‘centers’ of Geneva and Zurich to the Russian Empire. Throughout the 1870s and especially after 1875, waves of repression in the Tsarist Empire and the evolving social networks of Russians abroad brought people, books and ideas to the Romanian territory. While an established topic, the role of the Russian revolutionary intelligentsia is also a controversial one. Early communist historians walked a fine line between documenting the closeness of the Russian-Romanian relations, as required by the political imperatives of the 1950s, and denying that these supposedly close connections left any lasting or significant imprint on the development of Romanian socialism.⁹⁸ Admitting the opposite would have implied acknowledgment of the influence of the many ambiguous and overlapping trends of populism, nihilism and anarchism that characterized not only the Russian movement, but the Left in general at that time.

Another thorny issue plaguing the interpretation of this initial phase in the history of Romanian socialism was the uncomfortable association of some revolutionaries from Russia with Romanian nationalism. Several prominent leaders of this period were of Bessarabian origin and would later call for the incorporation of Bessarabia into Romania following World War One. The most telling example is that of Zamfir Arbore Rally, the father of Ecaterina Arbore, mentioned earlier in this chapter. Descendent of a prominent Bessarabian landowning family, he

⁹⁸ George Haupt, *Din istoricul legăturilor revoluționare româno-ruse 1849-1881* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1955).

was a member of Nechaev's nihilist circle while studying medicine in St. Petersburg, and later became Bakunin's secretary in Geneva and editor of Russian-language periodicals as well as of the anarchist journal *Le Travailleur*, where he established close relations with the French anarchist geographer Élisée Reclus.⁹⁹ Upon settling in Romania in 1878, Arbore contributed to leftist journals in Romania and abroad but after 1895 he gradually withdrew from the public arena, while continuing to work on scholarly works on Bessarabia. His public resurfacing in 1914, as a vocal supporter of Bessarabia's annexation, led communist historians to dismiss him as a "shameless agent of the Romanian surveillance agencies and promoter of Romanian imperialism."¹⁰⁰

Arbore's odyssey illustrates the adventurous careers and transnational connections, but also solid commitments that characterized this first socialist wave. Whether stopping in Romania temporarily, like Pavel Axelrod and Vera Zasulich, or settling there permanently, like Dobrogeanu-Gherea, the revolutionary émigrés manifested genuine curiosity and concern for their provisional home that transcended linguistic barriers, prejudices against foreigners and their own self-doubts. Mostly trained in medicine and still eager to "go to the people," the representatives of this generation in Romania showed little in common with their contemporary counterparts in the Russian Empire who, according to a historian of the period, "knew little about the people and cared even less."¹⁰¹ By contrast, the early activists in Romania seemed eager to become familiar with local realities, integrate in Romanian society and uphold the cause of the Romanian peasantry. The notorious Ukrainian-born Nicolae Sudzilovski- Russel, who would live and travel throughout Europe and North America before becoming governor of Haiti and then a

⁹⁹ Jan Meijer, *Knowledge and Revolution: The Russian Colony in Zuerich (1870-1873): A Contribution to the Study of Russian Populism* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1955).

¹⁰⁰ Haupt, *Din istoricul legăturilor revoluționare româno-ruse 1849-1881*, 137.

¹⁰¹ Nicolaysen, 20.

communist propagandist in China and Japan,¹⁰² was confidently promising his friend and colleague Nicolae Zubcu Codreanu in 1877 to write only in Romanian, most likely in order to master the language.¹⁰³ Ironically, he was expelled from Romania only four years later, in 1881, following a celebration of the Paris Commune. His earlier determination, however, suggests long-term hopes.

As foreigners settled in or, in some cases, were expelled, from Romania, an opposite trend was also beginning to take shape in the early 1880s. Studies abroad brought Romanians in contact with various leftist circles in France, Switzerland and Germany, and inaugurated a time of formal public commitments and affiliations to foreign movements. In 1886-7 three important future biologists, Paul Bujor, Emil Racoviță, and Dimitrie Voinov, officially joined the French Workers' Party. Following in their footsteps, in 1893 George Diamandy, "the blond knight of red socialism," published the French-language journal *L'Ère Nouvelle* which benefited from contributions from Engels, Lafargue, Kautsky, Zetkin, Plekhanov and other well-known names, while also introducing to the Western public the works of Dobrogeanu-Gherea. The lighthearted Diamandy was remembered for more than his editorial efforts. Tone-deaf, he used to sing the International with improvised Romanian lyrics and total disregard for the melody. He achieved fame at a socialist meeting where he expounded on the socialist doctrine of an invented theoretician, "Hamersfeld of Neandertal," which, he assured the public, was "guaranteed to fundamentally revolutionize socialist thinking."¹⁰⁴ The audience, embarrassed by its supposed ignorance, rewarded the speaker with ovations. As Artur Gorovei recalls,

After this affair, Diamandy's reputation as a trickster spread throughout socialist Paris and his memory lasted long time after his return

¹⁰² Iosko, *Nikolai Sudzilovskii-Russel'*.

¹⁰³ *Documente Privind Istoria României: Războiul Pentru Independență* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1952), vol. I, part I, 523.

¹⁰⁴ Artur Gorovei, *Alte vremuri: amintiri literare*, 155.

to the country. The great Jaurès, upon meeting some Romanian, used to ask: “Et votre farceur, Diamandy, qu’est ce qu’il fait la-bas, en Roumanie?”¹⁰⁵

The charisma of French socialist leaders like Jaurès was undoubtedly crucial in the conversion of young Romanians. The socialist later turned American anarchist Ben Zion Liber described his impressions from an 1893 visit to Paris thus:

I saw and heard Jaurès, one of the greatest orators of all time, probably the greatest of the last century. He dazed me with his eloquence while at the same time making me happy. I was presented to him, and he introduced me to others: “Un jeune camarade de la Roumanie”. I was his comrade. Socialism surely was worthwhile if this God was his leader.¹⁰⁶

The fascination exerted by Jaurès proved enduring. Expelled from Romania in 1899, Adolf Clarnet would reminisce about his years spent in Paris among socialist circles and listening to Jaurès’ speeches,¹⁰⁷ while Barbu Lăzăreanu would become in 1907-8 editor of the French socialist daily *L’Humanité*, also founded by Jaurès. Meanwhile, journals back in Romania would habitually reproduce articles from the French socialist media as well as from French and German-language scientific publications.

While France remained appealing, the rise of German social-democracy, combined with the reputation of its scientific and academic establishment and the increasing visibility of the German working class, contributed to the growing attractiveness of Germany as the destination of choice. As historians like Georges Haupt had argued, beginning in the late 1890s and continuing after the turn of the century, the German Social-Democratic Party and especially Karl Kautsky represented the models that the socialist movements in Southeastern Europe tried to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ben Zion Liber, *A Doctor’s Apprenticeship: Autobiographical Sketches*, 202.

¹⁰⁷ Adolf Clarnet, *Mitif, poetul florilor* (Bucharest: Vremea, 1929), 30.

emulate.¹⁰⁸ Following the founding of the Romanian Social Democratic Workers' Party in 1893, Romanian socialists engaged in official correspondence with other socialist parties abroad and consistently sent representatives to international meetings. Prompted by their now newly official position, socialists were more eager than ever to uphold Marxist orthodoxy, and the guardian of the latter was none other than the German Social-Democratic Party. Many Romanian socialists subscribed to *Die Neue Zeit*, the official German socialist newspaper, and Romanian leaders asked for Kautsky's opinion in contentious issues.¹⁰⁹ Since imitation required close acquaintance with the model, the Romanian Party, this time officially, sent its representatives to observe and learn from their German counterparts. Leading workers like Dimitrie Marinescu and Andrei Ionescu went to Germany to attend the Party School, work among German printers, meet Kautsky and Bebel and become familiar with trade-union organization. This period witnessed the first instance of working-class representatives experiencing the same kind of mobility previously reserved for the middle and upper classes. Other Romanian leftists became long-term committed Germanophiles. Barbu Brănișteanu, for example, was an established reporter for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, while according to the memoirs of some contemporaries the Moldovan socialist Max Vexler exchanged letters with Kautsky, Mehring, and Rosa Luxemburg and even housed Luxemburg when she passed through Iași in 1905.¹¹⁰ This interest led to more translations of the works of German thinkers, extended coverage of the debates taking place within the German Social-Democratic Party and closer attention to the themes engaging the German socialist public. While the women's question had long been on the Romanian socialist

¹⁰⁸ Georges Haupt, "Model Party: The Role and Influence of German Social Democracy in South-East Europe" in *Aspects of International Socialism, 1871-1914: Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

¹⁰⁹ *Karl Kautsky und die Sozialdemokratie Südosteuropas: Korrespondenz 1883-1938*, edited by Georges Haupt, János Jemnitz and Leo van Rossen (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1986).

¹¹⁰ Ion Pas, *Aducere aminte*, 119-122.

agenda, for example, the many editions of the translation of Bebel's *Woman and Socialism* further raised the profile of the issue.

The latter is just one example of the many themes, outlooks and controversies that became familiar to the Romanian public through local socialism's exposure to foreign influences. While the Russian, French and German connections shaped the ideology of Romanian socialism, the presence of Romanian socialists within these foreign movements turned them into international actors who could both contribute to the broader European movement and bring new perspectives to their agendas at home. In turn, this transformed the character of Romanian (and potentially other) socialisms themselves from peripheral movements to ones integrated in larger European leftist networks and mentalities.

Socialist Women

The portrait of the Romanian leftist community would be incomplete without an assessment of the place occupied by women in the early socialist movement. In Romania the socialists had been among the earliest and definitely most vocal and consistent supporters of women's emancipation. This is well-documented in the communist-era historiography of the women's movement which, while obscuring the contribution of other relevant groups and individuals, is nonetheless right to highlight the decisive role played by the socialists.¹¹¹ Post-1989 histories of feminism in Romania agree that the socialist movement was responsible for bringing the 'women's question' at the forefront of public awareness, especially through its campaigns in the wide-circulation journal *Contemporanul* and the frequent articles on the subject

¹¹¹ See Paraschiva Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România, 1848-1948* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1976) and E. Georgescu and T. Georgescu, *Mișcarea democratică și revoluționară a femeilor din România* (Craiova: Scrisul românesc, 1975).

present in all socialist periodicals.¹¹² Before the onset of regular socialist publications, the Romanian socialists had been active contributors to and supporters of the first Romanian women's magazine *Femeia româna* (The Romanian Woman), published by the early feminist Maria Flechtenmacher between 1878 and 1881, and endorsed warmly by C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, who considered it a "very solid journal."¹¹³ The collections of all subsequent socialist newspapers abound in articles deploring women's inferior legal status (until 1932 married women were considered "underage" and could not own property, draw contracts, appear in court or act as guardians of their children), lack of civil rights (until 1946 women could not vote or be elected in office), and restricted professional opportunities (while women could attend and graduate from all schools and universities, they could not be lawyers or judges and as professors their wages were lower than men's). The socialists also customarily questioned the perceived intellectual inequality between men and women and condemned women's subordinate position in relationships, within the family, at home and at work.

The actions of Romanian socialists mirrored those of contemporary socialists everywhere. In fact it was the early nineteenth century utopian socialist Charles Fourier who first used the term "feminism" and argued for women's emancipation as a precondition for the replacement of capitalism with a more just social order.¹¹⁴ In his words, "the extension of privileges of women is the general principle of all social progress."¹¹⁵ Fourier's "new women" participated in decision-making at home, in the workplace and in government. In doing so, they contributed to the erosion of the bourgeois family and the capitalist system. Marxism would

¹¹² Ștefania Mihăilescu, "Introducere," in *Din istoria feminismului românesc: Antologie de texte: 1838-1929* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 26-27; Theodora- Eliza Văcărescu, "Contexte de gen: roluri, drepturi și mișcări ale femeilor din România la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea și la începutul secolului XX" *Sociologie Românească* vol.12 (2014), 101-102.

¹¹³ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 8, 97.

¹¹⁴ Barbara Winslow, "Feminist Movements: Gender and Sexual Equality," in *A Companion to Gender History*, edited by Teresa A. Meade and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Maiden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 187.

¹¹⁵ Fourier quoted in Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution* (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 51.

further develop the theory of women's subordination and locate it at the same time in history as the emergence of private property, which in time led to the rise of monogamous marriages and patriarchal families as dominant modes of relations. As Engels contended in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, this was "the world historic defeat of the female sex."¹¹⁶ The main Marxist ideologues advised women to join the industrial workforce and thus decrease their financial dependence on men. They also realized that this in turn would require men to become involved in housework and child-rearing. The women's question enjoyed "minimal attention" during the First International (1864-1876) but received a more serious treatment during the Second (1889-1914), mostly due to the efforts of the German Social-Democratic Party. Led by the famous socialist feminist Clara Zetkin, German socialists advocated for suffrage and equal pay, as well as specific issues like maternity leave and the reform of marriage and divorce legislation. Zetkin argued that socialism and feminism were mutually necessary. Women's emancipation could only take place within a socialist context and socialism could not succeed without being fully endorsed by working women. Progressive thinking notwithstanding, the relationship between socialism and feminism remained an ambiguous one, as historian Barbara Winslow is right to point out:

Despite these important theoretical breakthroughs and organizational achievements, Marxist theorists accepted traditional gendered beliefs about women's physical inferiority as well as the accepted ideas about the gendered division of labor within the family. The Marxist theoretical approach also failed to resolve the contradictions between women's dual role – as worker and as mother. By arguing that the "primary contradiction" in a capitalist society was class struggle, and that struggles against other forms of oppression – racism and sexism for example – were secondary, the Marxist tradition kept women's interests secondary in the making of socialist revolutions.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Winslow, 195.

¹¹⁷ Winslow, 196.

This ambiguity was reflected in the work of the socialists in Romania as well. Indeed, just like in the case of the Romanian Jews, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Five, the Romanian socialists loudly proclaimed the inherent equality of all adult residents of the country and denounced the various forms of discrimination faced by women, but in effect did relatively little to support their struggle to obtain civil rights. In the later part of the nineteenth century and the early 1900s, the socialists, while still promoting, at least at the level of discourse, the emancipation of women, did not actively encourage campaigns for women's suffrage. Instead, they insisted that full citizenship rights for women and other deprived categories would be of little use as long as the current social organization was maintained. In their view, only a social revolution would effectively emancipate women from their many layers of subordination. The socialist movement in Romania retains the merit of making the 'women's question' a very visible one. The Romanian public became accustomed to debates about women's condition from its ample coverage in socialist periodicals. The socialists also scored important symbolic victories against the opponents of women's emancipation. In a very famous exchange, Sofia Nădejde, a famous feminist and Ioan Nădejde's wife, refuted the sexist allegations of Titu Maiorescu, Romania's towering intellectual figure and C. Dobrogeanu- Gherea's main literary and critical rival. Relying on spurious scientific evidence, Maiorescu gave a lecture in 1882 claiming that Darwin himself showed that women have smaller brains than men and consequently inferior intellectual abilities.¹¹⁸ Sofia Nădejde countered convincingly that any difference in size or weight between men's and women's brains is proportional with the

¹¹⁸ Titu Maiorescu, "Darwinismul în progresul intelectual." Lecture delivered at the Atheneum in Bucharest in 1882. Text available in *Familia*, no. 19, 1886.

difference in their general body mass, and there is no anatomic evidence of discrepancies between men's and women's intellectual capacities.¹¹⁹

But Sofia Nădejde was an exceptional figure even among socialists, where women's still precarious role is evidenced by their very low numbers. Out of the one hundred and sixteen socialist intellectuals included in this study, only five were women: Sofia Nădejde, Ecaterina and Nina Arbore, Elena Farago, and Izabela Sadoveanu. Sofia Nădejde (1856-1946) was both the most prominent and the most active one in the movement. She published frequently in socialist journals on topics like gender inequality, domestic violence, divorce, incest, birth control, celibacy, virginity, lack of sexual education, sex roles and prostitution.¹²⁰ Many of these themes were taboo in the Romanian printed media of the time and Nădejde has the merit of bringing them to the attention of the readers and prompting a public discussion around them. She addressed the same topics in her fiction which, although lacking in finesse, was nevertheless important for addressing quasi-forbidden subjects. In spite of these personal achievements, Sofia Nădejde was known to the socialist community as a self-sacrificing wife and mother, who worked tirelessly to support her husband, translated and wrote for *Contemporanul*, and gave up her savings for the expenses incurred by the movement. "The charming Sofia Nadejde, writes, B. Liber, the wife of Ion, a mother of several children and friendly to all young people in the movement, was beloved by everybody and affectionately called "Pica"- from Sofica."¹²¹ But her visibility did not translate in a leadership position within the party and the movement. Despite being an intellectual and an "author in her own right," as Liber notes almost like an afterthought,

¹¹⁹ Sofia Nădejde, "Răspuns d-lui Maiorescu in chestia creierului la femei" *Contemporanul*, No.24, 1881-1882, 873-881.

¹²⁰ See Ramona Mihăilă, "'On the Subjection of (Romanian) Women' in Sofia Nădejde's Feminist Articles." *Annals of Spiru Haret University, Journalism Studies* vol. 13, no. 2 (2012): 13-18.

¹²¹ Liber, 238.



Figure 1.12: Sofia Nădejde (left) and Izabela Sadoveanu (right)

she still remained essentially “Nădejde’s wife.”

Ecaterina (1873-1937) and Nina Arbore (1888-1942) were Zamfir Arbore’s daughters and were exposed to leftist circles from their youth. While Ecaterina’s trajectory, as eminent doctor and then Soviet official after 1917 was described before, Nina had a more low-profile presence, as a painter and artist who often illustrated socialist periodicals in the 1910s and 20s and whose police file notes her frequent presence at the meetings of the *România Muncitoare* circle between 1909 and 1911.¹²² Generally considered the “less receptive” to socialism of Arbore’s two daughters, she nevertheless maintained loose connections with the socialist movement throughout the interwar period, even as her artistic career became a priority.¹²³

¹²² Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC) Bucharest, fond Direcția Poliției și Siguranței Generale, dosar 44 (1909).

¹²³ For her artistic work, see Gheorghe Vida, *Nina Arbore* (Chișinău: Arc, 2005).

An orphan at an early age, Elena Farago (1878-1954) grew up in Caragiale's house, where she met many socialist intellectuals and as a poet was very much influenced by Gherea's writings. Her husband, Francisc Farago, was an arduous socialist sympathizer and they took part in some workers' club meetings together. After 1905 she started publishing in *poporanist* periodicals but had also temporarily flirted with *sămănătorism*, *poporanism*'s more nationalist cousin.

Only Izabela Sadoveanu (1870-1941) did not have male relatives active in socialist groups. She was also the only one who can legitimately be called a leader of the workers' movement. Sadoveanu was an active organizer, speaker and propagandist, much appreciated among socialist and workers' circles in Brăila, the Danubian port that had one of the highest concentrations of industrial workers, and socialist sympathizers, in the country. She was also an acknowledged writer of first socialist and then *poporanist* orientation, as well as a teacher known for her interest in pedagogical innovations.¹²⁴

Women thus constituted a tiny minority in a movement that claimed to be dedicated to elevating their status. And even if some of the very few, like Sofia Nădejde and Izabela Sadoveanu, were recognized figures who played key roles, other members still referred affectionately but also condescendingly to the "girls of the party" as relevant but not quite equal partners.¹²⁵ Socialists were proud to have their "girls" and at least in theory promote their participation. It was, after all, something that no other political party in the country did. But the practice of women's involvement and recognition reveals one of the ambiguities that characterized the movement for most of its existence.

¹²⁴ For an account of her life see Cora Barbu, Lenormanda Benari and Gheorghe Popescu. *Izabela Sadoveanu: Viața și opera* (Bucharest: Editura didactică și pedagogică, 1970).

¹²⁵ Ion Teodorescu, "Fetele partidului," in Tiberiu Avramescu, ed., *Amintiri literare despre vechea mișcare socialistă, 1870-1900* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1975), 364-368.

Conclusion

The early Romanian Left was an informal community which eludes a precise definition. The detailed analysis undertaken in this chapter suggests its openness and complexity. The prosopography itself resists neat conclusions and systematic categorizations. It does, however, indicate the existence of a sizeable group of educated, well-read and well-travelled individuals with various social backgrounds, mostly engaged in liberal professions, who shared at least the cultural and social, if not political, agenda of the Left. Whether Romanian or foreigners, they shared a commitment to understanding and improving the specific social conditions of Romania. Significantly, it also shows that a majority of these individuals remained committed to this agenda whether as official socialists or not. This important point questions the ingrained assumption of the “betrayal of the generous” and the accompanying periodization that traditionally breaks the history of Romanian socialism in two distinct and unrelated phases. The Romanian Left did not disintegrate in 1899 and did not start anew in 1905. Neither was its prewar history confined to the grand total of ten years which sum up the official presence of the two consecutive socialist parties. While political affiliations may have been fluid, leftist convictions were usually not. Going beyond narrow definitions and rigid timeframes, this study argues for the existence of a cohesive leftist community and the continuity of leftist activism.

CHAPTER TWO: A TRAIN STATION ON THE LEFT: THE MAKING OF A SOCIALIST PUBLIC SPHERE

What emotion envelops me even today when I get off the train in the Ploiești station! Before the train stopped properly in the station, we, the youth of that time, would rush to make our way amid boxes and suitcases, running like crazy through the crowd, until we reached the door of the restaurant, to see behind the counter, at least for a couple of moments, the gentle apostle's face of Gherea Dobrogeanu (Jean Bart)¹

In Romanian popular history and public memory the early socialist movement often overlaps with the image of the socialist theoretician and literary critic Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea. Intelligent, erudite, prolific and often original, Gherea was undoubtedly the best, and best known, socialist writer in Romania. To this day, his enduring work is known for foundational texts in Romanian literary criticism and socialist doctrine. But he did not play an active role in politics and his opinions, while valued, were also questioned. Gherea himself did not mirror the diversity of thought that characterized the early socialist movement and he was neither its faithful representative nor its official leader. He did, however, inhabit a particular location that made him a central link in leftist networks and allowed the emergence of a certain socialist culture surrounding his figure. Gherea simultaneously occupied many positions. He was journalist, theorist, literary critic, chef, manager, business owner and public employee. The goal of this chapter is to recover the crucial but usually understudied dimensions of Gherea's public persona that were instrumental in the making of a Romanian socialist community and public sphere.

¹ Bart, 158.

It is easy to associate Gherea with his works in literary criticism and social and political thought, which are remarkable feats in themselves. By mid-1890s, his reputation as a major literary critic was already consolidated. The first two volumes of Gherea's *Critical Studies*, an anthology of his pioneering work in Marxist literary criticism, published in 1890 and 1891 respectively, met with widespread acclaim and only isolated, and respectful, criticism. The elderly but esteemed forty-eighter Mihail Kogălniceanu called Gherea the "greatest critic of the Romanian literature," the future renowned historian Nicolae Iorga referred to him as "the master of our scientific criticism," and the classical novelist Alexandru Vlahuță welcomed him as the "first to introduce constructive criticism to our literature."² "With his two volumes of critical studies, Vlahuță noted, Gherea opened for young talents a wide and bright horizon, and a new way to consider and analyze the value of a literary work."³ While his status as an authority on doctrinal socialism was established early by his many writings aimed at explaining and popularizing Marxism among the Romanian public, his consecration as an insightful and original thinker came with the publication in 1910 of his main work *Neoiobăgia (Neoserfdom)*. Written after the violent Romanian peasant uprising of 1907, considered by many historians a "modern jacquerie," the book became known as a "minor classic of Marxist literature on underdevelopment,"⁴ making Gherea known internationally as an early precursor of world-systems theory. Focusing on these two aspects of his activity, while understandable, overlooks Gherea's everyday life and career. For over a quarter of century, since 1882 until his gradual retirement after 1906, Gherea was the manager and "first worker"⁵ of the railway station restaurant in Ploiești, an important Wallachian town. Even after retreating to the nearby

² Quoted in Z. Ornea's overview of the reception of the first volume of Gherea's *Critical Studies*, in *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 340-41.

³ Alexandru Vlahuță, *Un an de luptă*, 45.

⁴ Mitchell Cohen, *The Wager of Lucien Goldmann: Tragedy, Dialectics and a Hidden God* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 16.

⁵ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol.8, 178.

mountain town of Sinaia to focus on writing his *Neoserfdom*, Gherea remained the official administrator of the train station restaurant until his death in 1920. There, in the “insane atmosphere” of “a business that was by its nature among the most difficult possible,”⁶ in the constant noise of trains coming and going and the impatience of hurried customers, Gherea made a name for himself as writer and innkeeper, as famous for his signature beefsteak as for his theoretical articles. Both admirers and detractors rushed to see him at work, friends and acquaintances were hosted for days in a row, and political émigrés were hidden from the police in what became effectively the unofficial headquarters of the Romanian socialist movement. Benefitting from an uncommon manner and degree of visibility, Gherea himself was the main attraction. His presence and activity, which drew crowds of visitors, intellectuals, journalists, agitators and politicians, turned the train station in Ploiești in a center of informal literary and political system of connections and contributed to the creation of a new and distinctly socialist culture.

“The Tavern-Keeper from Ploiești”

The illustrious thirty-four years history of Gherea’s restaurant in Ploiești tells a very different story of early Romanian socialism than its official political record. As contemporaries recall, Gherea’s visitors were always likely to find, tucked away in one of the restaurant’s three halls, groups of individuals discussing the latest works in social theory, planning translations from foreign languages or debating the content of the next issues of the main leftist literary and scientific magazines. That the train station restaurant became such a lively center of intellectual exchange is testimony to Gherea’s hard work, entrepreneurial talent, charisma and mounting reputation. In retrospect, this career path is surprising and accidental, bearing little relation to

⁶ Ibid.

Gherea's training or aspirations, but illustrating instead the latter's remarkable ability to make the most out of the limited opportunities available.

Born Solomon Katz, a Russian Jew from the province of Ekaterinoslav in today's Ukraine, in 1855, Gherea was studying sciences at the university of Kharkov when he was exiled for revolutionary agitation and settled in Romania in 1875. Armed with socialist convictions, but no knowledge of Romanian and few employable skills, "Romania's Marx," as Karl Kautsky referred to him, did odd jobs while founding socialist circles and short-lived periodicals. After years of manual labor and precarious living, he established a laundry service for the Russian army during the Russo-Turkish war of 1878-1888, and then tried unsuccessfully to launch a brick factory together with other Russian emigres. The breakthrough came in 1882, when he earned the concession of the train station restaurant in Ploiești, a sizeable town in Wallachia. The railway section between Bucharest and Brașov (in Hungary at the time) had been inaugurated three years earlier in 1879. Opened at the same time, the train station of Ploiești was auspiciously located on the main railway to Western Europe, one hour and a half by train north from the capital Bucharest and one hour south from Sinaia, the home of the favorite royal residence, the Peleş Castle. Anyone travelling abroad was bound to pass through Ploiești, which was the most important train station before the Austro-Hungarian border. In October 1883, a year within Gherea's tenure, the station witnessed the first journey of "L'Express d'Orient," later to be renamed Orient Express, the famous train that linked Paris to Constantinople.⁷ Various personalities of the time, including numerous journalists, were aboard this train, which stopped in Ploiești as well. During this first trip of the Orient Express, the passengers were welcomed at Sinaia by King Carol I and Queen Elisabeta and invited to spend a day at the Peleş Castle. This

⁷ The first journey of the Orient Express took place from October 4 to October 20, 1883, along the route Paris-Strasbourg, Munich, Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest, Giurgiu, Ruse, Varna, Constantinople. From Giurgiu to Ruse and from Varna to Constantinople the travelers were transported by ship.

would become a ritual for a couple of years, until the novelty of the train wore off and, starting in 1889, a second, faster route was developed along Budapest- Belgrade-Nis- Sofia.⁸ Nonetheless, this famous train brought huge publicity to the towns it traversed, including Ploiești.



Figure 2.1: Map of the Romanian railways in 1879, showing the extension from Ploiești to Brașov in red⁹

The town was of major national importance as well, linking Wallachia not only to Transylvania but with Moldova as well. Even before the construction of the railroad, Ploiești stood at the intersection of routes between the three regions and was known as a vital trading center. Commercial importance notwithstanding, Ploiești was primarily known for its oil resources. The town itself was developed in the valley of the Prahova river, near some of the largest oil fields in

⁸ Dorin Stănescu, “Orient Express: Trenul care vindea iluzia Occidentului in anii La Belle Époque,” *Historia*, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/orient-express-trenul-care-vindea-iluzia-orientului-in-anii-la-belle-epoque>. Last accessed March 5, 2017.

⁹ Source: Toader Popescu, *Proiectul Feroviar Românesc, 1842-1916* (Bucharest: Simetria, 2014), 53.

Europe, where the world's first large oil refinery was opened in 1857.¹⁰ As Romania's main industrial hub, the region was also a working-class center, comparable only with Bucharest and the Danubian ports of Galați and Brăila. Unlike the latter, however, the Prahova Valley had a dense concentration of workers from the same industry and a higher degree of organization and eventually unionization. Understandably, it was one of the regions that reacted most positively to socialist agitation and by the late 1880s it was one of the main socialist centers.

Within a decade, the train station restaurant in Ploiești became famous as one of the few places where one could truly “eat well”¹¹ in Romania. Writers, artists, journalists, politicians and occasionally the king himself met there, in a place where conversation was guaranteed to be



Figure 2.2: The platform of the Ploiești train-station in 1908

¹⁰ Oil constituted Romania's main export for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Ploiesti oil fields were a main source of fuel for Nazi Germany and were target of repeated attacks from the allies during World War Two, the most important being Operation Tidal Wave.

¹¹ Mihail Sevastos, *Monografia orașului Ploiești* (Bucharest: Viața românească, 1938), 131.

lively and the food “above criticism.”¹² Under Gherea’s direction, the place excelled in both food and atmosphere. The restaurant included three main dining halls, corresponding to the three classes of train travel passengers. The elegant first-class hall catered to officials, foreign travelers, professionals or simply well-off citizens, both transiting and local. It is indicative of the restaurant’s reputation that a significant percentage of its patrons came from Ploiești itself. In other towns in Romania and elsewhere, people seeking to dine out usually chose locales downtown, rather than making reservations at the train station restaurant. This should have been true of Ploiești as well, especially as its abundance of markets and traveling merchants led to a proliferation of restaurants and pubs, which made it known in the interwar period as “the town of two hundred taverns.”¹³ Even in the face of stiff competition, however, Gherea’s establishment was special and contemporary observers claimed that only the Capșa House on Calea Victoriei in

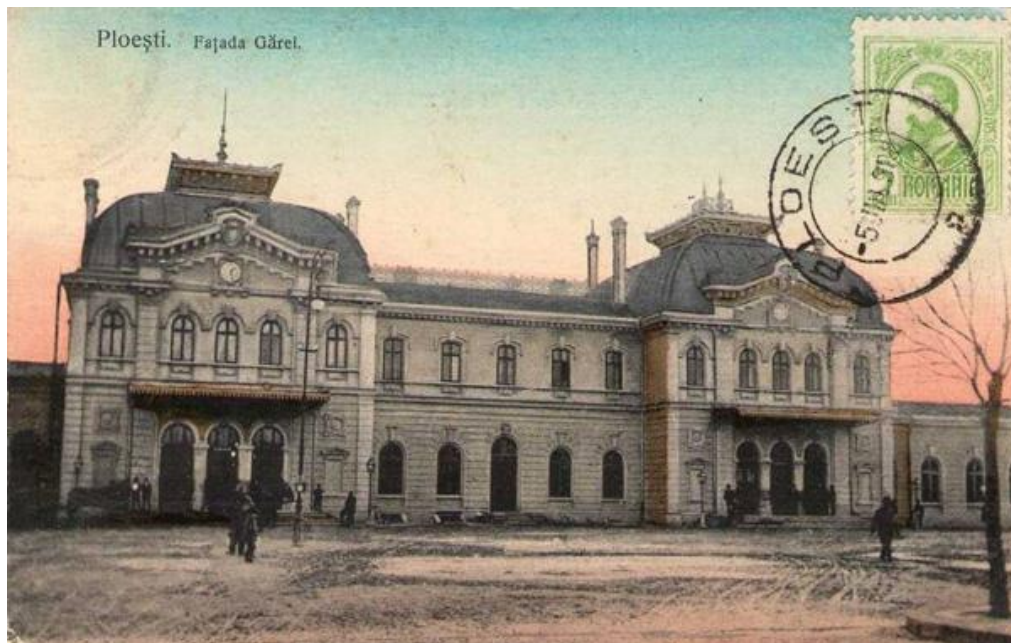


Fig 2.3: The front entrance of the Ploiești train-station in 1908

¹² The pun belongs to Ion Luca Caragiale, the most famous nineteenth-century Romanian playwright and Gherea’s close friend.

¹³ In 1862 the town had 27.500 inhabitants and 116 taverns. See Ion Groșescu, *Mahalalele Ploieștiului* (Ploiești: Ed. Karta-Graphic, 2008), 75.

Bucharest, the centrally located oldest and most prestigious restaurant in the Romanian capital, rivaled the Ploiești station restaurant in customers and prestige.¹⁴ Gherea's personal reputation would have helped his restaurant little if it were not for the excellent food as well. As the celebrated modernist poet Tudor Arghezi noted, if the traveler "did not satisfy his hunger at the ideal table of the literary critic, a simple lunch in the Ploiești train station was the equivalent of a royal feast."¹⁵ The food for all halls was known to be outstanding and several specific dishes became signature ones. Gherea was the mastermind behind most of them, initially drawing inspiration from his Polish father-in-law 'secret' cookbook and later developing his own recipes.¹⁶ "Gherea's fish roe salad" in particular was a beloved fare.¹⁷ The fish in question was carp and the roe were held above boiling water until they became red and then rubbed together with olive oil, lemon juice, ground black pepper and minced sweet onion. The dip was served with black bread, baked fresh on the premises, and a shot of "țuică," a strong traditionally Romanian spirit made from plums. There are anecdotes about customers travelling from Bucharest to Ploiești to have the salad and then complaining about the cost, which was indeed high if one added the roundtrip train fare to the price of the meal.¹⁸ Other famous dishes included the beefsteak prepared on a wood stove, "sarmale" (a variation of the stuffed cabbage rolls traditional to the Balkan Peninsula), "ciorbe" (sour soups made of vegetables and meat), and specialty breads. Many political and cultural personalities were among the restaurant's regulars and had their own preferences. The conservative prime-minister P. P. Carp was fond of the warm

¹⁴ Dorin Stănescu, "Un brand al orașului: Restaurantul lui Gherea din Gara Ploiești," *Historia*, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/un-brand-al-orasului-restaurantul-lui-gherea-din-gara-ploiesti>. Last accessed March 5, 2018.

¹⁵ *Adevărul literar și artistic*, no. 494, May 25, 1930.

¹⁶ C. Păcurariu, *Câteva amintiri despre C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea* (Bucharest: Tipografia M.M. Antonescu, 1936), 43.

¹⁷ The dish is known in English by its Greek name, "taramosalata."

¹⁸ "Salata de icre a lui Dobrogeanu-Gherea," *Jurnalul național*, March 23, 2012, <http://jurnalul.ro/special-jurnalul/salata-de-icre-a-lui-dobrogeanu-gherea-607910.html>. Last accessed February 17, 2018.

white bread loaf that he would eat on the platform while waiting for the next train.¹⁹ Gherea's literary rival and politician Titu Maiorescu preferred the pastries. The restaurant often catered to the royal table at Peleş and king Carol I was known to refuse dessert that "didn't come from Gherea."²⁰ Several well-known writers had their favorite tables and dishes. Gherea's close friend Ion Luca Caragiale, the famous satirical playwright, preferred a table outside, where the waiters, accustomed to his orders, welcomed him with a white bean paste seasoned with paprika and served in a clay bowl.²¹ The restaurant also took pride in a well-selected collection of wines and liquors, while also being known, since Gherea himself was a teetotaler, for its massive, perpetually simmering Russian samovar.

Gherea's remarkable aptitudes for this business are perhaps best illustrated by innovations that went beyond food and drink. Under his direction, the establishment became more than just a restaurant. For the hurried customers, he added a deli shop, where people could purchase breads, pastries, cakes, meats and drinks ordinarily served in the restaurant, as well as the latest national and foreign newspapers. Gherea also introduced a 'to-go' service, having waiters walk the platform with hot drinks and foods and serve customers through train windows. This of course required that trains stop in the station long enough, a favor which Gherea periodically secured from the Romanian railways authorities through smooth negotiation and often bribery.²² In addition, the restaurant also specialized in catering, occasionally providing food for the royal residence in Sinaia, as mentioned, but also for official and private meetings and banquets in Ploieşti.

¹⁹ Păcurariu, 25.

²⁰ Sevastos, 131.

²¹ Păcurariu, 17.

²² Ibid., 25.

As Gherea's literary reputation mounted, the restaurant became a meeting place for writers, journalists and politicians of all sorts. Gherea himself was the main attraction. His own living headquarters, for many years, were also inside the train station, above the restaurant. Only after the turn of the century did he purchase a house in town, and even then he was often more likely to be found at the station. A prolific reader and writer, in time Gherea also assembled an extensive library in the apartment above the restaurant, known as one of the best socialist collections in the country.²³ He was always easily within reach, anyone could see him at work and exchange words in-between rush hours. A real conversation often required patience from the guests. Caragiale described what must have been an ordinary scene at the restaurant thus:

I arrive in the Ploiești station at seven in the evening. I make my way through the people that congregate in front of the buffet, stretching their hands for their beefsteak, and I want to greet the manager. But it's impossible to penetrate the crowd. I prefer to wait for the train to leave. A whole veal cutlet disappears under Gherea's knife like magic... The second bell for [the train for] Bucharest rings and, meanwhile, the next train is announced as well... it looks like we won't be able to talk for now...²⁴

The restaurant was indeed a busy place. A contemporary pamphlet likened "Gherea without customers" to "Ploiești without oil." At the time, neither could be imagined.²⁵ The noise and the crowds did not stop those who wanted to see Gherea. The restaurant was a place where people casually stopped by or interrupted their journeys to share news and seek advice. The poet George Coșbuc, whose talent Gherea was among the first to notice and promote,²⁶ upon receiving a literary prize from the Romanian Academy, stopped first in Ploiești on his way to his native

²³ Păcurariu, 7; Ornea, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*. Upon Gherea's retirement, the collection was moved to his villa in Sinaia, where it was destroyed in a fire during World War One.

²⁴ Ornea, *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 161.

²⁵ *Furnica*, no. 235, 1909, 10.

²⁶ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Poetul țărănimii," *Opere complete*, Vol. 7, 169-266.

village, to “show Mr. Gherea the money from the prize.”²⁷ The biologist and novelist Paul Bujor, upon returning from his studies abroad in 1891, insisted on stopping first in Ploiești, to make Gherea’s acquaintance. He writes: “Voinov [Dimitrie Voinov, another socialist biologist] went home to Focșani, while I stayed at Gherea’s for three days, days that I will never forget.”²⁸ Especially in the late 1890s and after 1900, when Gherea and his restaurant acquired an almost mythical quality, younger writers, students, journalists or simply admirers organized ‘field trips’ to Ploiești to see and listen to Gherea and enjoy the food. As B. Brănișteanu notes, “these gatherings were true symposia that often lasted entire nights, until a morning train would take the guests back to Bucharest, animated by the ideas they exchanged together in a warm intellectual atmosphere.”²⁹ Many strangers, especially women, intrigued by his literary works, stopped by to get a glimpse of Gherea, whose good looks they found adequate even as his politics disappointed them.³⁰ Gherea’s employees and associates were used to the fascination exerted by their manager. “But who, in fact, did not seek to talk to Gherea?” asked Carol Crivda, Gherea’s second in command for over two decades, in a short memoir. The answer to this rhetorical question was succinct but firm: “Among our political and literary personalities, very few.”³¹ This uncommon manner and degree of exposure furthered Gherea’s appeal and prestige but also accustomed the public to a nonconventional presentation of a cultural and political leader.

Gherea himself loved to be surrounded by friends, writers and fellow socialists. The literary critic turned chef acted as a magnet for activists of all kinds, running his restaurant, in his own words, as an “asylum of Russian nihilists.”³² He provided shelter and funding to many

²⁷ Paul Bujor, *Amintiri de A. Vlahuță și I. L. Caragiale* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1938), 104.

²⁸ Paul Bujor, manuscript “Din viața mea de până acum” quoted in Olga Necrasov, “Prof. Paul Bujor: Biolog progresist și luptător pentru dreptate socială (1862-1952),” 9.

²⁹ B. Brănișteanu, *Jurnal* vol. 1 (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2003), 293.

³⁰ Păcurariu, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³² Letter to Paul and Ștefania Zarifopol in Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol.8, 179.

transiting revolutionaries as well as Romanian socialists. For example, the exiled Russian writer and narodnik activist Vladimir Korolenko was known to visit and stay at Gherea's often.³³

Close friends, like Caragiale, spent several weeks at a time as Gherea's guests. They also always dined for free and, in case they were impoverished, received train tickets to return home.

His was an open house (and restaurant), and employees recall that often new preparations and new food had to be made for Gherea's overlapping groups of visitors. His numerous friends and



Figure 2.4: C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Vladimir Korolenko, and their families, at Sinaia, date unknown (Gherea is standing next to his son Alexandru, while Korolenko stands next to his daughter Natasha).³⁴

acquaintances congregated especially during the holidays, for Easter and Christmas, when the general public travelled less, and the restaurant was less likely to be crowded.

³³ Sevastos, 131.

³⁴ Source: Constantin Titel Petrescu, *Socialismul in Romania, 1835- 6 Septembrie 1940* (Biblioteca Socialistă), 72.

In time some visitors became neighbors. The political possibilities brought by the town's industrial class determined several socialist leaders, like Vasile Morțun and Alexandru Radovici, to move to Ploiești. But their decision was also likely influenced by proximity to Gherea and his connections. In 1896, Constantin Stere, the chief *poporanist*, also of Russian origin, moved to Ploiești too, buying a house close to Gherea's, with whom he engaged in "long, often contentious discussions."³⁵ Around the same time, Anton Bacalbașa, a beloved but controversial socialist journalist and satirical writer, who rose to fame as contributor to Bucharest newspapers, moved to Ploiești to be closer to Gherea as well.

During the almost thirty years of his career as manager, Gherea directed substantial parts of the profits generated by the restaurant towards financing the Romanian socialist movement and helping his many friends and acquaintances, literary and political, socialist or not, in Romania and abroad. His letters reveal that he periodically sent money to members of the Russian émigré community, including key figures like Vera Zasulich and Roza Plekhanov.³⁶ Several Romanian socialists recall that Gherea used to contribute, always tactfully, to the costs of socialist propaganda publications and activities.³⁷ The social-democrat historian Constantin-Titel Petrescu notes that as late as 1908, when the Bucharest "Circle for Social Studies" reemerged after an absence of many years, Gherea paid the rent for the group's headquarters and continued to cover, with "absolute discretion," the deficits incurred by the Romanian socialist movement.³⁸ Gherea's "proverbial generosity" was a source of frustration for his collaborators at the restaurant, who thought that even some well-to-do visitors took advantage of their manager's

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Letters to Vera Zasulich and Roza Plekhanov in Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol.8, 202, 235.

³⁷ Pas, 77.

³⁸ Constantin Titel Petrescu, 215.

largesse.³⁹ Carol Crivda remembers that travelers occasionally asked Gherea for small loans, to be returned upon their arrival at destination, never to be heard of again.⁴⁰ That he still managed to make a profit in these circumstances is testament of his unfailing business acumen.

Entrepreneurial achievements also had downsides. While generously supporting the movement once the business took off, Gherea was perennially plagued by the dilemmas of his contradictory position as both socialist activist and capitalist employer. As he later confessed in a letter to his son-in-law, the literary critic Paul Zarifopol:

Because of an overly utopian ethical understanding of socialism, I could not protect myself against my staff's negligence and dishonesty. I was always inclined to believe that they, the proletarians, were right in their fight against me, the bourgeois capitalist. [...] I perceived my occupation as a breach of socialist principles and when Sofia [his wife], after a couple of years of work, saved and invested 700 francs, I couldn't sleep even the very few hours a night I did before because of this flagrant violation of the religious dogmas of socialism.⁴¹

Even concerns about employees aside, the work at the train station took a considerable toll on Gherea's health. The restaurant was open twenty-one hours per day, and Ploiești was a busy station, with both local and international trains passing by frequently. The employees confessed that they had difficulties getting used to the constant noise, agitation and chaos. Gherea himself, whose constitution was fragile, was permanently plagued by neuroses, anxiety and insomnia. As he got older he also became increasingly absent-minded, being known to frequently take the train in the opposite direction, south to Bucharest when he in fact intended to go to Sinaia, and vice versa.⁴² But this was after the turn of the century, when he could afford to leave the restaurant in the capable hands of staff members that he trained himself. The restaurant's smooth functioning

³⁹ Pas, 76.

⁴⁰ C. Păcurariu, *Câteva amintiri despre C. Dogroeanu-Gherea*. About Carol Crivda's activity and pseudonym see D. Karnabatt, *Bohema de altădată* (Bucharest: Vremea, 1944), 41.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Păcurariu, 9.

and consistently high-quality service were the result of many years of hard work and sleepless nights on Gherea's part. In this respect, both the prestige and the financial gain were well deserved.

However, commercial success stood at odds with intellectual respectability. As Gherea began to publish more often, unsavory labels were quick to emerge. "The tavern-keeper from Ploiești," "the butcher-theoretician," or "the bartender-critic" were common appellations in the newspapers of the time.⁴³ Opponents who must have thought highly of their wit often accused him of deconstructing arguments as if cutting beef, or of adding random concepts to a theoretical stew.⁴⁴ The malicious remarks were not entirely unjustified, Gherea himself having admitted more than once that he sacrificed sophistication and elegance for the sake of clarity. In his later years, he even confessed that decades of writing for the purposes of "popularization" ended up ruining his own writing style.⁴⁵

These comments also highlighted Gherea's persisting precarious status, as both intellectual and businessman. In spite of his accomplishments, Gherea's position was never secure. The railway restaurant concession had to be renewed periodically and depended on the good will of the various liberal and conservative Transportation ministers who succeeded one another rapidly but usually shared a common antipathy towards socialists. Until 1890, when he was officially granted Romanian citizenship, Gherea's foreigner status made him particularly vulnerable. He was often harassed by various officials, local or just passing by, especially the police and the railway authorities, whose cooperation often required gifts and gratuities. Even

⁴³ Ion Pas, *Aducere aminte*, 75; Galaction, 137.

⁴⁴ Ornea, *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 161.

⁴⁵ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol.8, 117.

after his naturalization, which came as an exception to the country's strict laws regarding Jews⁴⁶ and was most likely a result of his mounting literary reputation, Gherea had no illusions about his condition, which was, as he confessed in a letter to his son-in-law, "always in essence [that of] a foreigner," "not being a native Romanian" and lacking "a secure national and civic standing."⁴⁷

To write literature in an undeveloped language, in which you weren't raised, while playing innkeeper twenty-four hours per day, in the infernal noise and turmoil of the train station, with a house full of refugees, surrounded by Russian spies and surveilled by the Romanian police, taking care and responsibility for the Russian nihilist struggle and the multiple troubles of the Romanian socialist movement, to write, to make literature in these conditions is a tour de force that would make even the famous acrobats the Zengano brothers proud [...] I don't know if my social studies, and especially my critical studies, have value and how much, but what I do know is that no one else wrote in less favorable conditions.⁴⁸

In the cultural climate of late nineteenth century Romania, Gherea's ascension was a social transgression. The Romanian intellectual leaders of the time were highly-educated and relatively prosperous members of the rising bourgeoisie or descendants of the traditional *boyars*, the landowning class. Those who needed to work for a living did so in respectable positions, usually in law or administration. This was a far cry from Gherea's daily struggles as cook, manager and accountant of a busy eating place. It must have felt beneath his literary contenders' dignity to engage with such a clear social inferior. After all, Gherea served meals in the train station restaurant "where Maiorescu (Romania's leading literary critic before Gherea and his main rival,

⁴⁶ In theory, Romania agreed to grant civil rights to its Jewish population at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, as a precondition to its independence. In practice, the state granted citizenship to the less than one thousand Jews who had fought in the Russo-Turkish War and made naturalization for the others a complicated individual process, which demanded that the person resided in Romania for at least ten years and had proved himself "useful" to the country. He then had to await the passing of a special law in Parliament to approve his application. In these circumstances only a couple of hundred Jews became citizens until the end of World War One.

⁴⁷ Letter from Gherea to Paul and Ștefania Zarifopol, dated 1902, quoted in C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol.8., 182.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 180.

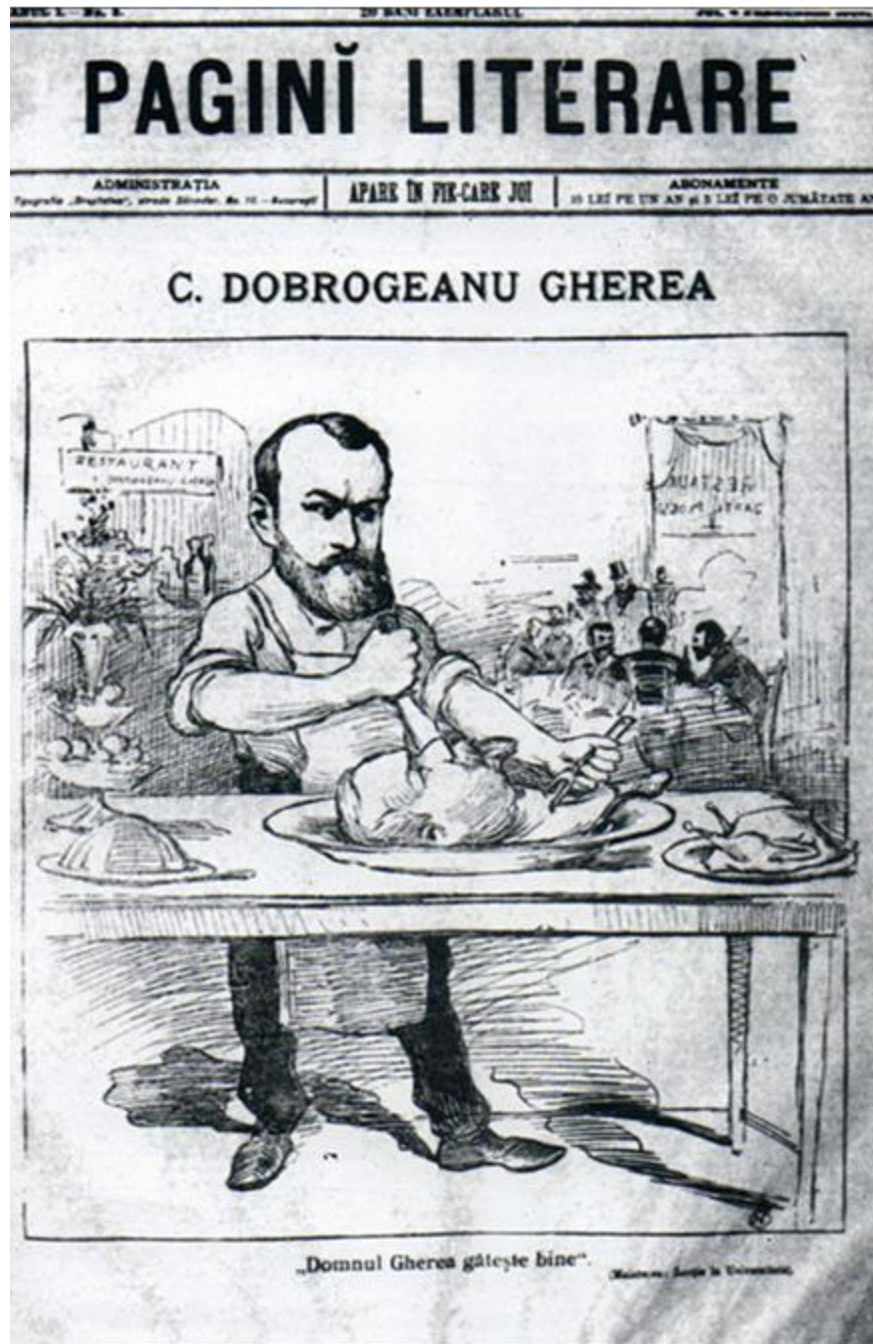


Figure 2.5: The cover of the journal *Literary Pages*, showing Gherea at work in the main hall of the restaurant in the train station in Ploiești. The caption reads “Mister Gherea cooks well.”

to be discussed in the following chapter) would stop to eat on his way to holidays in Germany.”⁴⁹ Gherea’s association with the food industry, and the even less digestible detail that he started to make a profit from it, continued to be a stigma that opponents used to their advantage and even sympathizers found difficult to overcome. When Caragiale, the great playwright, perplexed and encouraged by his friend’s Gherea business success, naively opened his own restaurant in Bucharest and went bankrupt within a year, a young contemporary noted that “Gherea was the professional tavern keeper, who climbed the empire of Writing, living and dying, with some money from his profession, while Caragiale was the writer, the essential and fundamental writer, who descended at the counter from the aristocracy of literature.”⁵⁰ As this statement suggests, Gherea’s everyday occupation made most of his fellow writers uncomfortable. Back then, even more than nowadays, intellectuals were not expected to do menial jobs, unless if briefly and unfortunately compelled by the circumstances, and were definitely even less supposed to excel at them. I argue, however, that this colorful employment and the accessibility that it implied were essential to the unusual fascination exerted by Gherea’s public persona.

A Socialist Train-Station and Public Sphere

The railway station restaurant is a fitting headquarters for nineteenth century socialism. After all, railways everywhere were powerful symbols of the Industrial Revolution and its promise of technological progress. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century Romania, where the first railways were built in the 1860s, was very much still in the “railway age,” commonly associated across Europe with economic growth and the spread of civilization. In an era of nationalism, railways paradoxically brought nations together, erasing boundaries and, in the

⁴⁹Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 194.

⁵⁰ Karnabatt, 29.

words of a hopeful if not quite accurate English epigrammatist, “abolishing time, distance and delay.”⁵¹ The train station in Ploiești itself, the largest and most impressive building in town at the time of its construction, reflected the cosmopolitan character of the railway, having been designed by French engineers and Italian architects, and erected by German and Austrian workers. Unlike many previous and subsequent forms of transportation, railways and trains were inherently public and available to the community at large. Even if they were usually divided into classes, according to the degree of comfort and range of facilities, trains led to a democratization of travel, with many poorer segments of the population being offered the opportunity to travel at a greater distance from home for the first time. The progressive, internationalist and collective ethos of the railway must have resonated strongly with supporters of the Left who embraced the same ideals.

In this universe, train stations held their own mystique. Even those which were not “cathedrals of the new humanity,” as Theophile Gautier referred to the large and imposing glass and iron constructions of Western Europe, were fascinating meeting points of people and nations, distribution and reception centers of goods and information, and key locations in the journey of mail. Train stations were gateways to the outer world, to the capital or the periphery, or to journeys abroad, for both business and pleasure. At the time when Gherea’s restaurant was becoming a popular favorite, train stations were already constant presences in literature and art, particularly in the realist and naturalist prose that socialist writers enjoyed discussing. Although Gherea and his disciples expressed a particular dislike towards Emile Zola, they probably would

⁵¹ Stanley Smith quoted in Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

have agreed with the latter's assessment that "our artists must find the poetry of stations like their fathers found that of forests and rivers."⁵²

In comparing modern train stations with medieval cathedrals, Theophile Gautier was not the only one to notice their almost religious connotations. Even relatively modest, by comparison, stations like that of Ploiești, resembled ecclesiastical institutions in the centrality of ritual. However busy and chaotic, train stations observed ritual practices with the reverence usually reserved for church. Both spaces accustomed visitors to the practice of patient waiting. Deserted stations predisposed travelers or "station saunterers,"⁵³ the equivalent of the urban flâneurs, to meditations on human transience and mortality. Nineteenth century railway stations were sites of pilgrimage by nature. This sacred dimension was amplified when combined with a figure as revered as Gherea's, himself the equivalent of a high priest of literature and social thought.

Train stations are emotionally charged places. In their classic social history of the railway station, Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie defined the station as "a place of motion and emotion, arrival and departure, joy and sorrow, parting and reunion."⁵⁴ They note that train stations are known to induce a particular kind of anxiety, defined by Cyril Connolly as *angoisse de gares*: "A particularly violent form of Angst. Bad when we meet someone at the station, but unbearable when we are seeing them off; not present when we are departing ourselves, but unbearable when we are arriving in London, if only from a day in Brighton."⁵⁵ No wonder that socialist sympathizers so often talked of 'sentiments' when referring to their allegiance to and involvement with the Left. Not only were these individuals linked by affection, friendship, and

⁵² Emile Zola, quoted in Jean Dethier, ed. *All Stations* (London, 1937), 9.

⁵³ Canon Roger Lloyd quoted in Richards and MacKenzie, 11.

⁵⁴ Richards and MacKenzie, 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

family and work relations, but they often met in a space that was by definition highly emotional. The *angoisse de gares*, the excitement and anxiety, the feelings of immediacy and transience, and the inherent melancholy of the train-station added to the sentiments of hope and uncertainty, enthusiasm and impatience, that must have characterized the meetings of Gherea's friends and colleagues.



A 60-a aniversare a lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea (la Ploiești). De la stânga la dreapta, rândul de sus, în p'cioare: Jeana Branîșteanu, Titel Petrescu fiica lui Al. D. Gherea, Rozal'a Frimu, d-na Cristescu, d-na Paunescu Pa t'n și Paunescu Pa t'n' randu dola m'jloc: Izu Branîșteanu (cu barbă), Gh. Cristescu, Ione Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Al. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Dr. Otoi, Ion Sion, Maria Sion, D. Marinescu. rândul d'n fața: A. Constantinescu, (jos al doilea), Ec. Arbore, Blagoeff, (Deadu), C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, d-na Sofia Dobrogeanu-Gherea, dr. Racovski, I. C. Frimu, d-na V. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Leon Gheller-Ieși.

Figure 2.6: Group portrait at Gherea's 60th anniversary in Ploiești. The caption names the guests, who include Christian Racovski, Dimitar Blagoev, Ecaterina Arbore, Otoi Călin, and I. C. Frimu⁵⁶

In late nineteenth century Romania, train stations also functioned as political schools for provincial citizens who now had the opportunity to see, hear and even touch political figures whom they had previously known only from newspapers. Given its strategic location and its

⁵⁶ Source: Constantin Titel Petrescu, *Socialismul in Romania*, 288.

proximity to the capital, the station in Ploiești in particular was one of the spaces that in the 1890s and 1900s became a “political tribune” where political candidates arrived to give speeches, promote their platforms and meet the electorate.⁵⁷ The frequent arrival of ministers or other important politicians in the Ploiești station, whether en route to Western Europe, to other towns in Romania, or simply to Ploiești as final destination, gave rise to elaborate and sometimes cumbersome ceremonials. One of the prescribed duties of the prefect of the district was to greet important local and foreign political figures at the station personally. In busy seasons that meant almost daily, and sometimes ill-received, trips. The conservative prime-minister P. P. Carp, waiting to exchange trains in the middle of the night, is reported to have scolded the prefect in irritation, warning him not to come to the station in the future unless summoned. The king and the royal family, easily the most attractive guests, who travelled through town frequently on their way to Sinaia, were also averse to extravagant public displays and the distinctive blue royal train often passed through Ploiești without stopping.

Reserved statesmen notwithstanding, the local officials and the larger public greatly enjoyed the pomp and circumstance of these stops. The ritual welcoming of important guests required the decoration of the station building with flags and flowers, the intonation of the national anthem by a marching band, locals dressed in folk costumes and the traditional offering of bread and salt. The train station was a space of recurring spectacle, one that large segments of the public chose to attend. Truly remarkable events, like the visits of important foreign monarchs or the passing of the funeral trains of beloved personalities attracted thousands of people. But not all politicians were shy of the crowds. Many welcomed the chance to present themselves as real, accessible individuals, to shake hands and to speak with the people congregated on the platform.

⁵⁷ Dorin Stănescu, “Ploiești: Gara prin care au trecut toți regii României,” *Historia* at <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/ploiesti-gara-prin-care-au-trecut-toti-regii-romaniei>. Last accessed March 5, 2018.

For their part, the locals took the opportunity to ask questions, hand in petitions, or simply exchange pleasantries with famous people. For both politicians and the public, the train-station represented a space of increased visibility, where both camps could practice the art of political socialization.

As a space defined by the circulation of goods, people and information, the railway station restaurant is also reminiscent of the coffeehouses that Habermas considered instrumental in the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in eighteenth century Western Europe.

Habermas defined the public sphere as the *public* of *private* individuals *and* agents of the state who join in debates touching on state authority.⁵⁸ While the public sphere initially consisted of educated men, it gradually expanded to include other interlocutors in what were essentially rational arguments and debates. These features, the reliance on rational-critical discourse and the openness to participation, are in fact the two essential dimensions of Habermas's public sphere.⁵⁹ This potentially democratic space depended on a "a kind of social intercourse that, far from presupposing the equality of status, disregarded status altogether."⁶⁰ It therefore makes sense that it emerged in places like literary salons and coffeehouses and was initially centered on apparently apolitical matters like literature. The political potential, however, was always there, even if often unfulfilled, just like its democratic and equalitarian character. Habermas of course decries the degeneration of the bourgeois public sphere in the nineteenth century and further, when its open and critical character was gradually replaced and degraded by the ubiquity of ideology and mass consumption. But even Habermas's account is nevertheless a hopeful one.

While the democratic ideal of the initial public sphere was not fully realized, the idea remained

⁵⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

⁵⁹ Craig Calhoun, "Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, edited by Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 4.

⁶⁰ Habermas, 36.

an important one, and in spite of the social and cultural transformations that took place during the past two centuries there is little doubt that a return to an elitist and exclusionary public sphere is impossible. While Habermas locates the zenith of the Western-style bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century, his model is a useful one for the European periphery where the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the simultaneous rise of a local bourgeoisie, followed quickly by a manufacturing and then industrial working-class, and the advances in women's rights and participation in public life which took place at the same time throughout Europe. By its very nature a meeting place at the crossroads, enhanced by the cultural and political implications of Gherea's leadership, the railway station restaurant in Ploiesti is a fitting embodiment of a public sphere, the space where "private people come together as a public."⁶¹

But the train station restaurant in Ploiești is the physical and symbolic center of a public sphere that goes beyond the social and discursive restrictions of the Habermasian model. It is perhaps more useful to regard the public sphere as a metaphor for a space "where people's conversations, ideas and minds meet"⁶² or "where information, ideas and debate can circulate in society, and where political opinion can be formed."⁶³ However, I am not looking at a metaphor but I am anchoring the public sphere in the specific physical space of the train station. In doing so I argue that the overlooked spatial dimension is crucial in the visibility and publicity of the public sphere. I also respond to recent theoretical interventions that call for an exploration of the public sphere through "general sensory access."⁶⁴ The public sphere is not only a space of ideas and ideologies, but also one of tastes, smells, noises and tactile sensations, as Gherea's restaurant's patrons were surely reminded.

⁶¹ Ibid., 27.

⁶² Bruce Robbins, "Introduction: The Public as Phantom," in his (ed.) *The Phantom Public Sphere* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), xvi.

⁶³ Peter Dahlgren, *Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), ix.

⁶⁴ Ari Adut, "A Theory of the Public Sphere," *Sociological Theory* vol. 30, no. 4 (2012), 238.

The train station is also a case-study that rescues the public sphere from the critique that its alleged egalitarian nature is normative and unrealistic. While acknowledging the importance of spaces of socialization in the development of the public sphere, critics have denounced the Habermasian bourgeois coffeehouse for its exclusionary and class-bound character. A train station, however, is public in a different way than a coffeehouse or a literary salon even if the topics under discussion are the same. Train-stations are by nature meeting places, sites of interaction and exchange of products and information. One could argue that the restaurant never quite obscured the question of social status, as Habermas's ideal, although less likely historically accurate, model of the public sphere aspired to. After all, social structure was ingrained in the very organization of the three classes of train passengers. In reality, however, this specific location, populated by necessity by individuals of all social backgrounds, comes as close as possible to the ideal of interaction and dialogue across class boundaries. It was certainly more accessible and appealing than the selective monthly meetings of the *Junimea* society, the association of the socialists' main literary rivals, where attendance was restricted to members and carefully chosen recipients of a one-time official invitation. By contrast, the train station restaurant was open to everyone at all times. In an article on the "socializing places" of "young socialists" in Romania, historian Adi Dohotaru speaks of clubs and circles which, he admits, provided education, but were irregular.⁶⁵ Surely Gherea's train station, informal and permanent, takes precedence over the uncertain and precarious activities of the clubs, which often took place in spaces rented only for certain events, and rarely translated into official, enduring and accessible headquarters.

⁶⁵Adi Dohotaru, "Portraits of Young Socialists: Moral Standing and Socializing Places," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie «George Barițiu» din Cluj-Napoca* Vol. LIV (2015): 249-264.

This particular space was also less gender-segregated than the traditional model of a nineteenth century public sphere. Critics have long denounced the exclusively male character of Habermas's coffeehouse.⁶⁶ The previous chapter also discussed the gender gap that characterized the early socialist movement in Romania in spite of its egalitarian discourse. However, the peculiarities of a train station again offer a way out of this conundrum. Women not only traveled, waited in train stations, and ate and read while waiting, but, especially in the last decade of the nineteenth century and later, they increasingly did so unaccompanied. Carol Crivda's anecdote about society ladies coming to dine at the station to have a look at Gherea is revealing in this respect. The train station welcomed many publics and was the site of many overlapping public spheres and cultures: a broader social culture in which "strangers" of both sexes and all social statuses went about their daily business while inevitably interacting with each other, a political culture in which the larger public interacted with political figures and representatives of the state, and were socialized into democratic political processes, or a literary and cultural sphere born out of Gherea's presence and the fascination he exerted on the country's writers.

The highly emotional character of the train station discussed earlier also confirms critics' scepticism about the inherent rationality of the public sphere. The "emotional community" of Romanian leftist intellectuals had its unofficial headquarters in a space defined by affect and "angoisse." Scholars have recently talked of "the creative politics of affect-based social movements."⁶⁷ Having a train station, rather than a voluntary association or political club, as place of socialization for young socialist intellectuals, redefines the very nature of the "political," which in this case can include debates over aesthetics, controversies over anatomy textbooks or

⁶⁶ See for example Nancy Fraser's work on "subaltern counterpublics" in "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* vol. 25/26 (1990): 56–80.

⁶⁷ Deborah B. Gould, *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UPs Fight against AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 8.

the challenges of managing a capitalist venture, a successful restaurant, in line with socialist principles. The emphasis on this space also serves to bridge the gap between the ‘public’ and ‘private’ lives of historical actors and contribute to the understanding of “lived socialism,” a key concept in recent intellectual histories of socialism.⁶⁸ As noted, Gherea lived for many years in an apartment above the restaurant, also inside the train station. For him the station constituted both his workplace and his home, a connotation which was not lost on his visitors who often referred to the restaurant, the station, or even the town of Ploiești as “at Gherea’s.”⁶⁹

This aspect is important when considering the regulation of the public sphere and the particular position occupied by Gherea and his fellow socialists in this case. Most scholars agree that the state plays an important role in organizing, controlling and censoring the public sphere. This description is especially adequate for train stations which, given their highly regulated character, are often perceived as carriers of order and discipline. From strict timetables to uniforms, to ticket checks and their many clocks, train stations generally convey the message of structure and propriety.⁷⁰ However, this image fits poorly with a station known commonly as “at Gherea’s,” which was a crucial node in the physical and ideological travels of socialist sympathizers, be they local activists or foreign revolutionaries. Theorists of social space have long pointed to the relation between the functioning of a space and its ownership. Henri Lefebvre argues that those who control the representation of space also control how that space is produced, organized and used.⁷¹ Space is not neutral but “political and strategic” and its organization can be

⁶⁸ See Marci Shore, *Caviar and Ashes: A Warsaw’s Generation Life and Death in Marxism, 1918-1968* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) and John Randolph, *The House in the Garden: The Bakunin Family and the Romance of Russian Idealism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

⁶⁹ Alexandru Vlahuță, quoted in Valeriu Râpeanu, *Alexandru Vlahuță și epoca sa*, 265.

⁷⁰ Richards and MacKenzie, 98-103.

⁷¹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1991), 38-39.

used the promote an idea or ideology.⁷² Following in Lefebvre's footsteps, David Harvey also maintains that "placing and the making of places are essential to social development, social control, and empowerment in any social order" and eventually interrelate with the "social construction of space and time."⁷³ I argue that by subverting the orderly mechanisms of the train-station and using it for different purposes, socialists in Romania effectively took control of this space and shaped its political meaning. Sure, the train station hosted political activities of other parties and movements as well. As discussed previously, towards the end of the century politicians came to view important train stations as political tribunes. Still, while their visits were temporary, Gherea's restaurant was a permanent fixture and its association with socialism widely known and recognized. Of course, liberals, conservatives and everybody else were welcome at the restaurant. Gherea did not use this space, at least not overtly, to convert newcomers to socialism. Doing so would have been bad business practice. Still, when random individuals said that they dined at the "socialist Gherea's place"⁷⁴ it meant that they were aware of and accepted the political implication of his establishment.

The intersection between Gherea's complex persona, the space of the train station restaurant, and that of a thriving, strategically located town, makes for special and intriguing possibilities. This chapter attempted to sketch some of the implications and potential interpretations of this location. The obvious sociability inherent in the space, coupled with the literary and cultural dimension originating in Gherea's work, and its many layers of political significance make the train station a site of nesting public spheres and cultures. Among them, a discernible one was a specifically socialist public sphere and culture, born out of Gherea's

⁷² Henri Lefebvre, "Reflections on the politics of space," in R. Peet, ed., *Radical Geography* (London: Methuen and Co., 1977), 341.

⁷³ David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 265.

⁷⁴ Stănescu, "Ploiești: Gara prin care au trecut toți regii României."

fortuitous presence, but which transcended the narrow confines of a single person's career.

During his tenure, the train station restaurant in Ploiești became a singular public space, which mirrored its leader's cultural and ideological commitments.

CHAPTER THREE: “BORN THROUGH LITERARY CRITIQUE:”¹ EARLY SOCIALISM AND THE ROMANIAN LITERARY CANON

As both intellectual and restaurant manager, Gherea attracted malicious comments from a public that could not reconcile the image of the “prince of Romanian cuisine”² with that of “the master of our scientific criticism.”³ Interestingly, however, it was only after a certain point in his career that his writings and interventions were met with vicious remarks. Years before his debut as a literary critic Gherea had already been well-known for his many short works in social and political thought. While his Marxist perspective inevitably attracted criticism, it was only after he ventured into the literary terrain that Gherea became the target of truly offensive attacks. Most likely this reflects the special status of literature in the national imaginary. The development of a national literary canon was particularly important for the national identity of relatively young countries like Romania of the time. Literature is a contested field where foreigners are especially unwelcome, especially if their command of the local language is tenuous. Even after almost a quarter of a century of residing in Romania, Gherea’s Romanian was clumsy, although by then his writing at least benefited from the critic’s reliable common sense and humor. Earlier in his career, unfortunately, Gherea’s works have been initially written in Russian or crude Romanian and polished by the socialist leader Ioan Nădejde, a self-taught intellectual whose pretentious and heavy-handed personal writing style served Gherea poorly. It is thus both ironic and remarkable that, as a literary scholar recently noted, despite its stylistic shortcomings, both contemporaries and future critics “ended up speaking, for almost a century, whether they intended to or not, in

¹ Adapted from Georges Haupt, “Rôle de la critique dans la naissance du socialisme: la Roumanie,” *Le Mouvement social*. Special issue *Critique Littéraire et Socialisme* vol. 59 (1967): 29-48.

² Karnabatt, 29.

³ Historian Nicolae Iorga, quoted in the previous chapter.



Figure 3.1: Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, circa 1891⁴

‘Gherea’s language.’”⁵ In effect, Gherea revolutionized the methodology and vocabulary of Romanian literary criticism, placed Romanian literature in conversation with other European literatures, and initiated extensive debates in the Romanian cultural scene. He also, a rare feat for a socialist critic, discovered and promoted writers that later became classics of Romanian literature, thus actively shaping the national canon. In doing so, I argue, he also increased the

⁴ Source: I. C. Atanasiu, *Mișcarea socialistă*, 59.

⁵ Adrian Terian-Dan, *Teorii, metode, și strategii de lectură în critica și istoriografia literară de la Titu Maiorescu la E. Lovinescu: O abordare comparativă* (Bucharest: Editura Muzeului Național al Literaturii Române, 2013), 64.

visibility of the Romanian socialist movement and established the bases of a socialist culture. Romanian literary historians routinely speak of socialism in comparison or opposition to romanticism, modernism or symbolism.⁶ That an essentially political ideology should belong with such ease among literary and cultural trends is testimony of the impact that the socialist intervention had on the country's literary world.

This chapter aims to recover this aspect of Gherea's, and by extension, Romanian socialism's, history. By recovery I do not mean a recovery of the figure of Gherea himself, as either intellectual or socialist militant. Various scholars, influenced probably by Gherea's own aspirations, advocated for the inclusion of Gherea in the Western socialist and literary canon and lamented the context that confined him to a provincial and peripheral place and audience. Instead, I argue for the merits of continuing to consider Gherea a minor, local figure. Too often Gherea's critical work had been analyzed separately from his political engagement and everyday activity, and his successful literary career had been considered almost an accident given his presence as a "wrong face" in the "wrong space" at the "wrong time."⁷ This chapter explores Gherea's trajectory, contribution and legacy while retaining both the socialist milieu to which Gherea belonged and the broader Romanian intellectual environment that made it possible for a foreigner like him to achieve literary fame. Removing the aura of extraordinariness and "out of place" that often surrounds Gherea's portrait, I argue that this particular *time*, the end of the nineteenth century, and the convergent *spaces*, Romania, the literary and political spheres, and even the space of the train station restaurant, together contributed to the emergence of this well-known public *face*.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Michael Shafir, "Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea: Wrong Time, Wrong Face, Wrong Place," *Studia Universitatis Babes Bolyai European Studies* vol. 2 (2007): 5-48.

The Making of a Socialist Critic

As late as 1886 nothing predicted the emergence of a socialist literary star. The nascent socialist movement in Romania as a whole achieved little until the early 1880s, when regular socialist newspapers and magazines emerged, and the activity of socialist circles became more consistent. Gherea himself was absent from the country for almost a year, from November 1878 to October 1879. Lured to the temporary Russian railway station in Galați, Gherea was arrested by the Russian police and sent by train to Saint Petersburg. Although in theory protected by Romanian laws which prohibited the extradition of political refugees, Gherea was in practice helpless once apprehended by Russian agents and rushed out of Romania. It is unlikely that Romanian authorities could have done anything, even if they wanted to, and the appeals of Gherea's wife and friends were predictably without result. To the surprise of all those involved, copies of this paperwork came in handy eleven months later, when Norwegian consuls made inquiries on behalf of a "certain Dobrogeanu," who escaped spectacularly from Siberia aboard a Norwegian ship and was claiming to be a legal resident of Romania, unlawfully retained by the tsarist police.⁸ This time the Romanian government proved more prompt, supposedly at the insinuations of the veteran liberal C. A. Rosetti, a politician highly admired by Romanian socialists and to a certain degree sympathetic to their cause.⁹ In an autobiographical brochure published almost forty years later, Gherea revealed that after an "exasperating"¹⁰ kidnap in the fashion of "the novels of Ponson du Terrail,"¹¹ he was held in the cells of the Third Section of the Russian Police for a month, and then deemed "worthy"¹² of the famous prison at Petropavlovsk, where he spent another three months before being sent to Siberia. Scholars speculate that Gherea

⁸ Jardar Seim, "Dobrogeanu-Gherea. Evadare în Norvegia," *Magazin istoric* no. 4 (1978), 10-12; Z. Ornea, *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 127-143.

⁹ Sofia Nădejde, *Scrieri*, 83.

¹⁰ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Amintiri din trecutul îndepărtat* (Bucharest: Alcala), 11

¹¹ French author of mystery and Gothic novels, famous for his character *Rocambole*.

¹² Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Amintiri*, 30.

received the exile sentence reserved for those acquitted in the famous “trial of the 193,”¹³ which actually ended months before his arrest, but to whose list of revolutionaries, populists and nihilists Gherea could have easily been added.¹⁴

While not necessarily stagnant in his absence, socialist activity in Romania picked up after Gherea’s almost miraculous return. After a couple of short-lived or failed attempts (*România viitoare, Besarabia*), Gherea’s long-standing dream of a socialist magazine came to life through the birth of *Contemporanul* (*The Contemporary*), the most important publication of prewar Romanian socialism, a monthly literary and scientific tome published more or less regularly between 1881 and 1891. While *Contemporanul* was at least equally the creation of the socialist leaders in Iași, who also figured as editors (Ioan Nădejde and Constantin Mille doing most of the editing work, with Vasile Morțun occasionally providing funds), it also fulfilled Gherea’s professed wish for a journal in which articles “written as accessibly as possible” were “scientific, but not arrogant.”¹⁵ It was of outmost importance to Gherea that the journal should be primarily cultural:

The magazine won’t be one of socialist agitation, but something like *Sovremennik* in Russia. Such a journal can surely exist prior to even the formation of a party core.¹⁶

Meanwhile, more visibly political, although not necessarily socialist, themes, were being tackled by other newly founded publications. *Emanciparea* (The Emancipation) appeared in Bucharest in April 1883 and was quickly followed by the more substantial *Revista socială* (The Social Magazine), a monthly journal published in Iasi between 1884 and 1887, and, finally, a

¹³ For an overview, see Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution: A History of the Populist and Socialist Movements in Nineteenth Century Russia* (New York: Knopf, 1960).

¹⁴ Ornea, *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 139.

¹⁵ Letter from C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea to Nicolae Russel, dated 1880, quoted in C.Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol.8, 87.

¹⁶ Letter from Gherea to unknown addressee, quoted in Savin Bratu and Zoe Dumitrescu-Bușulenga, *Contemporanul și vremea lui* (Bucharest: ESPLA, 1959), 39.

“socialist daily,” *Drepturile Omului* (Human Rights) which made its debut in 1884 and then started appearing regularly in 1885. While Gherea contributed to all these publications, *Revista socială* in particular was written by him almost exclusively. From late 1883, when he made his debut in *Emanciparea* with an article on property dedicated to the current prime minister, the powerful liberal I. C. Brătianu, to early 1886, Gherea published at least twenty-seven studies and articles in *Revista Socială* and *Drepturile Omului*. Except for the first article, addressed to Brătianu, which avoided any reference to socialism, all other studies were intended to describe, explain, clarify and defend the socialist doctrine in its Marxist form. While some of these articles were relatively brief polemical replies to what Gherea saw as common misconceptions in the media of the time, some were substantial, valuable studies that were simultaneously published separately as brochures and are part of the theoretical foundations of Romanian socialism. The extended essay “Karl Marx și economiștii noștri” (*Karl Marx and Our Economists*), published in installments in the first five issues of *Revista Socială* and then separately as a 108-pages booklet¹⁷, represented the first respectable introduction to scientific socialism, based on the close reading of the *Capital* and other relevant sources. Similarly, “Robia și socialismul. Răspuns lui Herbert Spencer” (*Serfdom and Socialism: A Reply to Herbert Spencer*)¹⁸ and “Ce vor socialiștii români” (*What Romanian Socialists Want*)¹⁹, the latter to become the platform of the future socialist party, confirmed Gherea’s emergence as the authority on doctrinal socialism, as well as political economy and sociology more broadly. His writings were clear, argumentative, informed and up-to-date with the latest news and names in European social thought. Although all studies were either unsigned or written under various pseudonyms, the public soon learned to recognize

¹⁷ *Karl Marx și economiștii noștri sau Analiza organizației actuale a societății* (Iași: Tip Lucrătorilor Români Asociați, 1884).

¹⁸ *Robia și socialismul. Răspuns lui Herbert Spencer* (Iași: Tipo: Lit H. Goldner, 1886).

¹⁹ *Ce vor socialiștii români. Expunerea socialismului științific și programul socialist* (Iași: Tipo-Lit. H. Goldner, 1886).

Gherea's style and his identity ceased to be a mystery, if it ever was. Among the socialists active in Romania he was surely the most qualified to undertake these studies. No other socialist intellectual matched either the breadth of his readings or his polemical acumen.

Gherea's foray into literary theory and criticism was unexpected and seemed haphazard. In fall 1884, the alleged co-editor of *Contemporanul*, the bohemian Moldovan boyar turned socialist Vasile Morțun handed for publication in the journal a subpar drama entitled *Ștefan Hudici*. Surprisingly, the already reputed theoretician replied with an ample commentary intended to support Morțun's play but which in fact elegantly overlooked the play's shortcomings and focused on the dramatic genre in general. The study was welcomed enthusiastically at *Contemporanul* and sanctioned, as literary historian Z. Ornea pointed out, a triple debut: that of Gherea as literary critic, that of the soon-to-be-famous literary rubric in *Contemporanul*, and, often forgotten, that of "Gherea" itself as pseudonym and name of choice.²⁰ In the first years after arriving in Romania Gherea used various last names, sometimes dictated by the fake documents he could get his hands on, while settling on "Constantin," or more often the diminutive "Costică" as a given name. Even in the correspondence with his Russian émigré friends, in Russian, from that time, he used "Costică" instead of his real name.²¹ Once his situation in Romania became more stable he adopted the name "Dobrogeanu," inspired according to some sources by Romania's annexation of Dobrogea in 1878. This is the name used in the restaurant concession contract and eventually in the Romanian passport he received after his naturalization in 1890. While this was his 'business' name, his articles and studies were written under a series of pseudonyms (most frequently "Caius Gracchus") or were often unsigned. He likely spent more time in the selection of a literary pseudonym, which was used

²⁰ Ornea, *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 323.

²¹ *Documente Privind Istoria României: Războiul Pentru Independență*, Vol. I, Part I (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1954), 497-535.

consistently and soon replaced Gherea's other names in common parlance. Z. Ornea is probably right when he associates "Gherea" with the Hebrew "ger," meaning "foreigner," a choice which in the scholar's opinion confirms Gherea's inveterate 'foreigner's complex.'²² He fails to mention, however, the term's broader meaning, which extends to "proselyte" and also indicates someone who has willingly immigrated to a foreign country and chose to adopt its cultural norms.²³ This could provide insight into Gherea's ambiguous stance towards Romania, where he indeed felt like a foreigner, as the previous chapter showed, but which he embraced wholly to the point of grounding both his socioeconomic and literary works specifically in the Romanian context.

Once 'born' as a literary critic, Gherea rose to fame swiftly, helped by both his unquestionable talent and the existing cultural climate. His piece on Morțun's play was followed quickly by a study on Caragiale, the illustrious Romanian playwright who would become Gherea's close friend, as we have already seen, and essays on Dostoevsky and Turgenev, both famous but less researched writers at the time in Romania. The major breakthrough, however, came the following year, 1886, when Gherea published an essay with the deceptively unassuming title "To Mr. Maiorescu." "Mr. Maiorescu," as everyone in Romania knew, had been the founder and uncontested authority of Romanian literary criticism for more than two decades, and was overall considered a *spiritus rector* of Romanian culture. Intelligent, charismatic and highly educated, Titu Maiorescu was the lawyer, philosopher, literary critic and politician who stood at the center of *Junimea*, the cultural powerhouse of nineteenth century Romania. A literary society founded in 1863, *Junimea* attracted several generations of

²² Ornea, *Viața lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 29. Ornea also stipulates that "Gherea" could come from the French "guerre" or "guerrier," to symbolize Gherea's own fighting nature, but that is rather unlikely.

²³ Sol Steinmetz, *Dictionary of Jewish Usage: A Guide to the Use of Jewish Terms* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 48.

Maiorescu complained about a reversal of the natural sequence of development, which made it possible for Romania to have political journals before establishing political parties, literary publications before having an educated public, schools and universities before acquiring able professors and theaters and cultural associations before producing at least one quality playwright, writer or scholar.²⁹

Maiorescu's general attitude towards Romanian culture was reflected in his works on literature as well. Just as the entire Romanian cultural establishment, barely awoken from "oriental barbarism,"³⁰ was characterized by "megalography,"³¹ "falsity" and a "total lack of judgment,"³² most contemporary literary productions were in his opinion crude, trite, or simply ridiculous. His literary studies, starting with the famous *O cercetare critică asupra poeziei române de la 1867* (*A Critical Inquiry into Romanian Poetry in 1867*)³³, make for a highly entertaining read. Not one to engage in actual analysis, Maiorescu quoted extensively from the poets under attack, supposedly letting their glaring shortcomings "speak for themselves."³⁴ The carefully chosen worst possible examples, accompanied by Maiorescu's brief, devastatingly sarcastic comments, built up to an inevitable conclusion: Romanian literature as such was nonexistent. What took its place were nonsensical versifications, dull imitations and a strident and ill-understood nationalism.

The merits of Maiorescu's critical endeavor are unquestionable. Poor quality literature indeed abounded, and at that time, still shortly after the unification of Moldova and Wallachia in

²⁸ Edward C. Thaden, *Conservative Nationalism in Nineteenth Century Russia* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964), 28-29.

²⁹ Titu Maiorescu, "În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română," in Titu Maiorescu, *Opere*, vol.1 (Bucharest: Minerva, 1978), 150-151.

³⁰ Ibid., 147.

³¹ Maiorescu, "Observari polemice," in Titu Maiorescu, *Opere*, vol.1, 130.

³² Maiorescu, "În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română," 148.

³³ Maiorescu, "O cercetare științifică asupra poeziei române de la 1867," in *Opere*, vol. 1, 5-68.

³⁴ Ibid.

1859 and only a year into the rule of Prince Carol I of Hohenzollern, patriotic fervor seemed to legitimize writings of otherwise little value. But Maiorescu's subsequent reputation as the absolute objective arbiter and promoter of criteria and standards is problematic. Like all cultural leaders that would succeed him, Maiorescu wanted to establish his own "direction,"³⁵ which required the complete discrediting of prior trends. More than any of his contestants or followers (including Gherea who essentially embraced the "forms without substance" formula especially when applied to socio-political conditions), Maiorescu longed for a *tabula rasa* society that he could shape according to his beliefs.³⁶ In its absence, he minimized the achievements of previous generations, emphasizing instead their pernicious effects.³⁷

But Maiorescu was also instrumental in the creation of a literary field, in Bourdieu's understanding,³⁸ that made Gherea's rise possible. As several scholars noted, Maiorescu's status, as far as literature was concerned, was that of an outsider. Although a member of university faculty himself, in Philosophy and Logic, he never obtained the coveted Literature professorship, which went instead to some of the older and less reputable literates whom he often ridiculed in his writings.³⁹ He had an equally fraught relation with the Romanian Academy, an institution he consistently accused, before eventually joining it, of existing for the sole purpose of exhausting the state budget.⁴⁰ Coupled with his increasing fame, Maiorescu's hostility towards the cultural establishment contributed to a growing divide between the 'real,' vibrant and informal world of literary journalism and the official, but sterile and 'dead,' world of the

³⁵ A recent work argues that the entire Romanian literary criticism between 1870 and 1930 has been one of "direction," a characteristic the author attributes to (semi)peripheral cultures which, at least in the eyes of their representatives, needed to evolve. Terian-Dan, *Teorii, metode și strategii de lectură...*, 48

³⁶ Z. Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul* (Bucharest: Eminescu, 1978), 204.

³⁷ Titu Maiorescu, "Observări polemice," in *Opere*, vol.1, 127.

³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. Edited and Introduced by Randall Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

³⁹ Sorin Alexandrescu, "„Junimea”- Discurs politic și discurs cultural," in *Privind înapoi, modernitatea* (Bucharest: Univers, 1999), 59.

⁴⁰ *Convorbiri Literare*, October 1, 1870.

universities and the Academy. Literary historian Andrei Terian-Dan is right to argue that by situating himself as such Maiorescu consigned literary criticism to a “subversive, semi-underground” position, which would continue to characterize the discipline until the 1930s.⁴¹

Maiorescu thus unwittingly established certain rules of the literary field that favored Gherea’s breakthrough. According to Bourdieu every field of cultural production functions according to its own laws, developed independently from broader social, political and economic structures. For most cultural fields, and especially the literary one, the internal logic of the field comes down to an “economic world reversed.”⁴² Simply put, economic success retracts from the prestige or, in Bourdieu’s formulation, the “symbolic capital,” of an author. The writers popular with the masses are usually denied access to the elite circles of intellectuals whose works are directed towards, and only understandable to, other writers. The literary field thus values what Bourdieu refers to as “production for the producers.”⁴³ Depending on the local context and the historical development of a particular literary field, official credentials or institutional recognition can constitute liabilities. The lack of formal training in literature can benefit a young author, while receiving a literary prize perceived as questionable can discredit another. In other cases, like the French literary field that Bourdieu knows best, certain distinctions, such as the Academy prizes, are among the most coveted forms of symbolic capital. In general, though, unlike other fields, the literary one has extremely porous boundaries and does not value education, seniority, or even previous achievements. The literary field brings together individuals of different social backgrounds, occupations, careers and credentials, who share only a mutual interest in literature and who enter the field by the simple act of writing. As the celebrated pioneer of Romanian literary criticism, Maiorescu almost single-handedly shaped a literary field

⁴¹ Terian-Dan, 55.

⁴² Bourdieu, 39.

⁴³ Ibid., 53.

that specifically dismissed ‘professionals,’ valuing instead external contributions. By the time Gherea published his first critical texts the Romanian public was accustomed to, and indeed expected, the most innovative literary criticism to come from outsiders. Gherea’s many levels of foreignness, in terms of language, nationality, occupation, ideology and even religion, were more than readers were generally prepared for. Distance from the literary establishment, however, was still appreciated. By the 1880s this establishment included Maiorescu himself, the iconoclast rebel from twenty years ago having meanwhile turned into a respectable founding figure with an established ‘school’ and faithful disciples.

Gherea’s 1886 study “To Mr. Maiorescu” was thus directed at the heart of the Romanian intellectual world and its reverberations were correspondingly major. In the article, Gherea cleverly speculated a logical discrepancy in two of Maiorescu’s recent studies.⁴⁴ The issue at stake, a variation on a familiar theme, was whether a work of art necessarily mirrors the artist’s personality. Maiorescu, usually a staunch defender of the absolute autonomy of the aesthetic, argued in the first study that artists can create moral works only by completely overcoming their own selves, but mentioned in the second that the work of an important contemporary poet reflected “his personal character, in whose absence a real poet could not exist.”⁴⁵ This contradiction provided Gherea with the opportunity to expound his own well-informed ideas on the relation between the ethical and the aesthetic, and set the tone for a polemic that would dominate the next decade, between the advocates of “art for art’s sake” (Maiorescu and the Junimists) and “art with a tendency” (Gherea and the socialists).⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Titu Maiorescu, “Comediile lui Caragiale,” *Convorbiri literare*, September 1885, and “Poeți și critici,” *Convorbiri literare*, April 1886.

⁴⁵ Maiorescu, “Poeți și critici.”

⁴⁶ Virgil Vintilescu, *Polemica Maiorescu-Gherea: Implicații estetice și literare* (Facla: Timișoara, 1980).

Within the following year Gherea continued to publish regularly in *Contemporanul*. Two important pieces on pessimism in literature and art introduced the Romanian public to the systematic analysis of a topic dear to fin-de-siècle cultural and literary critics everywhere. More important, perhaps, for the critic's growing reputation, was the publication in two consecutive issues of an extended study on Eminescu's poetry.⁴⁷ The fate of Eminescu, the great Romantic poet, considered even today Romania's 'national poet' *par excellence*, was in 1887 of general concern. The poet, then aged 37, had been in and out of European sanatoriums since 1883 when he exhibited the first symptoms of severe mental distress, most likely a result of cerebral syphilis. Updates on Eminescu's condition recurrently made front-page news and many newspapers and magazines, chief among them *Contemporanul*, reprinted his poems. Gherea's study, coming at a moment of heightened public interest in Eminescu and his oeuvre, was the first to undertake a methodical, analytical survey of the themes in the Eminescu's work, and the only one to be published during the poet's lifetime. Maiorescu, the one who actually discovered and cultivated Eminescu's work, only published his own study in 1892, three years after the poet's death.

Two further studies consolidated Gherea's position as a notable figure of the Romanian intellectual landscape. In 1887 Gherea also published *Critica criticii* (*The Critique of Criticism*)⁴⁸ and *Direcția "Contemporanului"* (*The Direction of "Contemporanul"*)⁴⁹. The first, considered a fundamental text in Romanian literary criticism, introduced "modern explanatory criticism" as a literary genre in itself as well as an independent analytical discipline with a particular methodology and vocabulary. The article addressed issues of literary classification,

⁴⁷ Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Eminescu," in *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 61-123.

⁴⁸ Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Asupra criticii," in *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 15-42.

⁴⁹ Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Direcțiunea Contemporanului," in *Opere complete*, vol. 7, 291-310.

specialized language, and the broader questions of literary criticism in general, including the relation between art and reality or artist, art and the public. It also set forth what would become a



Figure 3.4: Contemporary drawing of Gherea and his critical volumes ⁵⁰

famous questionnaire designed to aid the critic in the analysis of a literary work. Gherea argued that any critic should answer four fundamental questions: where does a literary work come from (referring to the social environment), what influence will it have (understood mostly in ethical terms), how certain and extended this influence will be, and what are the means through which the artistic creation “works” on the readers (including literary style and devices).⁵¹ While rigid and simplistic from the perspective of future generations, Gherea’s questionnaire was nonetheless the first attempt to bring structure and method to a field that prior to his intervention operated without any rules. Romanian literary criticism before Gherea was represented at best by thoughtful commentaries (like Maiorescu’s) or impressions of given texts. Literary critiques varied widely in content, structure and length and readers had no way of predicting whether they

⁵⁰ Source: I. C. Atanasiu, *Mișcarea socialistă, 1881-1900*, 61.

⁵¹ Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Asupra criticii,” 35.

would address a work's message, plot, characters, style, language, or none of these questions for that matter. The socialist writer's innovation, however problematic, was therefore a welcome step towards the professionalization of Romanian literary criticism. The second important article published in 1887 was designed as a reply to commentators who had accused *Contemporanul*, and implicitly Gherea, of lack of "direction" and inconsistency between the standards and ideals promoted by his criticism and the literature actually published in the journal. To readers who wanted to see a decidedly more 'social' and even socialist content, he replied elegantly and somewhat evasively that *Contemporanul* had never intended to start a new "direction" as such, although one can still be discerned from the style and content of the journal at large, if not from individual publications. Moreover, the "intelligent" public surely did not need any obvious condemnations of social and economic conditions but could infer them from more subtle works which may not at first sight belong in a journal led by socialists.⁵²

While Gherea's remarks may not have assuaged the concerns of young radicals, they consolidated the appeal of his writings to the much larger segment of the audience that was opposed or indifferent to socialism. To many high-school and university students, teachers, journalists and aspiring writers, here was a knowledgeable and intelligent critic who happened to be socialist but who was not forcing his beliefs on anyone, making instead reasonable points about literature and society. It also helped that Maiorescu, who was expected to pick up the glove and counter this first serious contender for the place of first critic of the nation, delegated the task to younger and less experienced Junimists, and replied personally only in 1893, almost six years after Gherea published the article directed at him and after the publication of Gherea's first two volumes of critical studies. From the point of view of the dynamics of the literary field, Maiorescu's action was perfectly rational. As Bourdieu notes, "polemics imply a form of

⁵² Ibid., 302.

recognition; adversaries whom one would prefer to destroy by ignoring them cannot be combated without consecrating them, thus helping to produce the recognition they sought to prevent.”⁵³ Maiorescu, however, failed to recognize the changes already affecting the literary field and underestimated the prestige Gherea was already enjoying. Moreover, the Junimist leader did not actually engage in the discussion but simply restated his traditional views, dismissing Gherea as an uncultured amateur “unused with the rigor of argument” who should consequently “leave aside matters that are beyond” him.⁵⁴ If anything, this halfhearted attempt only served to reinforce Gherea’s position, as the article clearly lacked an adequate, substantial answer to the issues raised by the socialist’s by then respectable body of work. In the same year, a letter from his disciple Mihail Dragomirescu, who would himself become a well-known critic and philosopher, enlightened Maiorescu about his rival’s reach:

Perhaps I seem obsessed but that Gherea follows me everywhere. Throughout the train ride, while I read *Literatură și știință* [Literature and Science, Gherea’s new journal], I was out of breath with indignation...But this indignation reached a climax when I realized that this ignorant falsifier has among his most faithful partisans the brightest students that I met here!⁵⁵

Dragomirescu was right. Gherea had become a public figure to whom young people, students, journalists and wannabe writers, looked up. And despite the occasional attacks or incredulity that his literary presence still elicited, his reputation was in fact firmly established. Whether the Junimists agreed or not, there was little doubt at the time that Romania had discovered its second great literary critic.

⁵³ Bourdieu, 42.

⁵⁴ Maiorescu, “Asupra personalitatii si impersonalitatii poetului,” *Convorbiri literare*, No. 15, 1890.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Z. Ornea, *Titu Maiorescu și prima generație de maiorescieni* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1978), 96.

(Literary) Journals, Markets and Publics

Also playing a role in Gherea's ascendance was a newly emerging, fragile but noticeable literary marketplace. The term "literary marketplace" usually refers to the distinct socio-economic conditions that started to characterize the production and distribution of literature in Western Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and enabled writers to support themselves financially without resorting to their own wealth or the backing of wealthy patrons.⁵⁶ The ideal-type literary marketplace of "real money paid to real writers by real readers"⁵⁷ implies a very complex network of writers, editors, publishers, printers, distributors, booksellers, libraries and a multilayered reading public. As Melissa Frazier points out, even in Western Europe, before becoming a reality that is difficult to measure anyway, the literary marketplace first gained currency as an imaginary concept. In less socially and economically developed Russia of the mid-nineteenth century, she claims, the perception of a booming literary marketplace was more significant to participants in this market than the actual quantitative assessment that may question its existence. I argue that this was the case in late nineteenth century Romania as well. While meager compared to Western ones, circulation figures signal a sharp increase from previous decades, and socialist publications were highly successful compared to other journals. As noted in Chapter One, not by chance did the socialist movement include a high number of professional journalists, the first generation to make a living exclusively out of journalism. In this period, newspapers, especially those on the center-left, like the daily *Adevărul*, began to remunerate poets, novelists and literary critics as well, and socialist literary and scientific journals were among the first to make a profit, even if they too still occasionally required the sponsorship of wealthy supporters. In any case, the times of hundreds

⁵⁶ Melissa Frazier, *Romantic Encounters: Writers, Readers and the Library for Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 16.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

of unsold copies abandoned in the basement, the nightmare of any literary entrepreneur, were gone.

Naturally the main challenge in the way of the development of a Western-style literary marketplace was Romania's very low literacy rate. In spite of legislation making primary education mandatory as early as 1864 (six years before Britain, as Alex Drace-Francis points out⁵⁸), political conflicts, inconsistent funding and inadequate staffing prevented this from becoming a reality, especially in rural areas, until sweeping educational reforms were undertaken in 1894. According to the 1899 census, only 17 percent of the population (42 percent in urban areas and close to 12 percent in rural areas), could read and write.⁵⁹ Corroborated with general population statistics,⁶⁰ these percentages yield a total of slightly over one million literate individuals in 1899.⁶¹ While precise statistics are not available, the figures for the mid-1880s are most likely at least fifty percent less.⁶² It is worth noting therefore, that in spite of overall low figures, the last two decades of the century also witnessed a sharp increase in the number of readers, in accordance with trends manifest throughout Europe. Socialist periodicals benefited from this relative boom in readership to a larger extent than other cultural journals.

For the period in question socialist cultural journals, especially *Contemporanul*, set records of distribution and readership. The very first issue of *Contemporanul* in 1881 appeared in 700 copies, and the number rose to 2000 within seven months. In 1883 the magazine had 3000 subscribers and a circulation of 4500 copies.⁶³ This press run is comparable to that of the

⁵⁸ Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity*, 148.

⁵⁹ *Buletinul statistic al României*, Series 2A, Year 4, Issue 1(1899), 27.

⁶⁰ Romania's total population, according to the 1899 census, was 5,912,590, out of which 1,114,508 was urban population (*Buletinul statistic*, 22).

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 1,024,087.

⁶² The 1899 census was the most complete to date. It also quotes a figure of 686,886 literate individuals for 1894, although the statistical bulletin for that year does not include this information. *Ibid*, 28.

⁶³ Al. Hanța, *Contemporanul 1881-1891: O revistă așa cum a fost* (Bucharest: Albatros, 1983), 34.

contemporary prestigious Russian literary journal *Northern Herald*, which of course catered to a much larger audience.⁶⁴ The numbers dwindled by the end of the decade and various internal conflicts and constraints led to very irregular publication patterns followed eventually by the journal's demise in 1891. Even at the height of uncertainty, however, the editor Ioan Nădejde boasted that, worse comes to worst, *Contemporanul* could rely "at any time on one thousand committed subscribers."⁶⁵

For a total literate population averaging at most half a million people during the lifetime of *Contemporanul*, a press run of 4500 copies is indeed very high, especially considering the journal's format. In Romania until the early 1880s even traditional daily newspapers had circulation numbers in the thousands (most often 5000), rather than tens or hundreds of thousands.⁶⁶ *Contemporanul*, however, was not a newspaper, but rather a hybrid between the 'thick' journals of the Russian tradition and the scientific popularizing magazines familiar to the European and American contemporary public. Initially a bimonthly publication of forty-eight pages, it soon became a monthly one of ninety-six. On the occasions when printing was delayed, and several issues were combined together, the journal easily exceeded two hundred pages. In spite of its commitment to accessibility, many articles were in fact academic and pretentious, undoubtedly bearing the mark of Ioan Nădejde's "dry, clumsy, hefty, triumphal and definitive erudition."⁶⁷ By comparison, the somewhat similar *Convorbiri literare*, Junimea's journal, while published constantly between 1866 and 1903, reached a maximum circulation of 800 copies.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ In 1889, *Northern Herald*, a publication with a considerably longer history, had 3,300 subscribers. Stanley J. Rabinowitz, "'Northern Herald': From Traditional Thick Journal to Forerunner of the Avant-garde," in *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, edited by Deborah A. Martinsen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 213.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 35.

⁶⁶ Marian Petcu, *Istoria jurnalismului și a publicității în România* (Iași: Polirom, 2007), This would change with the advent of *Universul*, the first true mass periodical in Romania, which first appeared in 1884 and, due to aggressive marketing strategies and inclusion of tabloid-like content, soon reached a press run of 80,000 copies, 58.

⁶⁷ Z. Ornea, *Curentul cultural de la Contemporanul* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1977), 40.

⁶⁸ Z. Ornea, *Junimea și junimismul*.

The popularity of a literary-scientific journal is especially significant given the almost complete lack of censorship of the press. From 1866 onwards, the mass media in Romania was among the freest in Europe, a fact well-known and acknowledged among revolutionaries of all kinds. As explained in the Introduction, political stability in prewar Romania was achieved by the ‘rotation’ in power of the Liberal and Conservative parties, a process initiated every four years by the designation of a prime-minister by the king, and then by the orchestrated election of a majority legislature from the same party. Given this restrictive and predictable political mechanism, the real political debate moved to the pages of the newspapers. Guaranteed by the Constitution of 1866, the freedom of the press was indeed respected, and this is where the real social, political and economic questions were brought to discussion. As historian Alin Ciupală noted, “the press, rather than the political parties, represented demagoguery in prewar Romania.”⁶⁹ The king himself took to the press, anonymously, when under attack, professing the incongruence between country’s backward social structure and its progressive laws.⁷⁰ Of course, the press enjoyed this kind of freedom also because, all controversies considered, it was largely harmless in the face of the strong executive and the solid political system in place. Still, this freedom meant that periodicals were very rarely censored and only temporarily closed down in case they depicted the royal family in extremely obscene language or very explicit pornographic imagery. There was no need or desire for subversive, and hence attractive, cultural journals, since almost any political idea could be expressed freely by other means, as the many political socialist newspapers attest.

⁶⁹ Alin Ciupală, interview available at <https://www.digi24.ro/special/campanii-digi24/coroana-de-otel/libertatea-presei-in-vremea-lui-carol-i-615265>, last accessed March 5, 2018.

⁷⁰ The episode took place in 1871, when the already high anti-monarchic and anti-German sentiment was enhanced by the entrance of the Prussian troops in Paris following a four months siege.

The status of the socialist journals featuring Gherea's work was enhanced by the considerable symbolic capital already associated with the profession of literary critic. As Irina Paperno argues in her study of nineteenth century Russian realism, the literary critic was the quintessential "new man" of the intellectual revival that took place in Russia in the 1860s. The literary critic was not only a writer, but also a popularizer of science and progress and a social activist. The rise of realism combined with the limited possibilities of direct social and political action, at least in the case of autocratic Russia, blurred the boundaries between literature and reality and allowed the literary critic to extend his expertise over society as a whole. A literary critic's verdicts and advice concerned not only literary works but also broader cultural, social and political questions.⁷¹ As Maiorescu's trajectory suggests, the Romanian society of the 1860s and 70s also displayed deep anxieties as a young, newly unified and modernizing state. Maiorescu's literary criticism, like that of his Russian predecessors, belonged to a broader cultural and societal one. While the Romanian political arena was surely more dynamic and, at least in theory, more democratic than the Russian one, the realm of literature and the arts was still the one more easily assessed, influenced and supposedly brought up to Western standards. By the time Gherea entered the scene the influence of the literary critic may have diluted, but not to the extent that a prominent literary critic was no longer automatically an important public figure. Gherea's social and economic preoccupations fit the typical profile of the critic, and the literary field itself was a busy one, with men of letters still arguing over the constitution of a national literary canon.

The quick expansion of *Contemporanul* can also be explained by the fame of an attractive and original rubric dedicated to exposing cases of plagiarism in the Romanian public space. At a time when the curriculum of many disciplines was just developing, it was not uncommon for so-

⁷¹ Irina Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 11.

called Romanian authors to appropriate foreign studies and offer them as original textbooks. *Contemporanul* judiciously compared, in two adjoining columns, representative selections of text from the source and the version published in Romania. To the delight of the readers, many plagiarizers were respectable teachers or university professors, whose exposure was a source of great embarrassment. It was even worse when the guilty ones were young writers or scientists pretending to offer original research that turned out to be just plagiarism from specialized journals in French or German. In the words of a contemporary writer, *Contemporanul* “was the most daring and incisive journal our country ever had, which flogged without mercy everything that was dishonest in science, literature and philosophy.”⁷² This almost infamous section of the journal was so fashionable that ironically other publications imitated the format and sought to uncover their own cases of plagiarism. However, very few other Romanian intellectuals could match the encyclopedic knowledge of the Nădejde brothers, themselves authors of textbooks for various sciences and languages, and the richness of the libraries of the socialist circles in Bucharest and Iași, whose members subscribed to many prestigious European journals. The socialists hence continued to be the main actors in the fight against plagiarism and *Contemporanul* the main source of high-culture scandal.

As entertaining as the plagiarism rubric was, alone it does not explain the high circulation of the journal. More likely, this clever marketing idea added to the already existing appeal of the paper’s scientific and literary profile. Even intellectuals who were never attracted to socialism or later left the political movement recall that they used to read *Contemporanul* “like a true

⁷² Leon, 30.

Geologia D-lui Ananescu

1871.

București.

Considerat în întregimea sa, globul terestru se poate divide în patru părți principale.

1-iū, partea centrală sau masa internă planetară, neaccesibilă observațiilor noastre, și asupra căreia nu putem face de cât hypothesă; a 2-a, Învălișul solid sau coaja minerală, care acopere masa internă; a 3-a, Învălișul liquid sau masa apelor, care acopere aproape $\frac{3}{4}$ din suprafața globului; și a 4-a învâlișul aeriform sau atmosfera, care încungioră pământului din toate părțile,.... (urmăză aproape două rinduri care lipsesc în ediția a 2-a a lui Delafosse).

Lământul are o formă steroidală și este izolat din toate părțile în spațiu (urmăză 15 rinduri care lipsesc din Delafosse).

Forma pământului este tocmai aceea ce ar lua o masă fluidă, suspensă fiind din toate părțile la presiuni egale și contrarii.

(pag. 16 și parte din 17).

Agenți interni.

Agenți interni înțelegem în sens invers de cei externi; aceștia au rezidența, sau focarul lor de activitate așezat de deasupra cojei minerale, în această parte a globului ce se numește *masa internă sau planetară*... (urmează 30 de rinduri traduse din cuvânt în cuvânt, apoi o față care seamănă bine cu cea din Delafosse fără să fie tradusă—poate că a avut altă ediție înse) (pag. 53–54).

GÉOLOGIE

din *Précis élémentaire d'histoire naturelle* par G. Delafosse neuvième édition Paris 1883.

Considéré dans son ensemble, le globe terrestre peut se diviser en quatre parties principales: 1^o la partie centrale, ou la *masse interne*; soustraite pour toujours à nos observations, et sur la nature de laquelle nous ne pouvons que former des conjectures plus ou moins probables; 2^o l'enveloppe solide, ou l'*écorce minérale*, qui recouvre immédiatement la masse interne; sorte de croûte oxydée, composée presque entièrement de substances pierreuses; 3^o l'enveloppe liquide, ou la masse de eaux qui couvre près de trois quarts de la superficie du globe; 4^o l'enveloppe aérienne ou l'atmosphère, qui entoure la précédente et embrasse le globe dans toute son étendue.

On sait que le globe terrestre a la forme d'un sphéroïde aplati vers les pôles et cette forme est précisément celle qu'il a dû prendre de lui-même s'il a été fluide à son origine. Pag. 564.

Agents intérieurs. Phénomènes volcanique. Ce sont les agents dont le siège ou le foyer d'activité est situé au dessous de l'écorce minérale, dans cette partie du globe que nous avons appelée la *masse interne*.

(Pag 581).

Figure 3.5: Typical Exposure of Plagiarism in *Contemporanul* ⁷³

⁷³ *Contemporanul*, No. 14 (1883), 550. PDF from www.Dacoromanica.ro, last accessed June 20, 2015.

Bible,”⁷⁴ as the first publication to satisfy the youth’s interest in science, atheism and the latest literary debates and debuts.⁷⁵ The same people also confessed to devouring *Literatură și știință*, looking for the latest writings of “our Socrates,” Gherea.⁷⁶ The allure of the journal influenced its distribution too. From the beginning most socialist publications targeted an audience as broad as possible. Only the socialist dailies directly associated with the short-lived Romanian Workers’ Party actually identified themselves as mouthpieces of the working class and even those were still primarily written and read by the educated middle-class supporters of socialism. The cultural journals like *Contemporanul* and *Literatură și știință* or the supplement *Lumea nouă literară și artistică* (The Literary and Artistic New World) also eschewed political affiliations, to the point, as noted, where contributors were irritated by the journals’ apparent inconsistency.

Socialist journals thus opened themselves to many kinds of potential publics: the committed socialists, the fellow-travelers, the literates, the atheists, the students, and also many accidental readers. At the time, journals were rarely read only by subscribers and individual buyers. Instead, they were often shared among high-school and university students,⁷⁷ circles of friends and family, or simply due to being available in public spaces: cafés, salons, libraries or train stations. But, as Michael Warner points out, publics are also self-created and self-organized. The very idea of the public, Warner argues, is circular, because any discourse that occurs in public, however the term “public” is interpreted, is inevitably addressed to *a* public, but on the other hand this particular public cannot exist before being addressed.⁷⁸ If a public exists “*by virtue of being addressed*,”⁷⁹ and is “always in excess of its known social basis,” organizing

⁷⁴ Dafin, 21.

⁷⁵ Herovanu, 72.

⁷⁶ Kirițescu, 70; Gorovei, 12.

⁷⁷ Herovanu, 72; N. Leon, *Amintiri* vol. I, 54.

⁷⁸ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 67.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

itself as “a relation among strangers,”⁸⁰ then it is appropriate to say that socialist journals created a public of their own, the public of *Contemporanul* and other magazines, identified not by ideological affiliations but by the simple act of relating itself in some way or another to the journals. While readers were the primary category of this public, it must have also included individuals who had a second-hand knowledge of the printed material, through reviews and polemics published in other newspapers, hearsay or plain gossip.

How likely is it for a literary or cultural public to be converted into a political one and what are the mechanisms through which this can take place? Warner argues that a public’s closeness to politics depends on its degree of “punctuality” and “periodicity.” The more recurring and predictable a public becomes, and the longer the conversation in which it engages, the more likely it is for that public to become political or politicized. This is why, in Warner’s view, an ordinary academic book, which thus addresses the public once, is less likely to generate a political public than newspapers which engage with the public daily. From this perspective, the public of socialist journals that appeared more or less regularly for almost two decades and occasionally engaged in absorbing debates with rival groups fits the parameters of a potentially political public. It is impossible to measure the actual extent to which this public would have become politically active had the prewar socialist movement been more dynamic and more extensive. However, for the broadly defined category of “socialist intellectual” introduced in Chapter One, it is reasonable to argue that literary and scientific journals were instrumental in expanding the pool of socialist sympathizers and enhanced the socialist presence in the Romanian public space.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 74.

Socialist Literary Criticism

Regardless of the many-layered context in which it emerged, this socialist presence owed much to Gherea's popularity, which in turn cannot be dissociated from the decidedly Marxist content of his writings. Gherea's literary criticism had been the subject of specialized monographs⁸¹ and therefore only a brief overview will be provided here. His approach can be broadly subsumed under what came to be known as "reflection theories." Specific to early Marxist literary criticism in general, reflection theories argue that a work of art does or, in more programmatic terms, should, "reflect" or mirror the real social conditions in which it was produced. Like most intellectuals of his generation, Gherea had been profoundly influenced by French positivist critics like Hypollite Taine, Ferdinand Brunetière and Charles Saint-Beuve. From them, he borrowed the understanding of literature as a "social document,"⁸² determined by and reflecting the environment in which it was produced. Unlike Taine, who famously inquired into the "race, milieu and moment"⁸³ of the genesis of a literary work, or Sainte-Beuve, who emphasized the crucial importance of the artist's personal biography, Gherea looked at Marxist relations of production as the key to unlocking the meaning of a work of art and explain its origins.

As Engels explained in a letter written in 1890 which was only published much later, a Marxist understanding of literature as part of the 'superstructure' does not mean that "the economic element is the *only* determining one,"⁸⁴ or that literature merely passively reflects the socio-economic 'base.' Instead, as Marx himself suggested in the *Grundrisse*, also unavailable until later, the relationship between base and superstructure was a highly complex and

⁸¹ Terian-Dan; Z. Ornea, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*; Ion Plămădeală, *Un model românesc de "critică științifică" în context european: C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea* (Chișinău: Academia de Științe a Republicii Moldova, Institutul de Istorie și Teorie Literară, 1996).

⁸² Plamadeala, 47.

⁸³ Rene Welleck, "Hyppolite Taine's Literary Theory and Criticism," *Criticism* vol.1, no.1 (Winter 1959): 1-18.

⁸⁴ F. Engels quoted in Terry Eagleton, *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2002), 8.

asymmetrical one, which allowed, for example, for great works of art to be produced in times of severe exploitation and inequality.⁸⁵ A Marxist reading allows the analysis of a literary work as a “conjuncture,”⁸⁶ in Terry Eagleton’s words, of the various elements that went into its production, from the cultural and psychological factors delineated by Taine and Sainte-Beuve to questions of form and style, all of which can ultimately be related to a specific mode of production.

Unaware at the time of the founding fathers’ understanding of literature, Gherea would have nevertheless agreed with this interpretation, and gone even further, into what himself dismissed as the realm of ‘metaphysical’ rather than ‘scientific’ criticism. While Gherea shared the premise, not yet consecrated at the time, that all literary texts reflect the economic conditions of their production, he insisted that the process of reflection itself was individual and subjective and must be analyzed on its own terms.⁸⁷ A literary critic should assess the “aesthetic” dimension of a work, which in Gherea’s view belonged to the field of “general psychology,” followed by the “personal” dimension, which was specific to the individual artist, and finally the social aspect, by which he meant the causal relationship between the literary work and the social environment. Socio-economic conditions influence the first two dimensions too, but the critic could not conclude in what way and to what extent until he had performed a rigorous analysis that required “vast literary, historical and economic knowledge, analytical abilities and, unmistakably, also artistic intuition, without which most knowledge is insufficient.”⁸⁸ Critics could, and indeed should, use increasingly scientific methods to analyze a literary work. But literary criticism would never be wholly scientific, since it lacked the “fixed, geometric laws” of science. Taste and erudition would continue to serve the critic more than science and, in this

⁸⁵ Marx, *Grundrisse*, quoted in Eagleton, 11-13.

⁸⁶ Eagleton, 15.

⁸⁷ Ornea, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 43.

⁸⁸ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Materialismul economic și literatura,” *Opere complete*, vol. 7, 444-448.

sense, literary criticism required no less talent than literature itself.⁸⁹ In any case, a sociological approach was not a universal tool that would automatically reveal all the complex details of any literary text, and a mechanical application would only turn Marxism into a “dead formula.”⁹⁰

This emphasis is necessary because many positivist and determinist critics of the time were prone to overlook the very specificity of art. All things considered, in the Romanian socialist’s view, good art was still set apart from bad art by its aesthetic value and the sensibility and emotion that it inspired in readers, rather than the fidelity by which it mirrored reality. According to Gherea, the condition of great literature was the combination of great talent, genius even, and elevated social ideals.⁹¹ Although both are indispensable for great art, the absence of social ideals was preferable to that of creative talent. This concession to traditional taste and sensibility brought him closer to his contemporary readers and further away from the rigorous norms of future socialist criticism. The social ideals he endorsed were no less universal:

But what are these social ideals other than ideal aspirations of “better” in the social sense, hopes of human love, sympathy, the rule of fraternal feelings and institutions between people, of social justice? And all these are nothing but the fabric of poetry itself⁹²

A product of the social environment, art becomes a “social force” in itself and correspondingly impacts the environment that generated it. A writer with “elevated social ideals” is one who is aware of his moral duty to arouse feelings of compassion, indignation and hope, and who consciously undertakes the task of creating a more just world.⁹³

This perspective colored Gherea’s interpretation of realism and naturalism, both favorite trends and subjects of late nineteenth century literary critics. Rather than imitating reality,

⁸⁹ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Asupra criticii,” *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 37.

⁹⁰ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Materialismul economic și literatură”; Terian, 68.

⁹¹ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Idealurile sociale și arta,” *Opere complete*, vol. 7, 329.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 332.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

Gherea argued again, art processes it through an ideological filter, and can only “reproduce” it within its conventional limits of representation. At its best, realism reflects truthfully and esthetically human types and ideals that provoke and inspire:

Realism in literature, if we are to understand the word *ad litteram*, is a description of how things are in reality. This explanation, however, brings forth the question: “What should be described and how?” A novelist from Zola’s school is capable of describing in dozens of pages a chimney that smokes. No doubt, the fact is real, but what does this reality serve, how is it of any interest to us?...We’re wasting our time reading this nonsense!⁹⁴

If the realism of Balzac and Turgenev presents the “man,” the naturalism of Zola brings out the “beast.” Punctilious anatomic descriptions may be appropriate for physiology but hardly for literature. In spite of the obvious talent of authors like Zola, their work remains a distortion of realism, unable to elicit emotion and ‘serve’ a higher purpose. While this interpretation is undoubtedly utilitarian, the distinction between realism and naturalism, not yet entrenched at the time, and the condemnation of naturalism, recall later Marxist critical insights. Like Gherea, Georg Lukács would also argue that naturalism, similar to photography, captures only superficial images of the society and fails to acknowledge their depth, turning actual “representative” types into simple, clinical portrayals of “averages.”⁹⁵

Realism also illustrated the important differences between “art with a thesis” and “art with a tendency.” In the 1880s and 1890s Gherea and his disciples were engaged in the decade-long polemic with Maiorescu and the Junimists over “art for art’s sake” versus “art with a thesis.” This Romanian counterpart of a nineteenth century European-wide debate over the autonomy of art took a graceful turn with Gherea’s introduction of “art with a tendency,” understood in Hegelian terms as a “scientific conception that negates both previous ideas in a

⁹⁴ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “*Generatia nouă de Turgheniev*,” *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 381.

⁹⁵ Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969), chapter on “The Historical Novel and the Crisis of Bourgeois Realism.” Also, Eagleton, 28-29.

superior synthesis.”⁹⁶ “Art with a tendency” preserved the autonomy of art but argued, in a way that reminds of future Marxist critics’ assessment of the role of ideology, that any work of art inevitably reflected and was mediated by the circumstances of the social environment that generated it:

If an artistic creation is a result of the influence of the natural and social environment, if the artist gives us what the natural and social environment have put in him, his creation will express the tendencies of his surrounding environment; the artistic creation will express, in one way or another, the tendencies of the epoch and society in which he lives. Art without tendency, therefore, cannot even exist.⁹⁷

“Art with a tendency” is best exemplified by realist novels, commonly known as the quintessential product of bourgeois society. “Art with a thesis,” by contrast, is nothing more than writing ‘by request’ or ‘by prescription,’ mere propaganda in favor of ready-made ideas, most often nationalistic. Here Gherea was less rigid than his most important disciples. Raicu Ionescu-Rion,⁹⁸ a fiercely dogmatic socialist critic, and Garabet Ibrăileanu, the future *poporanist* cultural leader, were vocal advocates of a ‘socialist literature’ ideally written by and for the members of the working class themselves. This failed to materialize at the time because of the relatively low number of committed ‘proletarian’ writers and in many cases the inverse proportionality between their talent and dedication to the socialist cause.

Socialist attempts at emulating realist prose were mediocre and often turned out to be the kind of “art with a thesis” that Gherea expressly warned against. But Constantin Mille, Sofia Nădejde, Ștefan Bassarabeanu and others were too eager to evoke the greed, cruelty, and inhumanity of landlords and factory owners, as opposed to the misery, despair and depravation

⁹⁶ “Gherea despre ‘Arta tendențioasă,’” *Opere complete*, vol. 7, 384.

⁹⁷ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Tendenționismul și tezismul în artă,” *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 197.

⁹⁸ See his collected articles in Raicu Ionescu-Rion, *Arta revoluționară: Scrieri de critică literară și social-politice* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1972).

of workers' lives, to worry about subtlety.⁹⁹ Mirroring the constant dilemma of a socialist movement that operated in the absence of a sizeable industrial working class, many works instead addressed the village and the poverty of the "agrarian proletariat," as Romanian socialists euphemistically referred to the majority peasant population. Understandably this emphasis eased the transition of some authors to *poporanism*, which shared socialism's concern with social justice (and literary socialism's concern with the reflection of social realities) but focused exclusively on the peasantry.

Romanian socialism also had its share of "proletarian poets."¹⁰⁰ Usually they were young, poor and in ill health, and their early death served to further romanticize them. Only two celebrated poets of the proletariat, Theodor Neculuță and Ioan Păun-Pincio, were actually workers, and their modest oeuvre was often reprinted in the party's newspapers at anniversaries and special events.¹⁰¹ Of the two, Neculuță's work was decidedly socialist and revolutionary in nature, allowing for his appropriation by the communist regime. His volume of poetry *Spre țărmul dreptății* (Towards the Shore of Justice) was published several times both before and after 1945 as he was officially coined the nation's "first poet-worker" and posthumously granted membership in the Romanian Academy.¹⁰² As for Păun-Pincio, he was an unrelenting idealist, whose humanitarian values brought him close to militant socialists, although his understanding of and interest in the political doctrine were probably shaky at best. This did not prevent his fellow socialists from discovering, perhaps accurately, radical insights in his poetry, and

⁹⁹ See the following volumes of collected works: Constantin Mille, *Scrieri alese* (Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1961), Sofia Nădejde, *Scrieri* (Iași: Junimea, 1978).

¹⁰⁰ Adapted from Mark Steinberg, *Proletarian Imagination: Self, Modernity and the Sacred in Russia, 1910-1925* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

¹⁰¹ *Facla*, no. 32, 1910.

¹⁰² Theodor Neculuță, *Spre țărmul dreptății* (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1959), 12.

fantasizing about the work he could have accomplished had he not died at the age of twenty-six.¹⁰³

More problematic was the reevaluation of two other socialist sympathizers, Traian Demetrescu and Ștefan Petică, whose works ignited fierce controversy as soon as they were published. Traian Demetrescu was a talented poet, short-story writer, journalist and even literary critic active in socialist circles and publications from the mid-1880s until his death in 1896. Demetrescu was one of Gherea's most discerning admirers, who appreciated the socialist leader's logic, sensitivity and considerable erudition. Demetrescu thought that Gherea's studies inaugurated a new era in literary criticism but also noted the new approach's potential for over-determinism and, especially in the hands of others, insufficient attention to the aesthetic dimension of a literary work.¹⁰⁴ Ironically, these very excesses, although not coming from Gherea himself, would taint the reception of *Intim* (Intimate), his first volume of "poetry in prose." Traian Demetrescu's work, retrospectively labeled as pre-symbolist, irritated young socialist critics by its emphasis on allegedly irrelevant topics like solitude, introspection and romantic love. Momentarily forgetting that this was the common material of most poets whom they admired, including of course Eminescu, the socialists rallied against "Tradem" (Demetrescu's nickname and pseudonym) with unusual viciousness. Ionescu-Rion accused him of "trading in" an "immoral art," that focused selfishly on superficial personal emotions while ignoring "the less ethereal, less poetic, but more brutal and more painful, nostalgias of those around him."¹⁰⁵ Ibrăileanu characterized the volume as "the honest and naked proof of the whole filth crammed in the soul of our educated class and our bourgeoisie in general."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Socialist newspapers usually published this type of articles on the anniversaries of his death.

¹⁰⁴ Traian Demetrescu, "Ion Gherea," in *Profile literare* (Craiova, 1891), 10-20.

¹⁰⁵ Raicu Ionescu-Rion, "Intim," in *Artă revoluționară: Scrieri de critică literară și social-politice*, 3-8.

¹⁰⁶ G. Ibrăileanu quoted in Alexandru Melian, *Traian Demetrescu* (Craiova: Scrisul românesc, 1983), 54.

The crushing verdict of the movement's critical avant-garde did not deter Tradem's popularity among less dogmatic socialists. At least several comrades publicly disavowed the critiques published in socialist journals and expressed their support. Tradem's "sensitive" writings also appealed to many young supporters, and his imagined persona, as a typical proletarian artist ultimately defeated by oppressive social mechanisms, was even more fascinating than his work. That Demetrescu may not have in fact belonged, either by origin or by inclination, to the proletariat, did little to detract from this fantasy:

We loved Traian Demetrescu because we imagined him, we wanted him to be the 'poor and skeptical child of the proletarian plebe.' Some confused information [...] questioned this obligatory social origin that we bestowed on our poet. But such trifles did not stop us...Traian Demetrescu was the socialist poet of our generation. We saw him on the same ideal platform of generous demands and humanitarian doctrine as the end-of-the- century leaders of Romanian socialism. He wrote in the newspapers that asked for justice for the wronged, bread for the hungry, sun and freedom for the convicts of the social prison.¹⁰⁷

While Gherea himself did not join the chorus of outraged socialist critics, he did find Traian Demetrescu emblematic for the condition of the "cultured proletarian artist," to which he dedicated several studies. In Gherea's view, the bourgeois social organization was responsible for the disconnection between proletarian artists and their surroundings. Traian Demetrescu may have had a "weak and susceptible" personality to begin with, but the fierce competitiveness, inhumanity, lack of recognition, and ensuing poverty and insecurity that characterized the life of a poor artist in a capitalist society turned these innate traits into isolationism, selfishness and fatalism.¹⁰⁸ The condition of the working-class writers in peripheral countries like Romania was worse than that of artists in countries with a more extended bourgeois and capitalist tradition. In Romania the swift transition to capitalism skipped intermediary historical stages and uprooted

¹⁰⁷ Galaction, 146.

¹⁰⁸ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Artiștii proletari culți," in *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 67.

individuals from their traditional social and religious communities and beliefs thus intensifying their disorientation. The fate of proletarian artists was also a symptom of a broader “overproduction of intellectuals,” which Gherea ascribed to the combination of free education and insufficient jobs and could only be remedied by a radical change of the economic system.¹⁰⁹

The other emblematic “modern proletarian intellectual”¹¹⁰ of the socialist movement was Ștefan Petică, a talented and ambitious socialist militant and symbolist poet also sunk in poverty, cynicism and despair. Unlike Demetrescu, Petică was a passionate socialist activist and speaker, founder of the workers’ movement in the port of Brăila and tireless promoter of socialist clubs in the villages, a project that even got him arrested and detained for a short time. A voracious and eclectic reader, Petică was one of the few socialists who engaged seriously with socialist theory and even left an extended study in political economy in manuscript.¹¹¹ But Petică’s eccentric and megalomaniac personality fit poorly within socialist circles and his enthusiasm waned after the dissolution of the first socialist party in 1899. His transition to symbolism, while denounced by some fellow socialists at the time, was not unusual among socialist sympathizers. As the interwar literary critic George Călinescu argued, Romanian symbolism brought together the “consumptive proletarian socialists” with those writers “aristocratic at least in their souls”¹¹² in a common opposition against middle-class values. While young socialist critics like Ionescu-Rion, Ibrăileanu, Henric Sanielevici, and Izabela Sadoveanu rallied against symbolism and decadence in the manner typical of many Marxist analysts, Gherea himself was more sympathetic noting the genetic connections between the new trends and romanticism and realism while also pointing out

¹⁰⁹ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Supraproducția intelectualilor,” in *Opere complete*, vol. 3, 260.

¹¹⁰ Constatin Graur, *Cați-va inși* (Bucharest: Adeverul S.A.), 41.

¹¹¹ Ștefan Petică, *Scrieri* 2 vols. (Bucharest: Minerva, 1970-1974).

¹¹² Călinescu quoted in Zina Molcuț, *Ștefan Petică și vremea sa* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1980), 86.

that criticism was legitimate as long as symbolism produced non-entities but became futile once it gave rise to real artistic talents like Verlaine.¹¹³

Romanian Socialism and the National Literary Canon

As a specifically Marxist literary critic Gherea enjoyed little recognition during his lifetime and after. His contemporary Romanian socialist colleagues, while enthusiastic, were not familiar enough with either literary criticism or socialist thought to be able to locate Gherea within a broader European cultural landscape. Gherea himself was probably among the very few who could adequately assess the importance of his intervention and he more often deplored the condition of writers from small countries and small literatures rather than actively oversee the translation and distribution of his works in other languages. In an 1894 response to a letter from Karl Kautsky, who solicited articles for *Die Neue Zeit*, Gherea replied that, apart from an article on pessimism published in French in *Revue de sociologie internationale*, his articles on literature have been mostly written in Romanian, about Romanian writers and for a Romanian audience, and hence unlikely to be of interest to the German public. Leaving modesty aside though, he did offer the article in French as a sample of his “more general” works, emphasizing the novelty of his approach:

I am aware of the fact that my articles have many limitations. I was, however, among the first to apply the materialist conception of history to literary criticism; almost all my articles have been published a couple of years before Mehring's excellent book.¹¹⁴

This feeble attempt at gaining recognition was not successful. Mehring's “excellent book,” in fact a collection of articles on Lessing published in 1893, is generally acknowledged as a

¹¹³ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Tendințele literaturii franceze actuale,” *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 421.

¹¹⁴ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea to Karl Kautsky, December 5, 1894, in *Opere complete*, vol. 8, 118.

pioneering work in Marxist criticism¹¹⁵, followed closely by the more famous writings of the Russian critic Georgi Plekhanov in the late 1890s. On the other hand, Georges Haupt's article from a 1967 edition of the journal *Le Mouvement Social* remains the only Western work to acknowledge Gherea's contribution to literary criticism and theory.¹¹⁶

Less predictably, Gherea did not have an illustrious posthumous career in Romania either. Always postponed during his lifetime, a second edition of his critical studies was only published, successfully, in 1925. While Gherea's work continued to elicit interest, the interwar period witnessed the rise of many diverse literary trends and figures that took center stage. Included among them were Romania's first professional literary historians who, as it happens, were not particularly sympathetic to Gherea and oversimplified his approach.¹¹⁷ On the other hand, scholars of the early communist period could not afford to dwell at length on the legacy of a socialist who condemned the Russian Revolution of 1917 and was quickly labeled a 'menshevik.' Only with the national turn in Romanian communism in the 1970s did Gherea enjoy more visibility, with the publication of his complete works and several monographs about his life and writings. The rehabilitation, however, was always cautious, as Gherea was still in many ways too 'foreign' to be appropriated safely by a nationalist regime. This is why scholars usually avoided comparisons with foreign critics, with the important exception of Z. Ornea, who noted several times that Gherea predated other Marxist critics by "insisting on the relative autonomy of art, as well as rejecting rigid socio-historical determinism, in ways that bring him closer to Lukács than to his contemporaries Mehring or Plekhanov."¹¹⁸ Post-communist literary

¹¹⁵ For a discussion of Mehring's work see Peter Demetz, *Marx, Engels and the Poets: Origins of Marxist Literary Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 179-189.

¹¹⁶ See Haupt's article. Haupt, a prominent French Marxist, was himself of Romanian origin.

¹¹⁷ See for example George Călinescu, author of a monumental history of Romanian literature, who was clearly biased against Gherea.

¹¹⁸ Ornea, *Opera lui Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 46.

historians, in turn, while reopening the debate about Gherea's place in the evolution of Romanian criticism, are less interested in situating him in a Marxist canon.¹¹⁹

While the desire of Romanian specialists like Z. Ornea to give Gherea credit for his critical contribution is understandable, the question of socialist literary "firsts" is a less fruitful one for an inquiry which seeks to locate Gherea's impact primarily within the Romanian national context. Gherea's absence from histories and anthologies of Marxist literary criticism is indeed regrettable and deserves correction. Most of his contemporaries, however, cared little about whether he was a Marxist literary pioneer or not. In the context of turn-of-the-century Romania the socialist leader achieved notoriety in spite of his ideological tenets, not because of them. Even if chronology did indeed matter, it would be difficult and ultimately unimportant to categorically establish Gherea as a "first" given the proximity between his and Mehring's and Plekhanov's publication dates. Gherea published his first studies in the 1880s but his three critical volumes appeared in 1891, 1892 and 1897. Mehring published his first book in 1893. Meanwhile, Plekhanov's *Essays on the History of Materialism* were published in 1892-3 and his more famous *The Development of the Monist View in History* appeared in 1895. Since most of these works were published at some point during the 1890s, in very different places, it makes less sense to establish which literary critic was 'first,' or even to attempt to determine who influenced whom, than to position them at a moment of intellectual confluence, when a series of relatable writings emerged almost simultaneously but still independently from each other. Also, as mentioned in the introduction, looking at Gherea as a "minor" figure can provide a valuable and otherwise inaccessible vantage point. In David Lloyd's formulation, "minor writers" inhabit a "negative critical position" which is antithetical to the "autonomous subjectivity" that characterizes the "politics of the canon," the "major writers and their literatures" which in this

¹¹⁹ See Terian and Plămădeală.

case can refer to both Western literature and the acknowledged Marxist literary canon from which Gherea is missing.¹²⁰ As Antoinette Burton points out, the location of the “minor” figure provides a unique viewpoint into the operations of dominant discourses and “allows us to view such operations not as cause/effect [...] but to recognize them as more diffuse and therefore vulnerable to appropriation, as in a kind of “scattered hegemony” (to borrow from Karen Caplan and Inderpal Grewal), than their own self-representations permit.”¹²¹ This is an important point for early Romanian socialism, a movement which is often dismissed for its apparent lack of influence, legacy or, more crudely, effect. While some influences are clearly identifiable, like that of Gherea and other socialist cultural critics on the following generation of *poporanist* intellectuals, as well as that of early socialist beliefs on future politicians of the Center-Left, it is worthwhile to remember that this legacy may also be diffuse, scattered and “vulnerable to appropriation,”¹²² and thus less quantifiable but nonetheless present.

Comparison to other Marxist critics is, however, relevant, to the extent to which it illustrates Gherea’s specific impact on the Romanian literary sphere. What Gherea himself considered a handicap, the fact that many of his works focused on Romanian writers, proved an advantage on his home turf. While he was undoubtedly right that this made his writings less translatable, he underestimated the relevance that his studies will have for the Romanian public. In this sense Gherea proved, and remained, relevant, in the literary world, because he went beyond analyzing the works of already acknowledged writers and instead took risks by introducing, discussing and ultimately consecrating new authors that would become classics of Romanian literature. Among Marxist critics this is unusual. As stated previously, Gherea has

¹²⁰ David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

¹²¹ Antoinette Burton, *The Postcolonial Careers of Santha Rama Rau* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 24.

¹²² Ibid.

most often been compared to Mehring and Plekhanov, among his contemporaries, and Georg Lukács and Lucien Goldmann more generally. The latter in particular is a French philosopher and sociologist of literature less known to the Anglo-American public who was born in Bucharest, Romania, in a Jewish family in 1913 and emigrated to France at some point during the 1930s. While his biographer refrains from making a connection between Goldmann and Gherea apart from the obvious one between a young aspiring socialist and the most respected Romanian socialist intellectual figure, it is very likely that Goldmann was familiar with, and perhaps to some extent also influenced by, Gherea's writings.¹²³

With the exception of Plekhanov, the other three Marxist critics most often connected with Gherea focused almost exclusively on already famous literary figures. While Mehring looked at Lessing and other German authors, the more influential Lukács notoriously "kept his eyes resolutely on the past,"¹²⁴ on the acclaimed novelists and poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth century European literary tradition. Lukács was openly dismissive of contemporary writers and inhabited instead a literary world populated by giants like Goethe and Heine, Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert or, most interestingly, Sir Walter Scott, around whose historical novels he centered some of his most original criticism. Lukács' evident traditionalism attracted substantial criticism. "To confine one's wholehearted critical support to a dozen classics," one reviewer noted, "is a form of intellectual evasion."¹²⁵ If Lukács concentrated on classics of Western literature, Lucien Goldmann, although writing later, restricted his focus even further by ignoring the Anglo-American world altogether and addressing what he considered "forms that constitute great Western literature," by which he meant primarily

¹²³ Mitchell Cohen, *The Wager of Lucien Goldmann: Tragedy, Dialectics and a Hidden God* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 16-17.

¹²⁴ "The Mirror of Reality," *The Times Literary Supplement*, no. 2538, September 22, 1950, 589.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

French and German authors. Goldmann unabashedly valued only “works that have lasted beyond the period in which they were created and have been recognized by posterity as the greatest works of culture.”¹²⁶ In his view, only the great writers, endowed with superior sensibility, language and artistic skills, could most accurately express the “world views” or mental structures of the social groups of their time. Furthermore, only works of genius possess the internal coherence, or totality, that reflects the universal human condition, thus making them relevant across ages. Goldmann’s critics legitimately pointed out the inherent problems in this approach, like the question of the representativeness of these great authors, or the conflict between the determinism of reflection theory and the Kantian or even Platonic aesthetics of the totality of human condition. More importantly, however, in choosing to reexamine literary classics, both Lukács and Goldmann accepted a ready-made canon, without actually inquiring into the conflicts and negotiations, between ideologies, cultural and artistic trends, and social and political groups, that shaped the respective canon.¹²⁷ They may have provided important new interpretations of well-known texts and authors, but they did not declare the value of new or obscure writers or question the importance of established ones. In short, they did not contribute to the making of a canon, national or otherwise, and consequently their critical works are easily compartmentalized within the already existing sizeable exegeses of prominent authors.

Unlike these other Marxist literary critics, Gherea made a name for himself by intervening in debates about contemporary Romanian writers and actively shaping the Romanian literary canon. Having discovered and promoted future literary classics made him less easily forgettable in spite of succeeding political and cultural regimes antithetical to his

¹²⁶ Robert Sayre, “Lucien Goldmann and the Sociology of Culture,” in *Praxis* vol. 1, no. 2 (Winter, 1976), 139.

¹²⁷ See John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

views. His was the first substantial study on Eminescu and his, as well, was the discovery and promotion of George Coșbuc, a classic nineteenth century poet still known by the label coined by Gherea, “the poet of the peasantry.”¹²⁸ This study perhaps more than any other firmly established Gherea as *the* literary critic of the time, irrespective of his ideological orientation. It was also indicative of the variety of opinion within the socialist ranks. The popular journalist Anton Bacalbașa, known for his fierce defense of “art with a tendency,” initially denigrated Coșbuc’s work but later revised his views in the face of Gherea’s persuasive study and the overwhelming support it prompted.¹²⁹ The “Poet of the Peasantry” was welcomed enthusiastically by the Romanian literary community. Gala Galaction notes that “at its time, Gherea’s study on Coșbuc was a godsend.”¹³⁰ Caragiale is remembered saying that “Gherea is indeed a great talent who brings, with his articles, a lot of light. His latest volume and especially his study on Coșbuc gave me a great intellectual satisfaction.”¹³¹ Contemporaries were also quick to note the Junimists’ silence on the subject. Vlahuță wondered why no “good and honest page about the poet Coșbuc” made its way in *Convorbiri literare*, among the “pitiful” articles of junior Junimists who “had been deluding themselves for the last two years or so that they had finished Gherea off.”¹³² Of course, in promoting new names, Gherea supported not only them, but also himself. According to Bourdieu,

Every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it ... and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. All critics declare not only their judgment of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art.¹³³

¹²⁸ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Poetul țăranimii,” in *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 169-264.

¹²⁹ Galaction, 142.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 18.

¹³¹ Caragiale quoted in Brănișteanu, 307.

¹³² Vlahuță, *Un an de luptă*, 68-69.

¹³³ Bourdieu, 20.

As a busy contributor to the Romanian literary sphere, Gherea took risks and occasionally made mistakes. He had high hopes for completely forgotten, minor artists like Ion Adam, or assessed negatively works which would stand the test of time, like the novels of Duiliu Zamfirescu. Such missteps are common enough in literary criticism and underscore the immediacy of his interventions. The literary environment of late nineteenth century Romania indeed favored debates on the construction of a national canon in ways in which interwar Hungary or postwar France did not. However, Gherea could have limited his writing to discussions of Balzac, Goethe or Dostoevsky but chose not to. His commitment to the contemporary Romanian literary sphere, coupled with an unusually flexible and nuanced understanding and application of socialist theory, explains the popularity Gherea enjoyed during his lifetime and his rare but eloquent posthumous reevaluation as an insightful and original Marxist thinker.

Conclusion

The early socialist movement in Romania made its real debut in the Romanian public sphere in the unusual form of literary criticism. In Romania of the second half of the nineteenth century literary criticism was not a marginal academic discipline, but a deeply relevant instrument of nation and state-building. Together with the emergence of a new country came the making of a national literary canon. At the same time, a literary critic's assessments went beyond literature. His work imparted not only literary advice, but indicated the country's broader cultural, social and political direction.

But the impact of the socialist literary venture cannot be explained simply by Gherea's automatic elevated status as newly recognized literary critic. An interplay of several factors led to the establishment of a socialist literary culture. The first was the state of the Romanian literary

field, which encouraged the rise of non-specialists and which, more than fifteen years after Maiorescu's breakthrough, was ready for another major critical contribution. The second contributing factor was the spectacular debut and quick surge in popularity of *Contemporanul* and by extension the socialist cultural project in general. The final and most important, however, was the complex and paradoxical figure and career of Gherea himself.

The socialist leader was a contradictory figure. A socialist thinker, he was also a capitalist employer. A foreigner with limited knowledge of Romanian, he set out to define the parameters of Romanian literature and literary criticism. An early Marxist critic, he contributed to the creation of a national literary canon. A keen advocate of social determinism, he upheld the value of aesthetics and applauded symbolism. He introduced method and rigor in the discipline of literary criticism, but his own works were often nuanced and shaped by artistic sensibility. It is no wonder that he attracted many supporters and, out of all socialists, was the one who had the fewest detractors. Gherea rarely fuelled conflicts and maintained civil and even friendly relations with most of his rivals, including Maiorescu and his young and virulent disciples, and later the *poporanists* Stere and Ibrăileanu. Traian Demetrescu, the "proletarian poet" discussed before, provided one of the most insightful explanation for Gherea's appeal: "Mr. Gherea remains a great social critic, a literary historian without comparison so far in our country. Apart from this, as everyone noticed, the critic's studies are characterized by an especially attractive subjectivity: they radiate a strong and charming atmosphere of humanitarianism, of friendly and auspicious optimism and, above all, a high morality, which will have a great influence upon our society."¹³⁴ All things considered, it was still the "sentiment" that appealed to both socialists and non-socialists and allowed for the emergence of a cultural community around Gherea's figure.

¹³⁴ Traian Demetrescu, "Ion Gherea," 20.

CHAPTER FOUR: SCIENCE FOR THE MASSES: SOCIALISM, POPULARIZATION OF SCIENCE AND SOCIAL MEDICINE

As busy as I was with courses, with laboratory work, and my own personal research, I never stopped writing articles of popularization as well. (Nicolae Leon)¹

For early Romanian socialists literature and science went hand in hand. This is readily apparent in the titles and subtitles of the main socialist cultural publications. *Contemporanul*, the most successful socialist journal, was subtitled “scientific and literary magazine” (“revistă literară și științifică”), and had two editors, each responsible for the respective part of the journal. The weekly cultural supplement of the daily newspaper *Lumea nouă* (The New World) was *Lumea nouă științifică și literară* (The New Scientific and Literary World). Gherea’s own short-lived ‘thick’ journal was simply titled *Literatură și știință* (Literature and Science). This association, apparently so obvious to nineteenth century socialists, is almost counterintuitive to today’s readers and requires, if not explanation, at least speculation. Without doubt, literature was instrumental for the public recognition of Romanian socialism, and it makes sense that it took center stage in socialist periodicals. It also explains the frequent imbalance in socialist journals, with literary content quite often overtaking the scientific one. Given Gherea’s rising reputation and visibility, it is also understandable that his works and the various reactions and debates that they provoked took up more space in socialist publications. However, it is worth remembering that the editors of *Contemporanul* chose the formula of a literary and scientific magazine before Gherea’s debut as a literary critic and apparently without prior knowledge of his intentions. Surely then there must have been something particularly appealing to socialists in Romania about this combination. Most likely this involved the potential social impact of both

¹ Leon, *Amintiri*, 244.

literature and science. As seen in Chapter Three, literature, in the socialist understanding, while a product of the social environment and the individual artistic sensibility, had the power to influence and shape the social environment in its turn. The social importance of science was clearer and did not require explanation:

I was always struck by the fact that the workers would rather have scientific articles than literature. Looking closer at this phenomenon I learned that they see literature as lies and fantasy not worth wasting their time. What do I stand to gain from a novel or a poem, they say? At least a scientific article educates me, I gain something, I feel I make progress, and thus I work with pleasure to comprehend it. (I. Nădejde)²

Romanian socialists were not the only advocates of science, although they were among the first and most vocal. They were definitely helped in their endeavor by the prestige and visibility of fellow socialists who were renowned scientists. Above all, what set socialist intellectuals apart from other science popularizers was the strong belief in the enlightening, liberating and democratizing potential of science. Socialist journals may have had rubrics about “zoological curiosities” or the latest scientific experiments and wonders. The focus, however, was not on these eccentricities, which could be found in other newspapers as well, but on the potential of science to educate the masses and improve their everyday lives. This chapter explores the two main areas of socialist scientific work: the general popularization of scientific knowledge and the various campaigns for public health and social medicine. In doing so, it argues that socialists placed a unique emphasis on the practical and utilitarian character of science, thus rendering it more accessible to the larger public and more relatable to the socialist ideology.

² Ioan Nădejde, “Muncitorii și literatura,” *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, no.5 (1895), my translation.

The Nineteenth Century “Epidemics of Popularization”³

The popularization of science undertaken by early Romanian socialists should be located along two axes. The first is the broader nineteenth century European surge in science popularization. The second is the commitment, common to early socialist movements in general, to promoting *both* science and its popularization. Science popularization as a noticeable phenomenon emerged in Western Europe in the 1840s and 50s and intensified towards the end of the century, with the 1880s and 90s arguably being the most remarkable decades. The beginning of the twentieth century, while retaining part of this interest, was also characterized by a growing distrust in science, combined with a renewed investment in religion as separate from and antithetical to scientific experiments and advances. Popularization of science came as a result of two main developments: the diversification and professionalization of the sciences and the expansion of literacy. In Western Europe in particular the success of science popularization owed much to the availability of cheap mass-produced serial collections on scientific subjects. In countries like France, for example, these series became so popular as to make their publication economically profitable. Well-known publishing houses like Hachette, Larousse or Flammarion turned the popularization of science into a successful business.⁴

There is no denial that popularization of science was very much part of the nineteenth century *Zeitgeist*. Science acted almost as a precondition of modernity. Whoever wanted to be modern had to be acquainted with scientific laws and modes of thought, especially those governing the natural sciences. As the French scientific writer Louis Figuier called out in 1867,

³ ³Kurt Bayertz, “Spreading the Spirit of Science: Social Determinants of the Popularization of Science in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” in *Expository Science: Forms and Functions of Popularization*, edited by Terry Shinn and Richard Whitley (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1985), 210.

⁴ Bernadette Bensaude-Vincent and Liz Libbrecht, “A Public for Science. The Rapid Growth of Popularization in Nineteenth Century France” *Réseaux* vol. 3, no. 1 (1995), 79.

“Science is a sun: everybody must move closer to it for warmth and enlightenment.”⁵ But the fashion of science, which led to what historian Kurt Bayertz termed the nineteenth century “epidemic of popularization,” also had to do with the attractive ways in which science was marketed. Journals for the popularization of science often included high-quality illustrations and engravings and were pleasurable physical objects in themselves. Science popularization placed emphasis on “amazing facts.”⁶ Reading about scientific advances satisfied a desire for adventure: faraway places, bizarre plants and animals, intriguing microscopic organisms, mysterious fossils, little-known astronomical facts. Science was interesting, for sure, and writers often emphasized the unusual, the exotic, and even the grotesque when describing scientific discoveries and experiments. They also did not shy away from sexually explicit imagery and description. For conservative or deeply religious individuals, science was also outrageous and almost forbidden, which only served to increase its appeal.

Who the popularizers were depended on the local context in which they operated. In France, which acted as a model for many European countries, the scientific popularizer emerged in opposition to the scientist. The popularizers were usually journalists, editors, teachers, doctors, occasionally clergy. Their numbers were inversely proportional to their visibility. A French encyclopedia for the period between 1850 and 1914 lists around thirty such figures, but because they were all extremely prolific writers their presence in the general press loomed much larger.⁷ They tended to rely more on each other’s expertise and cite other popular works rather than actual scientific writings. While most of them were not scientists or were no longer active in research, the French popularizers in general had had scientific training at the university level.

⁵ Ibid., 77.

⁶ Peter J. Bowler, *Science for All: The Popularization of Science in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 195.

⁷ Bensaude-Vincent and Libbrecht, 82.

Formal education gave them the right to enter the public scientific discourse and guaranteed their legitimacy. The opening of science to the public was still to a considerable extent controlled and censored by the French Academy, which had the monopoly to define legitimate science. While not a closed elitist circle, the academy nonetheless did not encourage amateurs, sometimes feared as nonconformist, but instead contributed to the professionalization of science.⁸ This was different from England, where popularization mainly began by way of promoting practical experiments and thus encouraging the emergence of the same category of scientific ‘amateurs’ that the French academy wanted contained.⁹ As the century wore on, however, the appearance of amateurs could no longer be controlled and the line that separated them from experts became increasingly blurry.

The German case is without doubt the most interesting both for the kind of popularization of science it prompted and its inherently political character. Several features distinguish the German space from the rest of Europe. Firstly, the German intellectual and academic environment had traditionally been dominated by philosophy and philology. A growing group of nineteenth century scientists turned to the popularization of science in order to not only disseminate their findings but raise the reputation of science and gather support for its practitioners. Public recognition influenced state funding and was necessary for the opening of academic jobs, chairs, laboratories and specialized journals.¹⁰ Secondly, given the primacy of philosophy in German thought, it was of course important that “since the Enlightenment there

⁸ Maurice Crosland, *Science under Control: The French Academy of Sciences, 1795-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁹ The key works on this phenomenon include Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin, *Leviathan and the Air Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); David Gooding, “In Nature’s School: Faraday as an Experimentalist,” in D. Gooding and F. James, eds., *Faraday Rediscovered: Essays on the Life and Work of Michael Faraday, 1791-1867* (New York: Stockton Press, 1985): 105-36; Jan Golinski, *Science as Public Culture: Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain, 1760-1820* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ See the chapter on Germany in Richard Olson, *Science and Scientism in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

had been a widespread conviction in Germany that the sciences were a powerful force for social progress, not only freeing the spirit of man from prejudices, but also useful for his material well-being.”¹¹ Initially, this took a universalist form in Alexander Humboldt’s belief that scientific knowledge would “purify and pacify the spirit.”¹² In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, scientists moved away from the philosophy of this first great science popularizer and instead came to contemplate the ideological functions of science. The professionalization of sciences in Germany occurred simultaneously with efforts to modernize and democratize the social and political systems of Prussia and other German states. This in turn led to the rise of the third distinct feature of German popularization of science, the interpretation of science as agent of social change. For many supporters, scientific knowledge and its dissemination became extensions of the “ideas of 1848,” which could emancipate the masses from feudal and religious constraints.

For German intellectuals the main function of science popularization did not rest in the addition of random facts to an already existing body of knowledge, but the consecration of a “mode of thought” that would question authority, especially of the religious and ideological kind. As Kurt Bayertz argues, “the peculiar situation arose that science became at the same time a substitute for politics and a means of attaining political ends.”¹³ In the 1850s Germany witnessed the rise of the philosophy of scientific materialism. Ludwig Büchner, the towering figure of German materialism, who exerted a powerful fascination over European socialists in the second half of the nineteenth century, already noted the political character of science popularization in 1855, in the preface of his famous book *Force and Matter*:

¹¹ Bayertz, 223.

¹² Ibid., 212.

¹³ Ibid., 219.

The public is demoralized by the recent defeat of national and liberal aspirations and is turning its preference to the powerfully unfolding researches of natural science, in which it sees a new kind of opposition against the triumphant Reaction.¹⁴

While the Revolution failed, its emancipating ideals could be carried over by science. For these purposes, Büchner argued and provided an example himself, the popularizer need not be actively engaged in research or even formally educated in science. The dissemination of materialism, followed in the 1870s and 80s by that of various forms of Darwinism, was mostly done by self-taught individuals, who wanted to recover, from the danger of over-specialization of scientific disciplines, a unitary scientific worldview that would emphasize rational inquiry, social progress and evolutionism. Like Büchner, the most important figures of the German debate on Darwinism, including Ernst Haeckel and Wilhelm Bölsche or the virulent anti-evolutionist Rudolf Virchow, also played political roles, most often on the left of the political spectrum. They were also extremely influential among European socialists in general and Romanian socialists in particular, several of whom have studied directly under their supervision. Büchner's "Force and Matter" had been a Bible of many Romanian socialists' youth. Between 1887 and 1891 Paul Bujor, already an active figure of the Romanian socialist movement, did his doctorate in zoology in Switzerland under the direction of Carl Vogt, another leading materialist and signatory of the Communist Manifesto. Nicolae Leon, one of the most important promoters of Darwinism in Romania and a member of socialist circles, studied with Haeckel at the University of Jena in the second half of the 1890s. Dimitrie Voinov, while primarily a product of the French school of zoology, like his fellow socialists Emil Racoviță and Ion Cantacuzino, also studied in Germany, at the universities of Heidelberg and Freiburg.

¹⁴ Quoted in Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Dordrecht/Boston: D. Reidel, 1977), 105.

Socialism and the Popularization of Science

Even with the rise of Social Darwinism in the 1880s, “the bulk of popular Darwinism’s influence [and of science in general] was on the left half of the political, cultural and social spectrum.”¹⁵ This was true not only for Germany, where the growing socialist movement would increasingly turn to science to justify its existence and goals, but also for the rest of the world in general. The founding fathers themselves were clearly aware of the legitimizing potential of science. In a letter to Lasalle from 1861 Marx noted that “Darwin’s book is very important and serves [him] as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history.”¹⁶ Most socialists of the time took for granted a presumed connection between Darwin’s natural science and Marx’s science of society. Also, the centrality of the Hegelian dialectics, with its deterministic laws, enhanced the scientificity of socialism. The very characterization of socialism as “scientific” served to both differentiate it from previous types of socialism and emphasize its rigorous, provable character. Science and socialism shared a common methodology based on rational examination, experimentation, and the design and engineering of a realistic future project. American socialist publisher Gaylord Wilshire could have talked for socialists everywhere when he stated that “to be called unscientific is about the greatest insult that can be hurled at a socialist.”¹⁷

For socialists though, science popularization was particularly important as an educational tool. Not for all popularizers did science mean enlightenment or promise equality and progress. As scholars often noted, various groups in various places advocated for the popularization of

¹⁵ Bayertz, 222.

¹⁶ Marx to Lasalle, January 16, 1861, available at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1861/letters/61_01_16-abs.htm. Last accessed March 15, 2017.

¹⁷ Quoted in George Cotkin, “The Socialist Popularization of Science in America, 1901 to the First World War,” *History of Education Quarterly* vol. 24, no. 2 (Summer, 1984), 205.

science not only in order to promote learning but also to prevent “bad reading” and bad habits.¹⁸ Conservative groups sometimes advocated for the popularization of science in order to counteract the danger of the moral depravation of the working-classes. Other figures occasionally believed in the pacifying potential of science, which could supposedly prevent social unrest and reconcile social classes.¹⁹ In his well-known account on phrenology in early nineteenth century Britain, Roger Cooter argued that bourgeois popularizers of science promoted phrenology (the belief that the shape of the skull corresponded to the level of various mental faculties) as a vehicle to encouraged the lower classes to focus on their own pathologies and thus distract them from the possibility of social change.²⁰ The socialists, by contrast, were motivated by the desire to prevent scientific knowledge from remaining the monopoly of a privileged class. In their view, science was inherently democratic. They were convinced of the universal benefits of scientific education and worked tirelessly to make science accessible to all. For the French socialist journalist Victor Meunier, popularizing science was synonymous with working towards a new society, since “science tends towards the creation of a new society and this unanimous tendency of the sciences can be expressed in one word: socialism. Socialism is the word. Science is the thing.”²¹ Proudhon himself had previously argued that the creation of a new social order depended on the prior elevation of individuals’ “philosophical” abilities, a task best achieved by exposure to scientific arguments. In the French public sphere, the association of science with politics was present even before, in the works of positivists like Auguste Comte, whom Romanian socialists held in high esteem. Comte himself developed and offered free public courses on popular astronomy and, like Proudhon, considered scientific education a precondition

¹⁸ Bruno Beguet, “Le livre de vulgarization scientifique,” in *La Science pour tous 1850-1914* (Paris: Bibliotheque du Conservatoire national des arts et métiers, 1990), 62-64.

¹⁹ Bensaude-Vincent and Libbrecht, 86.

²⁰ Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

²¹ Quoted in Bensaude-Vincent and Libbrecht, 86.

of political consciousness. American socialists also had no doubt that science and socialism belonged together. The popular journal *International Socialist Review* claimed that “scientific discoveries are weapons in the working class’ arsenal.”²² For committed socialists, educating the masses was a duty just as important as agitation or trade-union work. And in case workers were not sufficiently literate to take advantage of printed works, they benefited from the “movement culture” that Cotkin ascribes to early American socialism and which consisted, like in many other places, including Romania, of a network of lectures, debates, readings, discussion groups, and meetings designed to educate the faithful.²³

Romania did not reach the stage that made science popularization so successful in mid-19th century Western Europe until considerably later. Scientific publications were fewer and within the normal or even expensive price range for newspapers and brochures, although after the turn of the century the second socialist party will supervise the publication of at least a couple of classics in affordable editions as part of the Socialist Library project. Unlike countries like France, the publication of scientific works in Romania in the late nineteenth century was most often motivated simply by educational purposes, and very rarely economic profit. Along with other devotees of science, socialist intellectuals actively contributed to creating a public for science, providing a steady supply of scientific news and studies before there was actually any demand for them. *Contemporanul* was actually the second “scientific” journal that appeared in Romania, after *Revista Științifică: diariu pentru vulgarizarea științelor naturale și fizice* (The Scientific Magazine: Journal for the Vulgarization of Natural and Physical Sciences), which was published monthly between 1870 and 1881. The journal was notable for introducing the idea of the popularization of science to the Romanian public, although that public was meant to be a

²² Quoted in Cotkin, 204.

²³ Cotkin, 209.

very small, educated, and elite one. The purpose was to instruct and inform readers that already had some degree of education but were still largely ignorant about the workings of modern science. The audience was decidedly urban and middle to upper-class and science was an abstract, intellectual subject, fit for elegant conversation, rather than a practical one. As Simona Antonescu, the author of the most authoritative synthesis on nineteenth century popularization of science in Romania, notes, on the rare occasion when the journal published an article, on shivering fits, intended for “our rural populations,” the author felt the need to apologize to the audience and explain that he addressed the “goodhearted persons who want to help the suffering and should forgive us for speaking of such disgusting things.”²⁴ The whole purpose behind even publishing this article was to showcase the charity efforts of a society ladies’ circle. The authors probably did not envision the “rural populations” actually reading the text, nor the ladies getting acquainted with the symptoms of the disease. In this case, the scientific text, a reproduction after a medical report, served to publicize the urgency of the ‘good deeds’ performed by a compassionate upper class.

Led by *Revista științifică*, the 1870s were a good decade for the popularization of science in Romania. But progress was of course relative, given the local context. Antonescu counts seventy books “related to the popularization of science”²⁵ published between 1869 and 1878 and claims that out of the 486 periodicals that appeared in the same period, forty-nine included texts of popularization. While this makes for less than ten percent of the total, it should also be noted that the total figure of 486, while very likely accurate, contained a large proportion of very short-lived, maybe one issue only periodicals. The ones that mattered were the couple of dozen or so which were respectable, enduring, widely read (at least for the time) newspapers. Here indeed

²⁴ *Revista științifică*, quoted in S. M. Antonescu, *Literatura de popularizare a științei în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea și începutul secolului XX în România* (Bucharest: Ars Docendi, 2007), 127.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

scientific subjects were making their way. Most newspapers and journals introduced sections devoted to the latest developments in science, or pseudo-science, especially since the first World Exhibition in 1851 turned science into a subject of ‘foreign’ news as well. Socialist periodicals followed the same model. Apart from the specialized journals mentioned above, even political dailies, like *Drepturile omului* (Human Rights) or *Munca* (Labor), very often had sections on science, just as they had rubrics of serialized literature. In the perception of some contemporaries, inaccurate as that may be, socialist journals were in fact the first to address this topic:

Gherea’s publications brought as novelty, apart from the literary rubric, the only one which interested the youth back then, also the concern with science. There were no publications at the time that would spread the taste for science.²⁶

The publication of *Contemporanul* in 1883 marked an important turning point in the history of the Romanian popularization of science not because it introduced a thoroughly new subject, but because it did so more urgently and vocally, to a much wider audience, and emphasizing primarily the utilitarian character of science. The socialist fascination with science was inextricably linked with the belief in progress. Socialists did not value science for itself (although it certainly did not hurt ordinary individuals to educate themselves in areas previously reserved for the upper classes) but as vehicle to improve everyday life. Even Antonescu, who thinks that the impact of *Contemporanul* is overrated and notes unkindly that the kind of accessible popularizing undertaken by the journal “was floating in the air and was bound to happen anyway,”²⁷ agrees that the socialist periodical introduced the Romanian public to “practical science.” To explain away the influence of *Contemporanul* by the simple fact that “the

²⁶ Kirițescu, 71.

²⁷ Ibid., 168.

time came for authoritative and simplifying visions of the world to have their golden age”²⁸ is to reduce a historical phenomenon to the realm of vague potentialities. The time was indeed ripe and other ideological and political groups could have pursued the same agenda with similar success. However, they did not, which is why the socialist endeavor remains both unique and extremely influential.

The second crucial contribution of *Contemporanul* to the history of science popularization in Romania pertains to the clarification of the process and function of popularization as such. The ranks of Romanian socialist intellectuals included a cluster of prominent scientists, especially biologists of various specializations. Out of the one hundred and sixteen socialist intellectuals analyzed in Chapter One, thirty-two were actively involved in the popularization of science (seventeen physicians, ten scientists and five teachers and journalists). This meant that the socialist popularization of science was undertaken by both experts and amateurs, but with a decided inclination towards the experts. Socialist scientists themselves wrote and lectured on both popular topics and occasionally the subjects of their own research. Romanian socialist popularizers did not cite each other, as French popularizers did, but cited scientific works directly. This had to do with the close proximity of socialist scientists, but also with the socialist revulsion towards anything that could be construed as plagiarism. As noted in the previous chapter, *Contemporanul* built its initial reputation on uncovering cases of plagiarism in the Romanian press. As such, socialist writers were even more keenly aware of the necessity to base their articles on an extended bibliographic apparatus. Most scientific articles consisted of extended reviews, summaries or syntheses that included quotes from western works and authors and meticulous citations. What may seem like name-dropping to a present-day reader, and perhaps to a certain extent really was, was also a deliberate reaction against a contemporary

²⁸ Ibid.

literature that rarely credited original sources. The scrupulous, taxing, and occasionally inaccurate, as some scholars noted, bibliographies, served to reinforce the meaning of popularization. The contributors to socialist periodicals were very clear about their role as intermediaries:

Therefore, one more time: to popularize issues that pertain to medicine or agriculture doesn't mean to pretend, or to pretend that anyone believes, that you are a specialist physician or agronomist. It only means to be knowledgeable about the issue in question and strive to impart it to the interested readers.²⁹

Even in the hands of experts, scientific writing mostly remained “popularization” and credit was duly given to the authors or writings where the ideas originated.

Evolutionism and Atheism

So, what kind of scientific knowledge was being disseminated in socialist periodicals, brochures and public lectures? At first sight, socialist journals offered a veritable bazaar of scientific and pseudo-scientific information. Articles on geology, zoology and astronomy stood side by side with various explanations of electricity and “scientific agriculture.” Literary and scientific supplements also dedicated plenty of space to technological advances: A four-part series in *Lumea nouă științifică și literară* explored the Röntgen rays,³⁰ and others were dedicated to the telegraph and telephone. Not all articles were optimistic, though. One required more research into the dangers of riding a bike and one warned against the excesses of modern surgery. With the now universal availability of anesthesia, the author argued, some over-zealous surgeons were prone to experiments and unnecessary procedures.³¹ Some pieces were designed

²⁹ Quoted in Antonescu, 166.

³⁰ *Lumea nouă științifică și literară*, no. 11, 14, 15, 18, 1896.

³¹ *Ibid.*, no. 21, 1896.

to shock, like the one on the lifespan of heads already severed from the body, and many qualified as miscellanea or “curiosities”: mammals with three eyes, “monstrous births” of babies with two heads³² and cases of self-amputation in the animal world. Socialist scientists also used the journals as platforms for the dissemination of their studies. The biologist Nicolae Leon, freshly back from a research trip, published an article in *Contemporanul* about “all the methods of conservation that [he] used at Alvoerstroem [in Norway] for echinoderms, worms, bryozoans, brachiopods, tunicate, mollusks, and crustaceans.”³³ Beyond this diversity of topics, several programmatic intentions can nevertheless be discerned. The first issue of *Emanciparea* (Emancipation), a socialist newspaper of general interest, declared that emancipation is impossible without the close alignment between “the practice of social life” and the “progresses of positive science.” Unfortunately, claimed the editors, the Romanian public was not familiar with the “slow development of sciences.” It was thus the duty of the “educated youth” to wage “war against darkness and prejudices,” and persuade the “followers of blind faiths” of the “truths of science.”³⁴ More concisely, the first issue of *Contemporanul* opened on July 3, 1881, with the following statement:

Our goal is to introduce the Romanian public to the way contemporary science views the world. We want to bring to our country the new scientific theories that are currently discussed among the civilized nations of the West. We believe it would be useful for our country if we spread the knowledge gained about the world as widely as possible [...] and fight untiringly against mistaken scientific publications and especially school textbooks.³⁵

As was usually the case at the time, the underlying philosophies that led Romanian socialists to the popularization of science were positivism (the belief that all knowledge derived from and

³² Ibid., November 6, 1895.

³³ Leon, 121.

³⁴ *Emanciparea*, April 15, 1883.

³⁵ *Contemporanul*, July 3, 1881.

could be verified by natural phenomena) and materialism (the theory that reality rested only with material physical objects and their experiences, which in turn gave rise to ideas). As noted, Auguste Comte for positivism, and Ludwig Büchner for materialism, were the favorite authors of Romanian socialists as well. Apart from Büchner, who advocated the primacy and indestructibility of matter over force, local socialists also took their cue from a fellow Romanian. Vasile Conta (1845-1882), an earlier Romanian philosopher, was a keen advocate of material determinism, whose works were at the time better known abroad than in Romania.³⁶ In the tradition of French positivism but also influenced by the new evolutionist theories, Conta argued that all physical phenomena were strictly determined by inflexible laws, the most important one being that of universal undulation, which allowed for new, superior material forms, to replace older, imperfect ones. Having previously lived abroad, Conta returned to Romania for the last decade of his life and briefly taught law at the University of Iași, the Moldovan capital which was also the first center of Romanian socialism. For less than a year, prior to his death, he also acted as Minister of Instruction and the Cults in 1880. Politically unaffiliated, he was remembered as a progressive of sorts, a keen advocate for educational reform and a very vocal atheist. It was probably his atheism, together with his materialism, that was retained and cherished by young Romanian socialists, rather than the embarrassing xenophobic and anti-Semitic outbursts that characterized the last couple of years of his life, when he even warned that the survival of the Romanian nation depended on the elimination of the country's Jews. Romanian socialists were most likely impressed by Conta's reputation abroad and

³⁶ His main works were *Teoria fatalismului* (The Theory of Fatalism), published in 1875, translated into French with a preface by L. Büchner, *Teoria ondulațiunii universale* (The Theory of Universal Ondulation), published in 1877, and two introductory works on metaphysics (*Introduction to Metaphysics* and *The Bases of Metaphysics*) published in 1879-1880.

understandably proud to be his co-nationals. Nicolae Leon recalls his experience hearing of Conta during his stay at the University of Jena thus:

After he talked about Darwin and Haeckel, and Büchner's conferences on Darwinism, the professor, who was well-versed in the bibliography of the transformist theory, recommended that we read the very original and interesting book of a certain Conta. I suddenly awoke upon hearing Conta's name, avidly listening to the professor who, with passion and conviction, was summarizing the theory of undulation. It was the second time abroad when I heard foreigners discussing the works of a Romanian scholar. "This Conta and our Büchner resemble so much in terms of clarity and mode of thought," concluded the professor. A parenthesis: as well known as Conta was abroad by the entire intellectual world, he was just as ignored at home, especially by our highest cultural institution, the academy.³⁷

Romanian socialists selectively recovered Conta's legacy and published introductions to his life and work as well as fragments from his main writings.³⁸ Titles like "The Primacy of Matter," which assured readers that all natural phenomena can be reduced to moving matter, were commonplace.³⁹ Ioan Nădejde, the pre-1900 leader of the party, authored a long series of articles in *Contemporanul* with the title "Does the Spirit Differ from Matter?"⁴⁰ The answer was negative and relied heavily on long quotes from Paul Janet's book *Le Materialisme contemporain* (Contemporary Materialism). Most often, they focused on his emphasis on free-thought and the deterministic faith in the absence of free will and consequently responsibility.⁴¹ Conta's theories would figure prominently in the socialist attempt to exonerate 'criminals,' an important aspect of the broader socialist campaign of showing the influence of the social environment on individual behaviors.

³⁷ Leon, *Amintiri*, 122.

³⁸ *Dacia literară* no. 10, 1883; *Contemporanul*, no.10-12, 13, 14, 1885.

³⁹ *Besarabia*, no.9, 1879; "Principii de materialism," in *Emanciparea*, no. 1, 2, 1883.

⁴⁰ *Contemporanul*, no. 18, 1884.

⁴¹ "A cui e vina dacă există criminali?" *Besarabia*, no.11, 1879.

Leading among the favorite socialist scientific subjects was Darwinism, and more broadly evolutionism (or, in the term occasionally used at the time, the theory of “transformism.”) Gherea himself, when planning the publication of a socialist cultural journal, insisted on the inclusion of the topic. A letter from Gherea to Dr. Russel, dated 1880, reads:

Tell Nădejde that we ask him to write a couple of articles of popularization about Darwin’s theory. In these articles he can declare himself an atheist. If you have time, write something about social hygiene. It goes beyond saying that these pieces must be written in as popular a manner as possible.⁴²

Socialists did not introduce Darwin’s theories in Romania. *Revista științifică* already did that in the previous decade, and Darwin’s name and ideas had been around for a while. What Romanian socialists did was to mount an impressive and vehement defense of Darwinism. This defense was to some degree unnecessary and premature. There was no major controversy over evolutionism in Romania at the time that would justify a very vocal defense. Opinions both in favor and against were relatively restrained and did not take center stage in the Romanian public sphere. A look at the articles on Darwinism published in *Contemporanul* in the 1880s makes clear that socialists went to considerable lengths to find and refute enemies of evolutionism. Many pieces are directed against rather obscure religious publications⁴³ or articles in foreign journals which detailed new scientific discoveries that supposedly questioned or disproved Darwin’s ideas.⁴⁴

Socialist journals managed to establish evolutionism as a given and also to convey the impression, inaccurate though it may have been, that it was a philosophy heavily under attack. From the self-assumed besieged fortress of *Contemporanul* and other journals, the Romanian

⁴² C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 8, 87.

⁴³ “Scrisoare către redactor de la Frangulea medic militar,” *Contemporanul* no. 20, 1884; “Darwin masacrat,” *Lumea nouă Supliment literar* no. 32, 1894.

⁴⁴ “O spărtură în teoria evoluției?” *Contemporanul* no. 4, 1884; “Ruinarea teoriei lui Darwin asupra insulelor de coral,” *Contemporanul* no. 17, 1885.

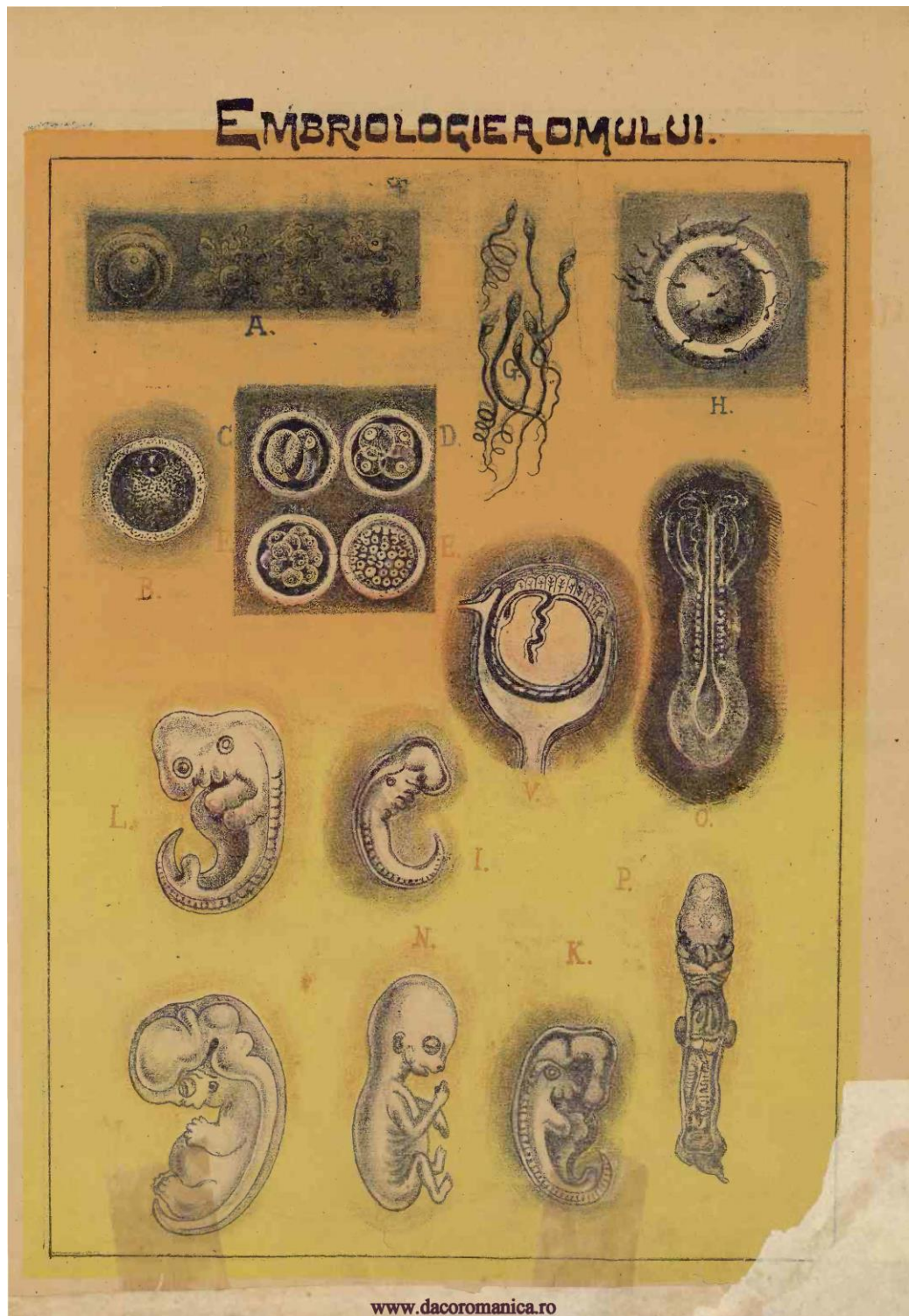


Figure 4.1: Chart depiction human embryology, published in *Lumea nouă literară și științifică* (The New Literary and Scientific World) on June 26, 1895

socialists valiantly proceeded to defend evolutionist ideas, most often with little regard for the details of Darwin's theory, or the many contemporary controversies and debates between his various students or supporters. An article from 1883 stated openly that while Darwin's theory is "controversial," "there's no better one and it is at least progressive."⁴⁵ The point was to disseminate the idea of evolutionism in general, not dwell on the specifics. Dimitrie Voinov's substantial article on "new transformist conquests" published in 1893 in *Literatură și știință* is an exception to this trend.⁴⁶ Voinov was a prominent scientist himself, and his study expertly reviewed the latest discoveries in oceanic fauna that further supported evolutionism. It came, however, more than a decade after the first socialist publications tackled the issue and in spite of claims to the contrary it was intended for readers who wanted to expand their knowledge of an already familiar subject. Earlier articles were more general and often repetitive.⁴⁷ More noteworthy articles were those on embryology,⁴⁸ primates,⁴⁹ and a long series of articles on paleontology, describing the differences between the modern and the "prehistoric man."⁵⁰ They were often accompanied by page-size illustrations in color, which often contributed to their appeal. Many authors also occasionally dropped in the concept of the "struggle for existence," along with Herbert Spencer's views, but serious attempts to differentiate it from Darwin's were few. In 1890, Cezar Vraja, the pseudonym of none other than Garabet Ibrăileanu, the future *poporanist* critic, published an article with the title "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society" which identified the social-Darwinist "struggle for existence" with capitalist competition. Since the latter is reserved for the bourgeois-capitalist stage of development, it

⁴⁵ Grigore Munteanu, "Darwinismul," in *Dacia literară*, no. 4, 1883, 60-61. See also Zamfir Arbore, *Darwin și darwinismul* (Bucharest: Tipografia și Fonderia de Litere Thoma Basilescu, 1893).

⁴⁶ Dimitrie Voinov, "Noile cuceriri transformiste. Teoria creațiunii versus 'Transformismul sau teoria evolutivă'" *Literatură și știință*, 1893, 99-109.

⁴⁷ *Dacia viitoare*, no. 14, 1883; *Contemporanul*, no. 2, 1885.

⁴⁸ *Contemporanul* no. 1, 3, 1895.

⁴⁹ "Foileton științific- Phitecantropus erectus," in *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, December 25, 1895.

⁵⁰ *Contemporanul* no., 13, 14, 15, 16, 1895.

followed that the transition to socialism would automatically solve the problem of the “struggle for existence as well.”⁵¹ While socialist authors casually mentioned scientists like Lamarck, Haeckel or Bölsche, their inclusion served to legitimize their discourse, and reassure the public that they are familiar with these important names, rather than as an occasion to engage with the varieties of evolutionism. A prominent exception was Rudolf Virchow who, as a leading German anti-Darwinist, received more space and attention.

For Romanian socialists the apology of Darwinism served mainly to contest religion, especially in its organized form, and whatever traditions socialists perceived as ‘superstition.’ From the very beginnings the vocal atheism of some Romanian socialists caused scandal. Following a failed public meeting organized by the socialists in Iași in 1881, Ioan Nădejde, the future leader of the Romanian Workers’ Party, and his brother, Gheorghe Nădejde, both teachers at the local high-school, were trialed and then fired for socialist agitation and for “corrupting young minds” through atheist propaganda.⁵² Several socialist students were also expelled from the university. Younger socialists recall the legendary figure of one of them, Alexandru Bădăraș, future socialist and then left liberal politician, who was rumored to shred his parents’ Bible to pieces and go around town vandalizing Orthodox icons.⁵³ Such stories exerted both uneasiness and fascination. Some socialists, like Henric Sanielevici, delighted in shocking their families and friends, sending postcards with the brief text, “Socialism is the movement of the workers against drones. As for God, I assure you that he does not exist.”⁵⁴

Equally scandalous was the socialists’ refusal to partake in the traditional Orthodox rites for weddings and funerals. The socialists were more successful in avoiding the latter, perhaps

⁵¹ Cezar Vraja, “Lupta pentru traiu in societatea omeneasca,” in *Munca*, no. 25, 1891.

⁵² *Socialismul înaintea justiției. Procesul fraților Nădejde înaintea juriului universitar*. 1880.

⁵³ Gorovei, 15.

⁵⁴ Herovanu, 104.

also because they could not subsequently change their minds. The first socialist in Romania to be buried ‘without a priest’ was Nicolae Zubcu-Codreanu, the Bessarabian militant who established the first populist/nihilist circles in Romania in the late 1860s and 70s. His death in 1878 prompted a flurry of petitions against the Orthodox funeral that the municipality of Bucharest was prepared to provide him with against his previously expressed wishes. Socialist newspapers used the opportunity to rally against the church and cheer for atheism and ‘free-thinking.’ Sympathizers were reminded of the controversy surrounding Codreanu’s funeral at each future commemoration of his death, as he became a symbol of resistance against the arbitrary rules of the church and state. After the turn of the century it became easier, although still controversial, to have a civil funeral, as that of workers’ leader I. C. Frimu attests. The socialists who advocated for non-religious weddings fared less well. The most famous, and embarrassing, case, is that of the well-known leftist journalist Constantin Mille, who for years condemned religious rituals most vehemently in both his journalism and fiction, only to end up marrying in church, supposedly for the sake of his in-laws.

Most socialist journals promoted atheism. While refraining from offensive language, the majority of socialist authors and publications took it for granted that an individual interested in science or progress could not be but atheist. The reverse was also true, as the rejection of religion, to their minds, could only reflect a commitment to science. As one article in *Contemporanul* stated, “in many places atheists are considered scientists who promote progress and cherish the truth.”⁵⁵ The socialists in Romania published long explanatory studies addressing general questions of faith. Over the course of a year *Contemporanul* published an unsigned seven-part essay entitled “Does God Exist or Not?”⁵⁶ The young socialist sympathizer Ion Dafin

⁵⁵ Gheorghiu, “Ateismul,” *Contemporanul*, no. 6, 1886.

⁵⁶ “Ieste sau nu Dumnezeu?” *Contemporanul*, 1884, 1885.

recalled that “he was never more impressed than when [he] read in *Contemporanul* the articles with this title.”⁵⁷ This series was accompanied by a three-part study on “Inconsistences between the Gospels,”⁵⁸ mostly translated from a 1864 book of the now obscure French theist writer Patrice Larroque,⁵⁹ and an equally long essay on the subject of the afterlife, written by Sofia Nădejde and inspired by the then popular anthropologist Charles Letourneau.⁶⁰ In the “war against darkness” specific Christian or other religious beliefs were lumped together indiscriminately with folk superstitions, customs and traditional church practices. Nicolae Quinezu, a socialist physician, provided a “scientific explanation” of religious stigmata.⁶¹ Others sought to explain religious miracles through autosuggestion.⁶² Socialists were equally keen to unpack beliefs in ghosts, vampires or the evil eye⁶³ and to examine critically the practice of spiritism, made fashionable at the time by the supposedly successful attempts of the well-known historian Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu to contact his dead daughter.⁶⁴

The 1890s witnessed a noticeable moderation of the socialist anti-religious discourse. The ideological commitment to atheism faced the practical reality of attempting to organize a political movement in what was still essentially a traditional, conservative religious environment. Whether by faith or custom, most Romanians were still outwardly religious people, and the influence of the Orthodox Church was considerable. The industrial working class itself was small, the socialist sympathizers were few and in-between, and the position of the newly constituted Romanian Workers’ Social-Democratic Party (born in 1892) was fragile. As a result,

⁵⁷ Dafin, 11.

⁵⁸ “Nepotriviri între evanghelii,” *Contemporanul*, 1884, 1885.

⁵⁹ Patrice Larroque, *Examen critique des doctrines de la religion chretienne* (Paris, 1864).

⁶⁰ “Despre viața viitoare,” *Contemporanul*, no. 17, 1884.

⁶¹ Nicolae Quinezu, “Stigmat și stigmatizați: despre explicarea științifică a stigmatelor (religioase),” in *Lumea nouă științifică și literară*, no. 4, 1895.

⁶² *Contemporanul*, no. 8, 1886.

⁶³ “Despre deochiu,” *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, no. 27, 28, 29, 1896.

⁶⁴ “Fotografia spiritistă- Experiențele d-lui Hașdeu,” *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, no. 27, 1896.

socialist leaders must have been wary of pushing an atheist agenda too far and potentially alienating parts of an already feeble constituency. It may also be the case that they were beginning to develop a more nuanced understanding of science and spirituality as not diametrically opposed. As a result, in the early 1890s, socialist newspapers emphasized the irrelevance of the religious question. It is true, argued Constantin Mille in an article from 1891 entitled “Religion and Socialism,” that “many educated socialists, who studied a lot, can no longer believe in what the priests say.”⁶⁵ This, however, is no indication of how things should be within the socialist party:

Faith or the lack thereof is something personal, that pertains to the individual consciousness, and has nothing to do with the workings of a party that concerns itself with real things, with improving the workers’ material well-being.

Just as some workers are Orthodox, he claimed, and others are Catholic, Protestant, or even Muslim, there are also some who are atheists. But whether one is an atheist or not is ultimately unimportant since “faith, like nationality, does not act as a divider between socialists” and “in our party we have people of all nationalities and all religions.” The socialists are not anti-religious, Mille argued, but rather post-religious in their approach, having “long left religion aside and seeking to meet the needs of the workers’ stomachs rather than their religious aspirations.”⁶⁶

The same attempt to rise above religion or relegate it to the periphery of socialist concerns is visible in the articles from the same period of the party leader Ioan Nădejde. The question of religion became more stringent as, also part of the organization that preceded the formation of the party, socialists intensified their propaganda in the rural areas of Moldova,

⁶⁵ Constantin Mille, “Religia și socialismul,” *Munca*, no. 47, January 13, 1891.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

which would culminate in the late 1890s with the formation of ‘socialist village clubs.’ The rural areas were arguably the most problematic for the promotion of atheism. While some peasants were non-believers, the pull of tradition was nevertheless strong, and a too vocal rejection of religion could backfire. In Nădejde’s account, socialist propagandists circumvented the problem by emphasizing their lack of interest in religion. Supposedly speaking from personal experience, Nădejde replied to accusations of anti-religious agitation with the rendition of the following dialogue between himself and the peasants:

I say: ‘Good people, did I tell you anything about God, did I tell you not to worship according to custom?’ Of course people replied: ‘No, you talked to us about our rights.’ I follow up: ‘That I don’t believe in God is true and this is why [...] But this is my custom. You are free to do what you want, I don’t interfere, I’m only here to speak about your rights.’⁶⁷

Nădejde is keen to dismiss the continuing endurance of religion and its impact on the reception of socialism and concludes a bit too eagerly:

These two cases (and I know others) prove that we, the socialists, don’t need to fight against religion but continue the propaganda of our ideas, and show workers how to take advantage of their rights and how to strive for greater ones.

In his early history of social-democracy in Romania, Constantin Titel Petrescu upholds this attitude towards religion maintaining that socialism is generally “areligious,” considering religion as a problem that pertains to individual consciousness. Like Mille and Nădejde in the 1880s and 90s, Petrescu would emphasize in 1930s that adherence to “scientific socialism” does not imply adherence to “atheist, anti-religious and scientific materialism.” Some committed socialists, like the priest Gala Galaction, close friend of many socialist and working-class

⁶⁷ I. Nădejde, “Socialismul și liber-cugetătorii” in *Munca*, no. 17, 1890.

leaders, saw no contradiction between their religious and ideological convictions. However, writes Petrescu, echoing Mille's article from 1891,

Socialists, in their majority, are materialists and atheists, relying on the facts of science. And since religion has been and still is associated with the abuses, exploitations, and wars of the ruling classes, they fight against it. In our country the socialist movement had conducted such a propaganda, *but without emphasizing the religious aspect, deemed secondary* in the process of enlightening and educating the popular masses.⁶⁸ (my highlighting)

Nădejde's article also constitutes one of the rare instances of rallying against the theory and practice of "free thought," which otherwise usually enjoyed a good press among socialists. This time, according to Nădejde, "free thought" was nothing but a "liberal diversion," designed, like the nationalities question, to draw attention away from the real social problems. It would hence be counterproductive for socialists to join the liberals in promoting free-thinking, since that would only divest resources from their essential goals. This moment is unusual in the history of the early socialist discourse on religion. Both before and after this time socialist publications provided ample evidence that "free thought," in its many iterations, was both accepted and encouraged. The doctrine would become even more popular after 1900, when workers would note proudly that their children were "free-thinkers from birth."⁶⁹ This moment, characterized as it was by the rejection of a perceived rival anti-religious movement, and the optimistic, albeit strained, confidence in the irrelevance of the religion, reveals a deep-seated anxiety about the socialists' ability to retain the monopoly of anti-religious manifestations, their success in actually delegitimizing religion in the eyes of the masses, and the possibility to reconcile its materialist ideology with the lingering religious attachments of the electorate. Rather than dismissing it,

⁶⁸ Petrescu, 182.

⁶⁹ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC), Fond 3085 "Amintiri, Memorii și Însemnări ale unor Personalități despre Situația Economico-Socială și Politică din România," Dosar 391.

Petrescu's later commentary inadvertently confirms and recognizes this anxiety, which characterized the attitude of the Romanian socialists in the nineteenth century and occasionally resurfaced after 1900 as well.

However, virulent anti-religious discourse sometimes returned after the turn of the century. Unlike in the beginnings of socialism in the early 1880s, now the dismissal of religion required no explanation and was almost taken for granted. Articles were rarer but more confident, often eschewing argumentation. Christian Racovski, the star figure and unofficial leader of the Romanian socialist movement in the 1900s, proclaimed in an article from 1906 that "Christianity is dead and will not rise again!"⁷⁰ In 1908 the same newspaper, *România muncitoare* (Working Romania), would satirically rewrite the main Orthodox prayers, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed, from a capitalist perspective.⁷¹ The Romanian socialists also categorically rose against the notion of a "Christian socialism," as endorsed at the time by some American clerics and socialist sympathizers, emphasizing the incompatibility between the two philosophies:

As Marxist socialism is a doctrine that derives from research of the reality, while the religious notion of human happiness provides no answer except for happiness after death, it's clear from the beginning that between socialism and Christian dogma there is a wide gap that cannot possibly be reconciled.⁷²

The socialist view towards religion remained an ambivalent one though. *Calendarul muncii* (The Calendar of Labor), a yearly calendar published from 1907 to 1912 by the 'second' Romanian socialist party started by including side by side both the traditional Orthodox calendar, reproduced in detail from the official one released by the Church, and a makeshift socialist one

⁷⁰ C. Racovski, "Creștinismul e mort și nu va mai reînvia," *România muncitoare*, no. 6, Year II, Series II, 1906.

⁷¹ "Rugăciuni capitaliste," *România muncitoare*, August 10, 1908.

⁷² "Preoți socialiști," *România muncitoare*, August 24, 1908.

highlighting the most important dates in the history of the international socialist movement.⁷³

However, already in the second year the socialist calendar disappeared leaving only the religious one, this time complete with quotes from Orthodox saints, usually accusations against the rich. Obviously, the socialist calendar did not take off, in spite of increased acceptance of and tolerance towards atheism.

Like their European and American counterparts, Romanian socialists historicized the figure of Christ while retaining very strong religious imagery. Each Christmas and Easter journals would remind readers of Christ as “the first proletarian,” “the first socialist,” or simply “a man of genius” who envisioned a fair, egalitarian and democratic society.⁷⁴ Easter in particular was an emotional time when socialists invariably cried that Christ did not rise again (or did so only for the bourgeois),⁷⁵ while calling to their followers to take upon themselves the duty of resurrecting Christ’s message in its original, untainted form. Socialism, which was nothing else than “economic Christianity,”⁷⁶ sought to recover this message, which had been for centuries perverted by the Church and the rich. Interestingly, the articles were often accompanied by religious illustrations, though never of the Orthodox tradition,⁷⁷ and occasionally poems, again not a traditional religious genre at the time.⁷⁸

Romanian socialists’ complex relation with religion sets them apart from those in other countries, like Germany for example, where atheism was an important cornerstone of the socialist platform. The socialist movement in Romania, while at times vocally promoting atheism, also periodically stepped back and reassured its members that socialism did not require atheism, and faith was a private matter of individual choice, outside the scope of political and

⁷³ *Calendarul muncii*, 1907.

⁷⁴ Some examples include *Muncitorul*, no. 10, 1887; *Democrația socială*, no.14, 1892.

⁷⁵ *Democrația socială*, no. 44, 1885; *România muncitoare*, no. 16, 1902.

⁷⁶ “Crăciunul proletarilor,” *România Muncitoare*, December 25, 1908.

⁷⁷ *Lumea nouă literară și științifică* from December 25, 1895 includes pictures of Christ’s birth and the shepherds.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, March 20-21, 1896.

ideological allegiances. These recurrent concessions, together with the half-hearted attempts to dismiss the question of religion as unimportant speak primarily of fears of alienating the public. In Romania, at least in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the fight against religion became “secondary” not because it was less important, as socialist leaders would want us to believe, but because it was unsustainable.

Socialist Scientists at Work: The Case of Emil Racoviță

In the Romanian case the socialist popularization of science was further legitimated by the undisputed prestige of socialist scientists. The community of late nineteenth century prominent Romanian socialists included a series of well-known biologists who were active in both the Romanian socialist movement and the international scientific one. Most of them were educated in France, Germany and Switzerland in the 1880s and early 1890s, were involved in student socialist groups there and did research abroad for a couple of years working in research centers led by important Western scientists. Paul Bujor, one of the most active socialist scientists, had been a member of the French socialist party since 1887. During a four-year study period in Geneva he got close to the Russian socialist leader Georgi Plekhanov and organized a series of rallies and petitions, as well as representing Romania at the congresses of the International and various socialist student conferences. In Romania he was a pioneer of marine biology, dedicating his life to the study of the Black Sea fauna, but also a noteworthy realist novelist in the tradition upheld by Romanian socialist literary criticism. He was a frequent public speaker and contributor to socialist journals, addressing zoology and broader questions of evolution. Belonging to the same generation, Dimitrie Voinov specialized in cell biology and accompanied Bujor at international socialist congresses. A close friend of Ștefan Stăncă, a

socialist pioneer of public health, he shared the latter's concerns about social medicine and was very active in the socialist press. Slightly later, Constantin Parhon, who obtained his PhD in 1900 in Bucharest, would become a renowned researcher in neurology and endocrinology.

Conspicuously, he was also one of the few early socialists who fared very well in the early years of the communist regime, acting as president of the Great National Assembly (in effect head of state) between 1948 and 1952. At the other end of the specter, Ecaterina Arbore, an expert in public health and working-class maladies, especially tuberculosis, who would become Minister of Health in the Soviet Republic of Moldova after 1919, died in the Stalinist purges of the 1930s.

Socialist researchers, therefore, were high-profile academics whose presence added weight and credibility to socialist publications and activities. Upon their return to Romania, most biologists joined the socialist circles there and, remarkably, obtained coveted faculty positions at the universities of Bucharest and Iași. It is worth noting that out of the five candidates for the chair in morphology (biology) at the University of Bucharest in 1892, four had belonged to socialist circles abroad (Emil Racoviță, Paul Bujor, Dimitrie Voinov, and Nicolae Leon) while the fifth, Grigore Antipa, was the younger, unregimented stepbrother of Leon.⁷⁹ It was Paul Bujor who wrote to Voinov about this opportunity, liberally asking him to notify Racoviță as well. Voinov's appointment for the afore-mentioned position provoked enthusiasm among socialists. "My dear friend, wrote Gherea, I congratulate you from all my heart for your accomplishment. Your success does not shine on you alone, but on all of us. You cannot imagine my joy upon receiving the news!" Successful candidates like Voinov were able to create a socialist scientific network that helped younger socialist researchers climb the academic ladder. Voinov himself remained in cordial relations with the other socialist applicants and offered the



Dela stânga la dreapta; Sus: Vasile Ștefan, avocat; P. Antonescu, arhitect; Mütznér, medic; Gălcă, medic; I. Slatineanu; C. Garoflid, fostul ministru; I. Purcăreanu; dr. Stoicescu-Ploiești; Ion Eustațiu; dr. Cruceanu. La mijloc: Mitrany; prof. P. Anghel; George Georgescu; prof. Dragomir Hurmuzescu; dr. I. G. Radovici; romaniciul C. Nottara; dr. S. Irimescu. Jos: dr. Matza, ginerele lui Al. Dumas-fiul; prof. dr. Al. Slatineanu; Ir. Mihăilescu. — Se remarcă lipsa actualilor profesori Ion Cantacuzino și Emil Racoviță, studenți socialiști și membri ai Cercului; erau absenți din Paris când s'a făcut tabloul.

Figure 4.2: A portrait of the group of Romanian socialist students in Paris, many of them biologists or doctors. The caption notes that Emil Racoviță and Ion Cantacuzino were out of town when the picture was taken.⁸⁰

position of research assistant at his lab to Paul Bujor, who gracefully accepted. Five years later, Bujor would be named Professor of animal morphology at the University of Iași. Nicolae Leon would spend more than thirty years (from 1899 to 1931) at the same institution, as Chair in medical zoology. This circle of scientists was open to the larger public of socialist sympathizers or acquaintances. Paul Bujor recalls that Caragiale, the famous playwright and Gherea's close

⁸⁰ Source: I. C. Atanasiu, *Mișcarea socialistă: 1881-1900*.

friend, would visit his lab periodically, taking great pleasure in examining the cultures under the microscope that Bujor prepared for him and listening to his explanations.⁸¹

Apart from creating domestic scientific and socialist networks, these biologists also maintained connections abroad, and contributed to the circulation of scientific knowledge in ways that challenge predefined conceptions of center and periphery and allow for transformative and innovative research to take place on the periphery as well.⁸² In this sense, probably the most notable example is that of Emil Racoviță, a socialist scientist who played a major role in the Romanian and international socialist and scientific communities. While Racoviță remains a well-known name to this day, his socialist affiliation, especially the fact that he was an active militant, and representative of Romania at several congresses of the International, is largely obscured.⁸³ In Romania and abroad, Racoviță is mostly remembered as the founder of biospeleology, the study of cave flora and fauna, and the first biologist in the world to analyze life forms south of the Antarctic Circle, as a member of a Belgian expedition which took place between 1897 and 1899. This succinct characterization, however, obscures a much more complex life trajectory which intertwined the career of a militant socialist with that of a high-profile scholar who played a leading role in transnational scientific networks.

An avid reader, like many rebellious teenagers of his generation, of *Contemporanul*, Racoviță became actively involved in the socialist movement during his student days in Paris in the late 1880s and early 1890s.⁸⁴ There he joined the circle of Romanian socialist students, which included other future important names like Bujor, Voinov, I. Cantacuzino, and Dragomir Hurmuzescu, and also made his debut French socialist movement. In 1886, after personally

⁸¹ Bujor, *Amintiri de A. Vlahuță și I. L. Caragiale*, 76.

⁸² Gavroglu et al. "Science and Technology in the European Periphery: Some Historiographical Reflections." *History of Science*, no. XLVI (2008), 155-162.

⁸³ C. Motaș and Constantin Ghica, *Emil Racoviță, fondatorul biospeologiei* (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1969).

⁸⁴ Racoviță first studied law, between 1886 and 1889, and then obtained a second degree in biology in 1891, followed by a PhD in zoology in 1896.

meeting leading French socialists like Paul Lafargue and Jean Jaurès, Racoviță enrolled in the French Socialist Party, a membership he maintained throughout his life. In the following year, he took over the organization of the Romanian socialist circle in Paris, hosting meetings, distributing materials, and organizing lectures on Marxism. While abroad, Racoviță maintained a close connection with the socialists in Romania, contributing to the main socialist periodicals and exchanging letters with various leading figures like Gherea, Nădejde, Alexandru Radovici and, of course, the former members of the students' circle in Paris. Rarely physically present in Romania, he was nonetheless often informed about and consulted in the most important questions pertaining to the Romanian movement, most likely because of his commitment to the socialist cause in general, his active interest in what was taking place in Romania, and his close connections to French socialists. In 1891 Gherea was writing to update him on the state of organized socialism in Romania, sharing with satisfaction the news that fellow socialist Alexandru Radovici had succeeded in establishing both a socialist circle and a weekly gazette in Ploiești.⁸⁵ In fact, Racoviță's status as an important representative of Romanian socialism was already confirmed in 1889 by his participation, as official Romanian delegate, to the Congress of the Second International, where he endorsed the motion declaring May First a holiday of the working class. He was also the Romanian delegate at the international congresses of socialist students in 1891 and 1893, delivering a speech at the latter on the differences between socialism and anarchism.⁸⁶

Racoviță's militant activity continued until 1896, when the organizers of the Belgica expedition to the Antarctic, sponsored by the Royal Belgian Society for Geography, first propositioned him to join them as the on-board zoologist. Racoviță came highly recommended

⁸⁵ Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 8, 1909.

⁸⁶ Slăvescu, Vol. 1, 33.

by the French professor Henri de Lacaze-Duthiers, widely recognized as a founding father of research into marine biology, who established the laboratories at Roscoff, on the Atlantic Coast, and Banyuls-sur-Mer, on the Mediterranean, where Racoviță did most of the research for his dissertation. Following diverse organizational problems and delays, the expedition would depart



Figure 4.3: Emil Racoviță in his laboratory aboard the *Belgica* ship

almost a year later, and would last over two years,⁸⁷ during which Racoviță worked in the laboratory he assembled on board, collecting thousands of samples of organisms from the Atlantic Ocean and the Antarctic sea ice.⁸⁸ During the first part of the trip, when the ship anchored in ports in South America, Racoviță sent excerpts of his travel diary by post to Romania, where they were dutifully reprinted in socialist periodicals. Upon his return, he was caught in a frenzy of conferences, lectures and banquets thrown in his honor in Belgium, France

⁸⁷ The *Belgica* ship departed on August 16th, 1897, and returned almost miraculously to Antwerp on November 5th, 1899, after being trapped in ice on the west side of the Antarctic Peninsula for 11 months. The crew included the Norwegian officer Roald Amundsen, who would become famous in 1911 as the first man to set foot on the South Pole.

⁸⁸ Racoviță's collection from the journey included 1200 zoological samples, 400 botanical samples and over 200 photographs.

and Romania. His colleagues greeted his return enthusiastically and one noted that the Parisian university halls where Racoviță presented his findings were always overcrowded.⁸⁹ The polar expedition and the newly found notoriety resulted in a step back from socialist militancy. After the initial excitement faded, Racoviță retreated once more to the laboratory at Banyuls-sur-Mer, dedicating himself to research and academic publishing. However, he did not abandon his connections with the socialist movement. While most of his correspondence was lost, the surviving fragments indicate that he was well-informed and kept up to date with developments in Romania. A letter from Constatin Nottara, a minor playwright and socialist sympathizer, to Constantin Mille, from 1899, mentions that Ioan Nădejde sought Racoviță's advice upon deciding to expel Mille from the party.⁹⁰ Many years later, in 1912, Christian Racovski himself wrote an affectionate letter informing Racoviță about the progress of the Romanian socialist movement, which was finally acquiring a working-class, "mass" character.⁹¹ In his turn, a distraught Racoviță wrote to Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Gherea's son, in 1915, explaining that he could not accept the politics of neutrality endorsed by the Romanian socialists and was breaking ties with them until the latter would revise their stand.⁹² Racoviță described his own political activity thus:

I was actively engaged in politics only during my stay in France (1886-1920), as a social-democrat. [After 1900] I could no longer do political militantism, but I remained a member of the Social-Democratic Party. [...] In 1920 the University of Cluj invited me to establish, within the Department of Sciences, a laboratory of biological research. I accepted the offer enthusiastically but at the same time I took the firm decision of not getting involved in "politics." I was too aware of the conditions in which

⁸⁹Cl. Delamare Deboutteville, "Racovitza et la spéléologie française," in *Livre du centenaire: Émile G. Racovitza 1868-1968* (Bucharest: Éditions de l'Académie de la République Socialiste de Roumaine, 1970), 41.

⁹⁰ Biblioteca Națională a României, Fond Saint-Georges, P CCCLI/3 C. *Bacalbașa și C. Mille Scrisori diverse*, 43-44.

⁹¹ Gheorghe Racoviță, 43.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 44.

this civic activity is practiced in our country to view it favorably. [...] Hence I did not join any party.⁹³

Racoviță is one of the few early socialists to both live long enough to witness the establishment of the communist regime and be honored by it. On September 15, 1945, he reiterated his commitments and expressed his satisfaction in a letter to the Organization of Progressive Youth in Cluj, Transylvania:

I was very pleased to receive the letter by which you inform me that you unanimously selected me honorary president of your society, because it shows that you are aware of my lifelong progressive activity. Sixty years have passed since, in 1884, in Iași, in the hospitable house of the Jecu family, as they discussed with Ioan Nădejde and other comrades, I started to understand the need to find a solution to the “social question.” [...] In this respect I did not age, as the platform of your society mirrors the one I endorsed myself sixty years ago.⁹⁴

But Racoviță’s importance goes beyond that of an example of a lifetime of intertwined scientific and socialist pursuits. His example also speaks to the relevance of recent developments in the historiography of the history of science which seek to reevaluate the relations between scientific ‘centers’ and ‘peripheries.’ Introduced by Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems model and used frequently by economists in the 1950s and 60s to explain the uneven development of certain regions of the globe, the ‘center- periphery’ binary had been a recurrent explanatory device not only in economics, political science and sociology, but also in the history of science. According to this model, forward- looking intellectuals from the peripheries travelled to the scientific centers of Europe, where they absorbed the newest theories, methods and practices. Upon returning to their home countries, they tried to disseminate and implement this knowledge, often encountering resistance from more conservative members of their societies. The limitations of

⁹³ Ibid., 45 (my translation).

⁹⁴ Ibid., (my translation).

this approach are many. As Kostas Gavroglu notes, these studies convey a process of “mere transmission,” where scientific knowledge, just like any commodity, is simply taken from one space and uncritically “received” in another. The question is then to assess how “faithfully” this knowledge, perceived indiscriminately as modern and progressive, is being imported and reproduced in the new locality.⁹⁵ This is the case of various studies on the country-specific reception of major scientific theories like Darwin’s evolutionism or Einstein’s relativity.⁹⁶ In this historiographical tradition, local intellectuals are often presented as undertaking a “scientifically weak but ideologically robust campaign in favor of the new spirit.”⁹⁷ Commitment to the emancipating character of knowledge derived from the ‘center’ prevails over interest in its actual scientific content. Gavroglu is right to point out that in the studies of science on the periphery which employ this interpretation of concepts like “transfer,” “spread,” “influence,” “transmission,” “introduction,” “resistance,” and “adoption,” “scientific centers and peripheries are defined on the basis of the *separation* of production from distribution and use of scientific knowledge.”⁹⁸ Centers produce knowledge and the peripheries consume, to the best of their abilities. This model leaves no room for scientific ideas to be transformed in the process of circulation, let alone for scientific knowledge to be actually produced on the periphery.

In response to this trend, another group of historians have focused precisely on demystifying the centers and redeeming the peripheries, often looking for previously neglected important local “firsts” that would symbolically adjust the historical imbalance between the

⁹⁵ Gavroglu et al, 157.

⁹⁶ Alfred Kelly, *The Descent of Darwin: The Popularization of Darwinism in Germany, 1860-1914* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); Giuliano Pancaldi, *Darwin in Italy: Science across Cultural Frontiers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); Cynthia E. Russett, *Darwin in America: The Intellectual Response, 1865-1912* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1976); D. Stack, *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism, 1859-1914* (Cheltenham, England: New Clarion Press, 2003).

⁹⁷ Gavroglu et al., 156.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 159.

margins of Europe and its scientific centers.⁹⁹ It would be tempting to assess Racoviță's impact from this perspective. After all, his research and persona were instrumental in putting Romania on the scientific map. Frederick Cook, the American doctor who took part in the *Belgica* expedition, reminisced with noticeable wonder:

Extraordinary efforts were made to acquire a competent zoologist, who would have the required qualities of a Polar explorer; this proved to be one of the greatest challenges. France and Belgium were searched in vain and, eventually, Mr. Racoviță was found in Romania.¹⁰⁰

The biospeleology institute in Cluj founded by Racoviță was the first of its kind and it attracted scientists from all over the world. From the beginning it was not a pet-project of an isolated scientist, but a respectable institution benefitting from the patronage and support of the Romanian royal family, government, and academic community. It can be argued that far from being peripheral, Romania actually became a center for the production of this kind of specialized knowledge. This, however, would place Racoviță in a vacuum, rather than in the interconnected web of people and institutions to which he belonged. Racoviță was a product of the French school of biology, who reached maturity as a scholar in Romania, but always remained in close contact with developments abroad. As a French scholar noted on the occasion of the centennial of Racoviță's birth, "Romanian, French, French-Romanian, Romanian-French are nothing but words. It is impossible to ascribe a precise nationality to some people; they belong to our common heritage."¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See for example Ana Carneiro, Maria Paula Diogo, and Ana Simoes, "The Portuguese naturalist Correia da Serra (1751-1823) and his impact on early nineteenth-century botany," *Journal of the History of Biology*, no. XXXIV (2001): 353-93; and, by the same authors, "The Scientific Revolution in eighteenth-century Portugal: The role of the *estrangeirados* (Europeanized intellectuals)," *Social Studies of Science*, no. XXX (2000): 591-619.

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in G. Racoviță, *A ști sau a nu ști*, 70 (my translation).

¹⁰¹ Cl. Delamare Deboutteville, "Racovitza et la spéléologie française," in *Livre du centenaire: Émile G. Racovitza 1868-1968* (Bucarest: Éditions de L'Académie de la République Socialiste de Roumaine, 1970), 41 (my translation).

An apt illustration of Racoviță's 'internationalism' is his lifelong friendship and collaboration with René Jeannel (1879-1965), a younger French entomologist equally interested in speleology. Together, the two explored over fourteen hundred caves across Europe and North Africa and published numerous joint works. They became well-known for the study of troglobites, small creatures that live exclusively in the dark areas of caves,¹⁰² and which met the criteria for what Darwin called "living fossils," rare organisms that retained generally extinct biological features of the secondary and tertiary geologic eras. Racoviță and Jeannel also initiated a journal in French, *Biospeleologica*, named after the science they basically invented, which soon acquired correspondents in other European countries as well. Upon founding the biospeleological institute, the first of its kind, in Cluj in 1920, Racoviță invited Jeannel to act as his deputy director, a position which the latter held until 1927, when he was appointed chair in entomology at the Paris Museum of National History.¹⁰³ In 1929, under the title *The Enumeration of Visited Caves*, they started a vast enterprise aimed at publishing descriptions of all the caves explored up to then. Benefitting from the collaboration of numerous researchers from Europe, Africa and the United States, the project continued until 1951 and produced eight important volumes. Just like Racoviță in France, Jeannel was an acknowledged member of the Romanian scientific community, and later a member of the Romanian Academy. Rather than positioning Racoviță or Jeannel on the 'center' or the 'periphery' of an imaginary scientific map, it makes more sense to think of them as nodes in a perpetually shifting web of relations between mobile individuals and institutions. As such a node, Racoviță is also an excellent example of a socialist scientist who was both a reputed scholar and a committed activist, both a Romanian and

¹⁰² Constantin Motaș, "La Collaboration de Racovitza et de Jeannel: ses résultats," in *Livre du centenaire: Émile G. Racovitza 1868-1968*, 188-9.

¹⁰³ He later became director of the museum between 1945 and 1951.

an international figure, whose standing sanctioned the legitimacy of the socialist movement's interest in science and its popularization.

Public Health and Social Medicine

The most effective way to use science for the benefit of the masses was to disseminate and provide the most recent advances in hygiene and medicine. The association between socialism and medicine was a traditional one. Throughout Europe and Russia many early socialists had been trained as doctors. After all, medicine was, together with law, the main venue of education and income for a rising lower-middle class not privileged enough to be born in wealth. The first socialist and anarchist émigrés to Romania, like Zamfir Arbore, Nicolae Zubcu-Codreanu and Dr. Russel were practicing physicians. The 1890s had its own cohort of socialist doctors, including Alexandru Slătineanu and Iancu Radovici. The latter, descending from a wealthy family, like his more famous brother Alexandru Radovici, was known as a philanthropist, treating patients for free, lobbying in the country's sanitary commission, and sponsoring and supervising the creation of a tuberculosis sanatorium. Doctors remained present in the movement after 1900 as well. Racovski himself studied medicine in Geneva and Berlin before embarking on his career as "revolutionary of all countries."¹⁰⁴ By now the socialists also included doctors of working-class origin, usually Jewish, like Ottoi Călin, Litman Ghelerter and G. Nădejde-Armașu. In fact the party itself sponsored Călin's studies in surgery and ophthalmology in Berlin and Paris, where he was also supposed to become familiar with the workings of the international socialist movement. In Romania the emergence of the socialist movement in the late 1870s coincided with the first official attempts to reform the country's medical system and formulate and enforce sanitary regulations. This process, which entailed

¹⁰⁴ Pierre Broué, *Rakovsky, ou, La révolution dans tous les pays* (Paris: Fayard, 1996).

experimentation with various systems of preventive and interventionist sanitary measures, would continue until after World War One, and would include socialist intellectuals as active participants, contributors, critics and guardians of public policies.

The core of Romania's medical problems lay in the countryside. The public hygiene and medical services that should have served the country's entire population, including the peasant majority, were in fact only available in towns. Ever since the unification in 1859, Romania had established a wide network of "medici de plasă" (rural doctors) who were supposed to provide these services to their assigned clusters of villages. In practice, this was most often impossible. The areas were too large and the roads too poor to allow proper coverage. Medical supplies were missing, and doctors' wages were meager, sometimes barely matching their transportation costs. The countryside was rife with epidemics: typhus, diphtheria, scarlet fever, pellagra and cholera. The living conditions were abysmal, and the peasants were poor, dirty, underfed and uneducated. For a young graduate, being assigned to a rural position became the equivalent of a professional (and sometimes real) death sentence. It was not long until the "new locally educated physicians, in their role as frustrated agents of rural modernization, turned to anti-peasant and orientalizing discourses."¹⁰⁵ For the struggling rural doctors it became easy to blame the medical fiasco in the countryside on the peasants' ignorance, ill will, laziness and lack of morality.

As discussed previously, given Romania's demographics, it made sense that the socialist movement took an active interest in the "peasant question," to the point of bringing it on the agenda of the congresses of the Second International. It is not surprising therefore to find socialist physicians at the frontline of the struggle to improve sanitary conditions in the villages. Indicative of the movement's sense of social mission, campaigns for public health fit well within

¹⁰⁵ Călin Cotoi, "Cholera, Health for All, Nation-Building, and Racial Degeneration in Nineteenth-Century Romania," *East Central Europe* vol. 43 (2016), 162.

the broader socialist struggle against “darkness” and brought together two of socialism’s greatest enemies: ignorance and poverty. In fact, the earliest detailed description of the challenges encountered by doctors in rural areas comes from Nicolae Zubcu Codreanu, an exiled Bessarabian anarchist, founder of the first socialist circle in Iași in 1875. Codreanu studied medicine in Saint Petersburg between 1870 and 1874, where he became involved in the *narodnik* movement, and then at the newly founded Medical School in Bucharest, where he also started a circle of socialist students. Upon graduation he was sent as a rural doctor first in Moldova, in the Tutova district, and then in Walachia, in Argeș. During the war of 1877-1878 he was decorated for almost singlehandedly managing a soldiers’ hospital in Pitești, Walachia, before succumbing to complications from pneumonia later that year.

During the course of his brief life, Codreanu maintained a close correspondence with other socialist doctors, including Zamfir Arbore, Nicolae Russel, Constantin Istrati, Alexandru Spiroiu and Gheorghe Manicea, but also with other rising socialists like Gherea and the Nădejde brothers. He was a frequent contributor to the Russian journals *Vperiod* and *Obchina*, and to the *Travailleur*, the periodical founded by the anarchist geographer Élisée Reclus. In his letters and articles he gave a thorough account of the state of the Romanian rural population, which lived “in five to ten times worse misery than the proletariat in the West.”¹⁰⁶ As a result of “terrifying hygienic conditions,” he argued, the Romanians “degenerate” and die. He made a point in noting that since 1859, the beginning of the modern Romanian state and the introduction of European-style institutions, the population of Romania had actually decreased while the mortality rate went up. He attributed this change to the undue burden placed on the most numerous and least advantaged parts of the population, from whom resources were diverted to sustain artificial institutions and the minority that they served. Years later Constantin Istrati, who also started out

¹⁰⁶ Neagoe, *Nicolae Codreanu* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1970), 119.

as a socialist doctor, would take up Codreanu's studies and bring a racial component to his concept of "degeneracy."¹⁰⁷ What Codreanu had in mind, however, was the increasingly poor health of the population he examined and its vulnerability to disease. He was planning on developing a dissertation on the "social-sanitary degeneration of human society" and asked friends to send him, from scientific journals, statistics on "scrofulosis, syphilis, malaria, gout, pellagra, tuberculosis, scurvy, etc; their influence on the nervous system and reproduction, on future generations, etc."¹⁰⁸ He had seen the effects of some of these diseases first hand, and was also aware that adequate treatment was lacking. His letters show a physician trying to experiment with various remedies and complaining bitterly about the inefficiency of the vaccines that he was supposed to administer. "The medicine that I practice as a rural doctor is unhelpful, uninteresting and absurd," he noted with resignation in a letter to Russel from September 1877.¹⁰⁹

The sanitary conditions that Codreanu and others witnessed took a long time to improve. In a lecture delivered two decades later, in 1907, Ion C. Atanasiu, also a socialist early in his career and author of one of the only two important pre-World War Two monographs on Romanian socialism, described the same poverty and squalor already noticed twenty years ago.¹¹⁰ The ordinary Romanian peasant lived in crowded unventilated houses in villages without sewage systems, ate mostly cornmeal and wild roots, and drank contaminated water. There were frequent cases of pellagra, caused by the deficient diet; epidemics of typhus, diphtheria and scarlet fever were still common, and infant mortality was high. A doctor reported that in one case he could not even prescribe milk to the patient because in the entire village there was no single cow. Even in the very rare cases when peasants had access to meat, eggs or milk, they were

¹⁰⁷ Constantin Istrati is one of the early socialists with the most radical shift in ideology and politics.

¹⁰⁸ Neagoe, 162.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 141.

¹¹⁰ Ion C. Atanasiu. *In țara întinericului. Conferința ținută la Ateneul din Galați la 11 feb. 1907* (Galați: Tipolitoграфия "Moldova" Str. Mare, 1907).

prevented from eating them by the traditional Orthodox fasts that added up to one hundred and ninety days of the year. It was a typical of socialists to blame the Church and peasant “superstitions” for part of the problem. The real blame, however, and this is what set the socialists apart from other critics, lay with the state authorities who failed to educate the peasants about basic hygiene, to set up preventative protocols against epidemics and provide adequate medical resources or, in case they did, at least on paper, failed to monitor and reinforce their application in practice. The lecture, entitled “In the Country of Darkness,” somberly concluded that “in the middle of general indifference, disease and death walk freely and do whatever they please.”¹¹¹

In the two decades between Codreanu’s first articles and Atanasiu’s lecture socialist journalists and scientists busied themselves with two tasks. One was to educate the public about hygiene and medical discoveries, just as they did in general with other branches of science. The more important one, however, was to prove that the current medical and social problems that plagued both the city and the countryside (diseases and epidemics, but also alcoholism, criminality and prostitution) were a direct result of the bourgeois social organization, rather than of popular ignorance and apathy, as some critics were prone to argue. Socialist newspapers periodically published articles on hygiene and social medicine. While initially addressing conditions in the countryside, as revealed by dispatches from socialist rural doctors or sympathizers, starting in the mid-1880s socialist journals and circles began to also focus specifically on the health problems of the working class, regularly providing classes on hygiene and materials highlighting the pollution and health dangers of the industrial workplace.¹¹² The first socialist newspaper, *Besarabia* (1879), covered the “understudied sanitary question” in

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ecaterina Arbore, “Influența industriilor asupra sănătății lucrătorilor,” *Viitorul social*, 1907.

almost every issue. The articles included the usual assessments of unhygienic conditions, but also blamed the high infant mortality rate and the declining birthrate on “women’s inferior position in society.”¹¹³ Another early workers’ newspaper, *Emanciparea* (1883) focused regularly on hygiene advice, deplored the long working hours and the lack of adequate nutrition for the workers, advocated for social welfare programs and recommended cremation as a prophylactic measure against epidemics.¹¹⁴

Chief among socialist writers’ social and medical concerns was alcoholism. Articles on alcoholism, both short and generic or extensive and scientific, abound in socialist publications. Studies detail the production and consumption of alcohol, the chemical processes it triggers in the human body, the kinds (rural or urban, chronic or acute) of alcoholism and their prevalence, its symptoms, and long-term consequences. Overall, the image of alcoholism is a terrifying one. This “second Attila of Europe,” as one contributor put it, is the main cause of insanity and suicide in Europe. Alcohol, he claims, has devastating consequences on the human body and especially the nervous system. Children conceived in a state of drunkenness become “crazy, criminals or idiots,” simply put “monsters.” Moreover, the diseases caused by alcoholism are hereditary, up to the third generation. The crucial part to remember about alcoholism, however, is that it is a product of poverty and not the other way around. Alcohol is “a safety valve for the capitalist society.”¹¹⁵ In their misery workers resort to alcohol as a source of nourishment and energy. Educating them about the dangers of alcoholism is futile as long as the circumstances that require its use do not change. The only way for alcoholism to fade in the current conditions would be for the state to forbid its production, thus losing an important source of revenue

¹¹³ *Besarabia*, no. 1, 3, 4, 1879.

¹¹⁴ *Emanciparea*, no. 4, 7, 1883.

¹¹⁵ “Alcoolismul,” *Contemporanul*, No.12, 1888.



Figure 4.4: Pasteur in his laboratory on the cover of *Lumea nouă literară și științifică* (The New Literary and Scientific World) on September 25, 1896

through taxation. Since that was improbable, the only solution for alcoholism was the transformation of society from a capitalist to a socialist one. This conclusion began to be asserted more forcefully as years passed by. However, as change was unlikely to come soon, socialist journalists emphasized time and again that alcoholism was a social disease, caused by the economic organization of society. As any sick person, the alcoholic was innocent, and should not be held accountable for his actions.

The same verdict, albeit with a more complex explanation, applied to criminals. In an early article that echoed Vasile Conta's arguments about the lack of free will and responsibility in an exclusively material world, the journal *Besarabia* claimed that criminals were either "born degenerates," in which case the blame rested with their parents, or became so as a result of the social environment. Obviously even for the former the ultimate cause was still the deficient social organization, which led their parents to vices like alcoholism in the first place.¹¹⁶ More elaborate studies explored the historical and social construction of morality and criminality, explaining why various actions were considered crimes in certain times and places but not in others.¹¹⁷ The implication, although not explicitly stated, was clear. What the bourgeois society defined as criminal might not qualify as such in the future socialist society. Socialist intellectuals were of two minds about Cesare Lombroso's fashionable theory about inherited criminal tendencies and especially the relation between various physical traits and criminal types. On one hand, the theory was considered worthy enough of description and discussion.¹¹⁸ On the other, the tendency to blame the social environment proved stronger. Even if some individuals fit

¹¹⁶ *Besarabia*, no. 11, 1879.

¹¹⁷ "Criminalii," *Contemporanul*, no. 2 and 3, 1887.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Lombroso's classification, the duty of the society was to protect, rather than punish them.¹¹⁹ The same argument went for prostitution,¹²⁰ the supposed increase in the number of suicides,¹²¹ and abortion,¹²² although the latter was only rarely discussed.

The culmination of the socialists' interest in connecting social and medical phenomena with economic conditions came in 1891 with the publication of Ștefan Stâncă's dissertation on "The Social Environment as Pathological Factor."¹²³ Stâncă (Stein) was a Jewish physician educated in Romania who also specialized in ophthalmology in Austria and Germany, where he attended social-democratic congresses and related them in correspondences for the journal *Lumea Nouă*. He joined the socialist movement in 1881 and was a very active party member, propagandist and lecturer for the workers' circles. A doctor assigned to rural areas himself, Stâncă had long denounced in socialist newspapers the lack of hygiene and medical resources, the neglect of many peasants at the hand of the overworked rural doctors and the abuses that befell those who reported these incidents to the higher authorities. After moving to Bucharest, he devoted time (advertised weekly in socialist newspapers) to free consultations and treatment for those who could not otherwise afford medical assistance. His enthusiasm and selflessness made him a legendary figure among fellow socialists and an example for younger doctors.¹²⁴ What made his dissertation special was the detailed, well-documented and scientifically sound manner in which he rose against social Darwinism and Malthusianism and identified the social, rather than natural, environment, as a chief source of disease and distress. The book was published

¹¹⁹ Sofia Nădejde, "Criminalii," *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, Nov. 6, 1895; "Antropologia criminală și magistratura," *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, April 25 and May 1, 1896.

¹²⁰ "Prostituția," *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, no. 32, 1896; Al. Ionescu, "Corupțiunea în capital," *Lumea nouă*, no. 29, 1894.

¹²¹ Cipar, "Cauza inmultirii sinuciderilor," *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, no. 15, 1895.

¹²² Sorina, "Despre avort," *Lumea nouă literară și științifică*, December 18, 1896.

¹²³ Ștefan Stâncă, *Mediul social ca factor pathologic. Cu o prefață de C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea și o notiță biografică de Sofia Nădejde* (Iași, 1897).

¹²⁴ I. Felea, *Un medic socialist: Ștefan Stâncă* (Editura Partidului Social-Democrat, 1947).

immediately by the University of Bucharest Press and then it underwent several editions, with added commentaries and recollections from socialist leaders, becoming an essential text of Romanian socialism.

Social medicine in general and the socialist contribution to it in particular changed decisively with the rise of microbiology and bacteriology in the 1880s. As many reports from



Figure 4.5: Dr. Ion C. Cantacuzino, creator of a vaccine against malaria, in his laboratory

doctors showed, the Romanian population fought not only the diseases brought about by a poor diet, like pellagra or scurvy, but also epidemics of quickly spreading contagious diseases for which treatment was at best tentative. The most dangerous among them was cholera, “the defining disease of the nineteenth century.”¹²⁵ Waves of cholera struck the Romanian Principalities from 1828 to 1893, affecting especially the ports along the Danube, and the growing towns of Bucharest and Iași, and became a threat again during the Balkan Wars and the First World War. This was somewhat similar with the situation in Western Europe, where cholera reached London and Paris in 1832, to be followed by four other waves which lasted until 1896. In Romania equally disturbing were the epidemics of typhus, diphtheria, syphilis and

¹²⁵ Cotoi, 164.

tuberculosis. In light of their prevalence, it is understandable that socialist journals focused at length on these diseases and their potential cures. *Contemporanul* published eight long studies on cholera in its first two years of publication alone.¹²⁶ Tuberculosis ranked second in the socialists' preoccupations, followed by diphtheria, syphilis and pellagra. Unlike the general articles on the country's sorry sanitary state, the gravity of the studies on infectious diseases was also accompanied by excitement and curiosity about the latest advances in the discovery of bacteria, viruses and corresponding vaccines. Socialist periodicals carefully followed Pasteur's experiments with the vaccine against rabies, the discovery of Koch's bacillus, and the developments in the germ theory of diseases in general. Bacteriology was particularly attractive because it provided an additional philosophical perspective on the role of socialism and its promoters. Recalling the public lectures on cholera organized by the socialist circle in Bucharest, a witness noted the comparison between the struggles that take place within the human body and those that characterize the society as a whole. Just as white blood cells fight bacteria, vanguard individuals who are aware of the anomalies of the existent economic structures can act as protectors of the social body by working to remove the respective social diseases. In a healthy organism the process is not only natural but also inevitable.¹²⁷

Sometimes commitment to public health went beyond commitment to the narrow structures of organized socialism. In 1908, Ion C. Cantacuzino, a professor of bacteriology and experimental medicine at the University of Bucharest and socialist activist since the mid-1880s, joined the left faction of the Liberal Party, believing that he could do more for social reform from a position of authority, something only an alliance with a dominant party could provide. He thus

¹²⁶ "Arma împotriva holerei," "Holera," and "Holera- sfârșit" in 1883; "Cele cinci epidemii de holeră la Paris" I and II, "Hommel despre holeră," and "Cercetari însemnate asupra microbului holerei" in 1884; "Hultuirea împotriva holerei" in 1885.

¹²⁷ S. Irimescu, *Un ideolog social și un idealist politic. Profesorul I. Cantacuzino* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Eminescu S.A, 1934), 7.

joined the ranks of the so-called “generous,” socialist leaders who joined the Liberal Party, most of them in 1899, and are usually unfairly labeled as traitors in the historiography of the movement. Apart from joining the liberals much later and maintaining his commitments to the socialist organizations to which he previously contributed, Cantacuzino’s long and largely successful career as head of the sanitary service and then minister of health questions this narrative of betrayal and suggests the continuity of leftist ideals. Cantacuzino discovered and implemented a version of a vaccine against cholera, and during the Balkan Wars and World War One led large-scale immunization campaigns against cholera, malaria and typhus. Thanks to him Romania was the second country in the world, after France, which introduced, in 1926, a vaccine against tuberculosis for newborns. He initiated and passed laws on the regulation of working conditions in factories and harbors, a law for the prevention of tuberculosis, and fought, even if eventually unsuccessfully, for the establishment of a comprehensive health and sanitation law.¹²⁸ While budgetary constraints only allowed for its partial application, it provided a reference and starting point for future sanitary regulations that were implemented later during the interwar and even communist periods.

Socialist intellectuals did not just engage in obscure theoretical explanations or didactic appraisals of the potential of science to improve everyday life. They also worked actively towards the fulfillment of a distinct social mission, which included using advances in science and medicine to alleviate common health conditions or at least raise awareness about them. As time passed, they were joined in their crusade by various other progressives. They were, however, among the earliest and most determined pioneers. This commitment to public health and the association of socialist activists and scientists with progressive initiatives, campaigns and

¹²⁸ Irimescu, *Un ideolog social și un idealist politic. Profesorul I. Cantacuzino* and “Profesorul I. Cantacuzino: un biologist genial și un mare umanist,” in *Viața Românească*, no. 2 (1934).

legislation constitutes a defining feature of the prewar Romanian socialist movement and contributed to its visibility despite political stagnation.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE “SOCIALIST INTELLECTUAL BROTHERHOOD” AND THE NATIONALIST CHALLENGE

This chapter explores a different dimension of the early Romanian Left, the uneasy relationship between socialism and nationalism, by tracing how nationalism came to infiltrate, influence and eventually even shape the writing and thinking of Romanian leftists in the decades preceding the First World War. At a time and place where public debates were suffused with implications about national identity, leftist intellectuals were forced to move away from the intrinsic internationalism of socialism and confront the nationalist impetus of their era. Failure to do so risked alienating sympathizers, friends and potential political constituencies. Belonging to the Romanian public arena required accommodation with nationalism, however reluctantly. I examine this gradual process by identifying key moments in the prewar history of Romanian leftists' encounters with nationalism. Initial equivocal attitudes towards nationalism were replaced as the movement became more organized by a staunch commitment to internationalism. Next, the mid-1890s polemics on the “Jewish question” that introduced the idea of a potential separate political strategy “according to nationality” to the Romanian socialist discourse were followed by the necessity to address the question of the Romanians from the neighboring empires, whose demands for self-determination received increasing coverage in the Romanian media. Lastly, the emergence of more aggressive populist versions of nationalism inadvertently made the leftists, although always on the offensive, partners of dialogue. By the time leftist journalists proclaimed nationalism a “national danger,”¹ they were speaking the same language as their opponents, the language of nationalism. The increasing awareness of the reality and relevance of nationalism led to creative theoretical reassessments. Rather than abandoning their

¹ *Facla*, no. 15, 1910.

role of, to borrow Michael Shafir's phrase, advocates of "universalism in a place obsessed with its emergent particularism,"² Romanian leftists became subtle negotiators between ideals of social justice and national development.

The history of the early Romanian Left's relation to nationalism is one of a double political erasure. Predictably, communist scholarship reinterpreted socialists' attitudes towards nationalism in accordance with the political and ideological demands of the day. Thus, the 1950s and 60s narratives of commitment to internationalism, pro-Russian sentiment and Eastern European brotherhood were replaced after the "national turn" of the 1970s with depictions of socialists as fervent nationalists, advocates of the incorporation of Transylvania in the Old Kingdom of Romania (achieved in 1918), and militants for Romanians' rights in the Russian and Austro-Hungarian provinces of Bessarabia and Bukovina (both part of Greater Romania in the interwar period but lost either entirely, Bessarabia, or partially, northern Bukovina, following World War Two).³ By contrast, post-1989 scholarship, fascinated with the recovery of the long-term taboo, intellectually effervescent but also virulently nationalist interwar "golden age" of Romanian culture, was quick to emphasize the "foreignness" of socialism of all eras.⁴ Spanning both the communist and the post-communist period, Michael Shafir's important studies on Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea represent a notable exception to these trends. As noted in the chapter on literary criticism, while recovering Gherea's legacy Shafir also tends to regard his

² Michael Shafir, "Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea: Wrong Time, Wrong Face, Wrong Place." *Studia Universitatis Babeş Bolyai European Studies* no. 2 (2007), 24.

³ For a comprehensive account of the "national turn" in Romanian historiography see Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). For an example of the reinterpretation of socialist attitudes towards nationalism see Ion Popescu-Puțuri, ed., *Vechimea, permanența și unitatea poporului român în scrierile socialiștilor: texte ale socialiștilor români scrise între anii 1872-1919* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1980).

⁴ For a representative example see Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

presence in the European periphery as both exceptional and unfortunate, thus inadvertently reinforcing the “foreign” character of socialism in Romania.⁵

Predictably, neither of these extremes does justice to the intricate, ambiguous and constantly shifting relationship between the early Romanian Left and nationalism. Their position in the pre-World War One Romanian public and political arena required early Romanian socialists and their allies to accommodate themselves to the increasing presence and relevance of nationalism. The historical context itself favored an emphasis on nationalism. In 1880 Romania was very much in its infancy as a state. The 1859 unification of Moldova and Wallachia was followed in 1866 by the accession to the Romanian throne of Prince Carol I of Hohenzollern, and in 1878 by the declaration of official independence from the Ottoman Empire. However, both unification and independence left sizeable populations of ethnic Romanians outside the borders of the newly created state, mainly in the Hungarian province of Transylvania, but also in Austrian Bukovina and Russian Bessarabia. While the total population of the Kingdom of Romania in 1900 was around 6 million, the number of Romanians abroad exceeded 4 million.⁶ Naturally, the fortunes of the latter interested the Romanian public, and occasionally politicians, to a considerable extent. Among the provinces, Transylvania, with the largest Romanian population and by then a coherent and well-organized Romanian national movement, received most attention. The prominence of the Transylvanian question in the Romanian media placed socialists in a particularly problematic situation. Adding to their concerns was the demographic situation within the kingdom of Romania itself, and especially the Jewish question. While small as population (4.3 percent in the 1899 census), Jews nevertheless constituted the largest minority

⁵See Michael Shafir “Sociology of Knowledge in the Middle of Nowhere: Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea.” *East European Quarterly* vol. 19, no. 3 (1985): 321-336, as well as his “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea: Wrong Time, Wrong Face, Wrong Place.”

⁶ According to Keith Hitchins, in 1900 there were 2.785.000 Romanians living in Hungary, 230.000 in Bukovina and 1.092.000 in Bessarabia. See Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866-1947*, 202.

and the prejudices against them were vastly disproportionate to their numbers.⁷ The fact that many socialists were Jews or supporters of Jewish emancipation pushed them further away to the fringe of the political spectrum and added to their difficulties in addressing nationalism.

As noted in Chapter One, the emphasis on the foreign (mostly Jewish) origins of many socialist and especially communist postwar leaders had been a constant trope in a post-1989 scholarship invested in establishing the alien, Soviet-imposed and traditionally non-Romanian character of communism. Many initial leaders of the socialist movement in Romania were indeed not Romanians, but Russian, Polish or Bulgarian émigrés involved in the traffic of illegal literature from the socialist centers of Western Europe to the Russian Empire. Still, out of the one hundred and sixteen individuals examined in Chapter One only twenty-five were not ethnic Romanians, including nineteen Jews. This number is actually quite low given the perception, common at the time and occasionally reinforced in the historiography of the topic, of the socialist movement in Romania as predominantly Jewish. In fact, Jews constituted a minority in both the intellectual core of the movement and within its group of political leaders. While the percentage of non-ethnic Romanians is by no means exceptional, what is more revealing is that out of the entire group, only twenty-eight lacked studies in foreign countries or extended periods of living abroad. As Chapter One pointed out, this was customary at the time for members of the upper-class but extremely unusual in the case of workers. This familiarity with the world beyond the boundaries of Romania set socialists apart and made them distinctive. To many of their contemporaries, it also made them ‘foreign’ whether they were actually so or not. The persistence of this label would affect the way socialists presented themselves to the Romanian public and the way they intervened in social and political debates.

⁷ Hitchins, 164-5.

Socialism and Nationalism in Theory and Historiography

In his characteristically witty style, Ernest Gellner famously said that Marxists liked to think that the spirit of history had made a dreadful mistake. “The awakening message was intended for classes, but by some terrible postal error was delivered to nations.”⁸ The already problematic status of nationalism in the thought of the founding fathers of Marxism became exceedingly more complicated when movements which defined themselves as socialist confronted “really existing nationalisms.”⁹ Whereas socialist states established in Eastern Europe after WWII arguably received an already watered-down, slogan-like version of Marxism-Leninism, tensions between socialism and nationalism were already evident by the end of the nineteenth century and would reach a climax with the rise of Bolshevism. The latter showed that, without necessarily trading Bolshevism for nationalism, as Roman Szporluk would have it,¹⁰ nationalism, like many other modern phenomena which failed to meet their predicted end, can only be reconciled with a revised version of Marxism.

Marx’s and Engels’ ambiguous legacy led to a widely-shared consensus on their myopia towards nationalism or, in Erica Benner’s words, the “Marxist non-theory of nationalism.”¹¹ The crux of the problem is Marx’s and Engels’ seemingly paradoxical support for some national independence movements and outright dismissal of others, otherwise known as the distinction between historical (the Poles or the Irish) and “historyless” (most notoriously the South Slavs) peoples. Put simply, in their views, peoples inhabiting large territories, who once had or are likely to have their own centralized state and who benefit from having an active bourgeoisie will

⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 129.

⁹ Erica Benner, *Really Existing Nationalisms: A Post-Communist View from Marx and Engels* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹⁰ Roman Szporluk, *Communism and Nationalism: Karl Marx versus Friedrich List* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹¹ Benner, 3.

make prosperous capitalist nations, while smaller groups, defined culturally and linguistically but lacking economic integration, will not be able to cope with the penetration of capitalism and will consequently become reactionary. While this automatically dismissed many nineteenth-century nationalisms, Marx's and Engels' presumed support for historical peoples like the Irish or the Poles is no less problematic. Whereas Kevin Anderson stresses Marx's genuine commitment to the Polish cause and his unwavering support in debates within the Second International, he is forced to admit that Poland is crucial in Marx's vision of Europe because its independence would weaken the arch-reactionary Russian Empire.¹² As for Ireland, Anderson and Ephraim Nimni agree that Marx and Engels perceived it as a "lever" for sparking the revolution in Britain itself.¹³ Research into the question, including Engels' first-hand acquaintance with the English working-class, convinced them that anti-Irish prejudice prevented the development of an adequate class consciousness among English workers. Only Ireland's independence, ending the supply of cheap labor to England and the competition between Irish and English workers, could undermine British capitalism. As instrumentalist as this view may seem, Benner is right to point out that it nevertheless signaled a new, positive appreciation for the role of nationalism in fueling social revolution.¹⁴

Generally scarce, the scholarship on the relationship between nationalism and socialism is characterized by an enduring emphasis on the thought of major socialist theorists and a focus on the appeal, or more often failure, of internationalism. The interest in key socialist figures' understanding of the national question has provided this literature with a distinct geographical focus. In his study of French Marxism's encounter with nationalism, Robert Stuart notes that

¹² Kevin Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 45.

¹³ Ephraim Nimni, *Marxism and Nationalism: Theoretical Origins of a Political Crisis* (London: Pluto Press, 1991), 33; Anderson, 130.

¹⁴ Benner, 69.

works on socialism and nationalism “move without exception from the founding fathers to theorists from the eastern multinational empires,” “to Austria, Poland, and Russia, to the marchlands of Eastern Europe.”¹⁵ Indeed, most works on socialism and nationalism turn out to be studies on Kautsky, Bauer, Luxemburg, Kropotkin, Plekhanov or Lenin.¹⁶ In turn, equivalent works on Western Europe tend to focus on ‘deviant’ British or Irish socialists.¹⁷ In Tony Judt’s opinion, Western scholars were “always liable to neglect the topic [of nationalism] since in the perspective of the later history of the left in France, Italy or Germany it lost its prominence.”¹⁸ Instead, they chose to concentrate on the avatars of internationalism, examining its rhetoric and symbolic practices, but often also noting the limited effective action of the International Socialist Bureau. The image that emerges is not that of internationalism, but of a network of inter-nationalisms, centered around Germany, the capital and model of social-democracy. While studies document the socialists’ common stance on colonialism, imperialism, strikes and shared tangible goals like working hours and conditions, they also routinely emphasize the failures of working-class solidarity across national boundaries.¹⁹ Within the latter, the question of French-German relations is the most notorious but by no means only case.²⁰ Stuart’s work on the Parti Ouvrier Français represents an exception to these trends, examining in depth the French

¹⁵ Robert Stuart, *Marxism and National Identity: Socialism, Nationalism, and National Socialism during the French Fin de Siècle* (State University of New York Press: Albany, 2006), 3.

¹⁶ See Georges Haupt, Michael Lowy and Claudie Weil, eds., *Les marxistes et la question nationale 1848-1914* (Montreal: Editions L’Etincelle, 1974), Eric Cahm and Vladimir Fisera, eds. *Socialism and Nationalism*, 3 vols (Spokesman: Nottingham, 1978-80), Michael Forman, *Nationalism and the International Labor Movement: The Idea of the Nation in Socialist and Anarchist Theory* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998).

¹⁷ David Howell, *A Lost Left: Three Studies in Socialism and Nationalism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

¹⁸ Tony Judt, Review article of “Aspects of International Socialism, 1871-1914: Essays” by George Haupt and Peter Fawcett; “A Lost Left: Three Studies in Socialism and Nationalism” by David Howell; “Paper Stones: A History of Electoral Socialism” by Adam Przeworski and John Sprague. *The Journal of Modern History* vol. 61, no. 4 (1989), 746.

¹⁹ Frits van Holthoorn and Marcel van der Linden, eds. *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830-1940* (Brill: Leiden, 1988).

²⁰ Jolyon Howorth, “French Workers and German Workers: The Impossibility of Internationalism, 1900-1914,” *European History Quarterly* no. 15 (1985): 71-97.

Guesdists' approach to nationalism, although his choice of an analytical rather than chronological approach leads him to conclude that "little overall 'development'" occurred in the French socialists' response to nationalism.²¹ It is precisely these gradual, at times imperceptible, changes in the socialists' attitudes towards nationalism that this chapter intends to capture.

In spite of its apparent visibility, the question of socialism and nationalism in Eastern Europe, especially outside imperial contexts, has rarely been addressed. As Michael Shafir pointed out, one would be hard-pressed to find in general histories of socialism more than a couple of paragraphs, if any, on Eastern European socialism or socialist thinkers other than the major ones already mentioned.²² Jochen Schmidt's meticulous and well-researched study on Romanian socialism and populism continue to focus on the local adaptation of Marxism to agrarian countries and its political evolution.²³ While the comparison between socialism and the various versions of populism that emerged in Romania after the turn of the century could have given rise to fruitful discussions of their relation to nationalism, Schmidt addresses this question only in relation to Christian Racovski, the Bulgarian-born leader of the Romanian socialist movement after 1900, whose admission of the possibility of national emancipation in conditions of economic backwardness and dependency places him, in Schmidt's opinion, among better known Marxists theorists of imperialism. Augusta Dimou's innovative comparative study of socialist movements in Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece is concerned with the extent to which socialism succeeded (or, in the Greek case, failed) to become a viable alternative to nationalism.²⁴ The Serbian Radicals constituted a populist party in the manner of the original

²¹ Stuart, 5.

²² Michael Shafir, "'Romania's Marx' and the National Question: Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea." *History of Political Thought* vol. 15, no. 2 (1984): 295-314.

²³ Jochen Schmidt, *Populismus oder Marxismus: zur Ideengeschichte der radikalen Intelligenz Rumäniens, 1875-1915*.

²⁴ Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans*.

Russian *narodnichestvo* and, once in power, appropriated nationalist ideas just as easily as they absorbed the state and bureaucratic apparatus against which they built their legitimacy. The Bulgarian socialists, the only relatively successful social-democratic party in the Balkans before World War One, was torn by its internal debates between the dogmatically faithful Narrows and the Broads who were willing to include the country's peasants and craftsmen in their modernizing programs. Combined with the simultaneous rise of an autonomous agrarian movement, this factionalism hindered the progress of the Bulgarian socialists. In the Greek case socialism made no political inroads until the Great Catastrophe of 1922, as the Greek public space was monopolized by the Liberal Party of Eleftherios Venizelos, which acted as agent of both modernization and nationalism. In a country devoted to the *Megali Idea*, the establishment of Greater Greece, and characterized by a very strong executive branch, bourgeoisie, and bureaucracy, socialist intellectuals had no choice but to embrace nationalist ideas and enjoy the career opportunities that joining the Liberals entailed. Studies of the complex and gradual processes through which Eastern European socialists neither embraced nationalism nor completely ignored it are, however, conspicuously absent. In his recent study of social-democracy in Austria-Hungary, Jakub Beneš shows convincingly that workers, even if bilingual and living in ethnically mixed working-class neighborhoods, were aware of national differences and responded positively to nationalist programs. While the Czech and German workers examined by Beneš were sympathetic to each other's causes and did not ally themselves with the parties of their respective national bourgeoisies, they nonetheless endorsed their own, no less explicit, working-class nationalism.²⁵ Beneš's very important study reveals the presence and importance of ethnic nationalism at grass-root levels. By contrast, this chapter shows the

²⁵ Jakub S. Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism: Czech and German Social Democracy in Habsburg Austria, 1890-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

vacillations of socialist political and intellectual leaders when faced with the dilemmas of nationalism and nation-building.

Ambiguous Beginnings

The first generation of socialists in Romania was a remarkably mobile group whose sympathy for one brand of socialism or another changed as swiftly as did their geographical location. Traveling from St. Petersburg and Moscow through Iași and Bucharest to Berlin, Geneva or Paris, the intellectuals who would form the backbone of the first socialist circles in Romania successively, or sometimes simultaneously, embraced the teachings of Lassalle, Lafargue, Guesde, Jaurès, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Marx and Kautsky. The ideological ambiguity that characterized early socialism in Romania in general manifested itself with regard to perceptions of nationalism as well. Understandably, ethnic Romanians from foreign provinces were most susceptible to the attraction of nationalism. The prominent Bessarabian nihilist Zamfir Arbore, Bakunin's close associate, deplored in a letter the "sinful century" which allowed territories like Trieste, Bohemia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Dalmatia, Poland, Transylvania or Bukovina to "suffer" under foreign domination.²⁶ Foreign leaders of the early movement in Romania also played the national card. Nicolae Sudzilovski Russel, the prominent and extremely eccentric doctor who was active in Romania in the late 1870s and early 1880s,²⁷ argued in one of the first socialist works in Romanian that socialism alone could ensure national survival.²⁸ The first short-lived socialist journal was suggestively entitled *Besarabia*, to preserve the memory of the "Moldovan half now under the barbarian Russian yoke."²⁹ While extolling socialism for erasing

²⁶ *DDIMMDR*, vol. 2, 55.

²⁷ For an account of his life see M.I. Iosko, *Nikolai Sudzilovskii-Russel': zhizn', revoliutsionnaia deiatel'nost' i mirovozzrenie* (Minsk: BGU, 1976).

²⁸ Nicolae Russel, *Un studiu psychiatric urmat de câteva comentarii asupra ideilor sănătoase* (Iași: 1880).

²⁹ *Besarabia*, September 28, 1879.

national and religious boundaries between workers, the journal often referred to the “denationalization” of the Romanians in Russian and Austro-Hungarian provinces and showed clear irredentist undertones. The peak of ideological confusion was however probably represented by *Dacia viitoare* (Future Dacia), a journal published by Romanian students in Brussels in 1883. The reference in the title to the Roman province of Dacia, which broadly included modern-day Transylvania and Bukovina as well, was complemented by the puzzling subtitle which identified the journal as a “socialist-irredentist organ.” The extent to which young Romanian intellectuals could accommodate and reconcile contrasting ideological labels was baffling. While identifying themselves as “communists” and “anarchists,” the Romanian journalists were primarily interested in demonstrating the congruence between socialism and irredentism. Their explanation was of course simplistic:

We believe we are thoroughly logical in maintaining that we are socialist-irredentists. As socialists we oppose the exploitation of man by man. As such, we cannot but oppose the exploitation of one folk by another as well.³⁰

However, the potentially dangerous implications of this commitment to irredentism did not escape them:

Yet, we would hate to see our work turned to nothing through the formation of a Romanian kingdom, empire or republic which would cover territories from the Dniester to the Tisa but in which the dominant Romanian or Romanianized class would live idly from the work of the Romanian people.³¹

Irredentism, they claimed, was opposed to the idea of “national unity.” Granted, they argued, as few future socialists ever would, that ignoring the plight of Romanian “brothers” abroad was

³⁰ *Dacia viitoare*, no. 2, 1883, 22. This and all the following translations are my own.

³¹ *Ibid.*

both criminal and shameful.³² However, together with Austro-Hungarian domination, the goal of Romanian socialist students was to overthrow the native Romanian bourgeoisie as well.³³ Instead of unitary national states, they envisioned a federation of peoples and, for the “future Dacia” in particular, a communal organization, which is understandable in light of the still very powerful echo of the Paris Commune among leftists of all kinds.³⁴

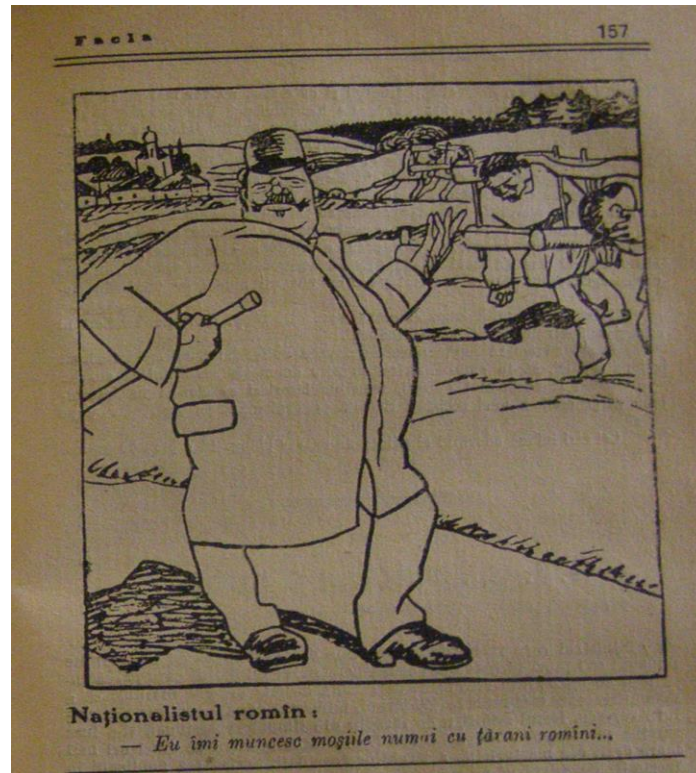


Figure 5.1: “The Romanian Nationalist: Only Romanian peasants work my fields!”³⁵

While generally more skeptical, socialist journals within Romania also took over the irredentist idea. If the first socialist daily, *Drepturile omului* (Human Rights), proudly denied in 1885 any affinity with irredentism,³⁶ two years earlier, the journal *Emanciparea* (Emancipation) argued

³² Ibid., no. 4, 55.

³³ Ibid., no. 5, 65.

³⁴ Ibid., no. 12, 191.

³⁵ Caricature in *Facla*, no. 10, May 16, 1910, 157.

³⁶ *Drepturile omului*, no. 13, 1885.

that the political fragmentation of the Romanian-speaking population prevented the spread of progressive ideas and social changes, thus appreciating the nationalist efforts of Transylvanian Romanians as “just and necessary.”³⁷ For many socialists, however, “national” remained a catch-all cover for lack of substance and dubious political programs, arguments and motivations.³⁸ Irredentism, in particular, was the invention of a greedy bourgeoisie and the hallmark of conservatism, aristocracy and royalty, “imagined in a night of insomnia by a sick mind dreaming of golden crowns.”³⁹ Nonetheless, Romanian socialists often contradicted themselves, confirming that the demarcation from irredentism was yet to be clear cut. In two almost consecutive issues, the journalists from *Drepturile omului* both condemned the leaders of the Transylvanian Romanians of wanting to reconcile the Romanian population with the Hungarian government⁴⁰ and accused Romanians abroad in general of unwarranted chauvinism.⁴¹ While the contradicting articles belong to two distinct, and highly prominent, socialist leaders, the fact that the same journal could host such divergent opinions is indicative of the lack of unity and even confusion still affecting the socialist ranks.

Internationalism at All Costs

The last decade of the nineteenth century marks a deliberate departure from this earlier confusion and a resolute commitment to internationalist dogmas. It is also the decade when Romanian socialists were politically most active. Following the founding of the Romanian Socialist Workers’ Party in 1893, Romanian socialists engaged in official correspondence with other socialist parties abroad and consistently sent representatives to the congresses of the

³⁷ *Emanciparea*, no. 2, 1883.

³⁸ *Muncitorul*, no. 5, 1887.

³⁹ *Drepturile omului*, no. 46, 1885.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 11, 1885.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, no. 13, 1885.

Second International. Prompted by their now newly official position, socialists were more eager than ever to uphold Marxist orthodoxy. The new internationalist impetus was obvious in editorials, commentaries on domestic and foreign affairs, reactions to periodicals of other political orientations and recommendations to their own constituencies. For several years, the Romanian socialist media acclaimed the friendship between French and German workers in spite of conflicts over Alsace-Lorraine⁴² just as they did the supposed comradeship between the lower classes in the Balkans in the midst of nationalist conflict.⁴³ At the same time newspapers dedicated many programmatic articles to the explanation of theoretical internationalism, insisting in particular on distinguishing it from “cosmopolitanism,” an accusation socialism often faced. As Michael Shafir pointed out, the very persistence in addressing charges of “cosmopolitanism” suggests the keen awareness of the “stigma of foreignness” which was still often attached to socialism.⁴⁴

The change in attitude was nowhere more obvious than in the approach to Romanians abroad. The new socialist daily *Lumea nouă* (The New World) irrevocably condemned irredentism.⁴⁵ In 1898, at the fifth congress of the party, socialists denounced the nationalist abuses committed by Romanian authorities in the newly acquired province of Dobrogea (Dobruja) and asked for an urgent extension of Romanian constitutional provisions to the new region as well.⁴⁶ The most sensitive subject remained, however, Transylvania. Several years earlier, covering peasant revolts in Transylvania, *Muncitorul* (The Worker) already

⁴² See for example, *Drepturile omului*, no. 10, 1885 and “Informare asupra congresului socialist internațional de la Paris din 1889”, in *DDIMMDR*, vol. 2, 622. See also vol. 3, 99.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 452.

⁴⁴ Shafir (1984), 301.

⁴⁵ *Lumea nouă*, February 9, 1895.

⁴⁶ *Dare de seamă despre desbaterile Congresului al III-lea al social-democrației române ținut în București în zilele de 4 și 5 aprilie 1895* (Bucharest, 1896).



Figure 5.2: Contemporary Drawing of Constantin Mille, here depicted in support of the 8-hours workday

rejoiced over the solidarity between Romanian, Hungarian and German peasants.⁴⁷ In the 1890s, the same was asked repeatedly of all Romanian workers in Transylvania. Socialists in Romania advised them to coordinate their efforts with their Hungarian counterparts and become active members of the Social-Democratic Party of Austria. In all their arguments, socialists emphasized the difference between the oppressive Hungarian bourgeoisie and the innocent Hungarian proletariat. The prominent journalist Constantin Mille dedicated a series of articles to this issue trying to convince Transylvanian Romanians not to follow the nationalistic and irredentist lead of the (also oppressive) Romanian bourgeoisie but seek alliance with their social counterparts:

⁴⁷ *Muncitorul*, no. 39, 1888.

As socialists and as Romanians we cannot but protest against the persecutions endured by the Romanians across the Carpathians. However, we unite our protest with that of fellow Romanians under one condition: to distinguish between the *Hungarian people* and the *Hungarian bourgeoisie*. [...] We, as Romanian socialists, as members of the Romanian Workers' Party, have nothing but love and respect for our Hungarian fellow workers. [...] As such, rather than pouring oil over fire, we will do our best to remove from the conflict the workers of both nationalities [...] since the events showed that workers had nothing to do with the oppression of Romanians.⁴⁸

Advising moderation, the Romanian socialists deplored the fact that “apparently the prejudice that anything Hungarian is hostile to the Romanians had taken root among Romanians in Transylvania,” assuring them once again that Hungarian workers would always be on their side.⁴⁹ Mille was quickly denounced for lacking patriotism,⁵⁰ an accusation that had already been leveled against him three years before, when he gave lectures “on patriotism and cosmopolitanism” at the Bucharest Circle for Social Studies.⁵¹ At the same time, correspondence between the Romanian party and the Hungarian section of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party suggests that both sides made efforts to curb the “machinations” of their respective nations’ “chauvinist bourgeoisies” and instead make workers aware of their natural affinities.⁵² That workers’ internationalist solidarity is and should be spontaneous was confirmed in the socialists’ eyes by the successful strikes in the port city of Constanța, where Romanian, Armenian and Turkish workers united their efforts despite the absence of any socialist propaganda.⁵³

Unfortunately, the timing was least favorable for the socialists’ internationalist zeal. In 1892, during the famous “Memorandum” trial, several leaders of the Romanians in Transylvania

⁴⁸ *Munca*, June 21, 1892.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, September 19, 1893.

⁵⁰ Avramescu, *Constantin Mille: Tinerețea unui socialist*, 345.

⁵¹ Victor Slăvescu, vol. 2, 93.

⁵² *DDIMMDR*, vol. 3, 244.

⁵³ *Lumea nouă*, April 7, 1896.

were prosecuted and sentenced to jail after sending a memorandum to the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Josef requesting equal rights for Hungarians and Romanians. In 1894, following the intervention of Romania's king, Carol I, they were released. In the same year, some of them visited Bucharest, where they were welcomed enthusiastically by Romanians who had followed closely the proceedings of the trial and then the debate over ending their imprisonment.

Prominent among them was Father Vasile Lucaciu, a Uniate priest and long-time advocate of Romanian rights, worshipped as a "martyr" of the cause by many Romanian supporters.

The official socialist reaction was at best insensitive. In the eyes of Lucaciu's sympathizers, some of them closely associated with the socialist movement themselves, it was morally egregious. The viciousness of the main socialist journal's attack surprised many within their own ranks. Blaming Lucaciu for being grateful for the king's intervention and praising the freedoms enjoyed by Romanians in Romania while ignoring the poverty and social problems that many of them confronted, socialist journalists went so far as to accuse him of coming to Bucharest to "eat for free:"

You're going too far, Father! Have you really not seen the peasant revolts, the beatings in schools, the beatings in the army, the fact that public meetings are stopped here more fiercely than they are in Braşov [in Transylvania]? Damn it! Hungarian jails alone could not have made you so blind! This is the great nationalist who comes to us and does not even notice the abuses of the powerful. [...] Nothing more than 'banquetofag' nationalists, they don't even deserve the workers' contempt.⁵⁴

In addition to the use of the offensive term "banquetofag," reserved for demagogues and spurious revolutionaries hungry for public honors, the article also tried to discredit Lucaciu by alluding to his seemingly divided loyalties as a Uniate priest who was funded by both Romanians and "the Pope."

⁵⁴ *Munca*, March 13, 1894.

While this gaffe had little impact on the socialists' already poor political fortunes, it alienated some of the sympathizers who shared the same social and cultural project. The gratuitousness of the insults repulsed many of their friends and for a while created a rift in the leftist community. Disgusted, but feeling a reply was necessary, Alexandru Vlahuță, a well-known writer and for a time a close associate of the socialist cultural circles, called on socialists to be "kinder, more humane, and more moderate" for the benefit of their cause and urged them to renounce slander and provide a "more dignified picture of the future world" they claimed to be working towards.⁵⁵ Many socialist sympathizers, who looked up to both Vlahuță and the socialist leaders were saddened to see the conflict, which was amplified at some point by divergent aesthetic views.⁵⁶ While Vlahuță and Gherea eventually reconciled,⁵⁷ the moment remains a telling one for the acrimony that the socialists' intransigent stance on the national question could provoke.

The Jewish Question and the "Nationalities Tactics"

Controversies also affected what seemed to be Romanian socialists' most consistent tenet, the Jewish question. Nineteenth and early twentieth-century Romania is widely known as a strongly anti-Semitic country.⁵⁸ Anti-Semitism rose steadily in the 1800s accompanying the migration of Ashkenazi Jews from Galicia and Russia to Moldova⁵⁹ and reached extreme heights

⁵⁵ Alexandru Vlahuță, *Un an de luptă*, 102.

⁵⁶ Galaction, 88; Kiritescu, 70.

⁵⁷ Letter from A. Toma to Elena Farago, 1905, in Traian Demetrescu and Elena Farago. C.D. Papastate, ed. *Corespondență* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1976).

⁵⁸ See William O. Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991) and Carol Iancu, *Jews in Romania, 1866-1919: From Exclusion to Emancipation*, translated by Carvel de Bussy (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1996).

⁵⁹ The migration started in 1827, when Emperor Nicholas I forced Jews to undertake obligatory military service for twenty-five-year terms. The percentage of Jews within the total population of Romania increased constantly until 1899. See Frederick Kellogg, *The Road to Romanian Independence* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1995), 45.

after the turn of the century. Gherea himself summarized the situation in a letter from 1912 to Vladimir Korolenko thus:

The entire Romanian intelligentsia (except P. Carp,⁶⁰ or Caragiale) is of anti-Semitic predisposition and is saturated by anti-Semitic spirit [...] But even though all our political parties are anti-Semitic, still none of them allowed or would allow too egregious trials against Jews, or pogroms of the Russian kind.⁶¹

From the start, socialists had been the greatest opponents of anti-Semitism and the most vocal advocates of Jewish emancipation.⁶² Across the entire time period under study countless articles denounced the artificiality of the “Jewish question” and, as in the case of any other ethnic group, distinguished between a Jewish proletariat and a Jewish bourgeoisie. While automatically rejecting anti-Semitic outbursts targeting Jewish workers, Romanian socialists regarded anti-Semitism directed against the Jewish bourgeoisie as a jealous reaction from an ethnically Romanian bourgeoisie unable to keep up with their dynamic and competitive Jewish counterpart. However, while constant in their criticism of Jewish scapegoating, the overall attitude of socialists in Romania towards Jews began to change gradually as the Jews themselves became more organized and more insistent in their pursuit of political rights. Contemporaries recall that Jewish and even Romanian socialists’ speeches and agitation in favor of political rights for the Jews were met with “enthusiasm and fervor, but occasionally also manifest hostility.”⁶³ Consequently, the initially vague campaigns in favor of rights for Jews in general became more and more qualified, to the point where socialists explicitly *denied* their support for Jewish

⁶⁰ P. Carp (1837-1919) was a respected Junimist intellectual and Conservative politician. He acted as Prime Minister in 1900-1901 and 1911-1912.

⁶¹ C. Dobrogeanu- Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 8, 279.

⁶² Constantin Filitis, *Democratismul și patriotismul evreilor din România* (Bucharest: Tip. și Fonderia de Litere Thoma Basilescu, 1892).

⁶³ Graur, *Cați-va inși*, 71.

political rights, which, they argued, would only serve the Jewish bourgeoisie without benefiting the larger masses:

If socialists were to fight for political rights and freedoms for the Jews, they would fight in fact only for the interests of the Jewish bourgeoisie. [...] If bourgeois Jews want political rights, they should fight alone. Jewish workers, just like Romanian workers, don't belong in this fight. They have better things to do, like fighting for the economic emancipation from which political emancipation will also derive.⁶⁴

To counterarguments that political rights would hardly hurt Jews in the struggle for economic equality (since what they were asking for was, after all, nothing more than what Romanian workers already enjoyed), socialists replied that a focus on political rights would misguidedly redirect Jewish efforts from a fight along class lines to one built on ethnic affiliations.

In claiming that Jewish workers had already understood and accepted this contention, Romanian socialists were deluding themselves. Not only were Jews in general increasingly keener on acquiring civic rights, but Jews within the party were also beginning to question the official party line. The disagreements culminated in the so-called “luminist dissidence,” centered on a group of socialist Jews from Iași, the Moldovan capital and the city with the largest Jewish population. Arguing that internationalism did not in fact exclude nationalism and quoting the Erfurt Program in their support, they advocated a tactic “according to nationality,” in which separate nationalities should have their special sections within the party and should address their constituencies in their own languages. The last remark in particular echoed an enduring controversy over the necessity of publishing a separate socialist newspaper in Yiddish. On the agenda of several consecutive congresses of the Romanian Workers’ Party, this problem never found a satisfactory solution. Claiming, perhaps accurately, the lack of funds, the party leadership postponed the publication of a separate newspaper, advising Jewish workers to learn

⁶⁴ *Munca*, September 29, 1891.

Romanian or subscribe to German-language newspapers. The party did, however, encourage the translation and distribution of the most important socialist brochures into Yiddish. According to Constantin Graur, himself a veteran Jewish socialist, “the Workers’ Club [in Bucharest] held an entire socialist library in Yiddish, ordered from America at the advice of Ioan Nădejde,” including Marx’s *Capital*, at a time when a Romanian version was not available.⁶⁵

The current debate, however, went beyond this issue. The socialists in Iași fulfilled this long-standing aspiration by publishing a journal in Yiddish, *Der Wecker* (The Awakener). The conflict with the socialist leaders in Bucharest was sparked, however, by the secret preparation and subsequent dissemination in Iași of a separate Jewish socialist journal in Romanian, *Lumina* (The Light). In theory committed to the intrinsic internationalism of social-democracy, the “luminists” in practice picked from the official pronouncements of German social-democracy the particular indictments that would allow them to put forward overt, sometimes aggressive, nationalist arguments.⁶⁶ Starting from Kautsky’s example of the Poles who could only be attracted to international socialism by the creation of their own independent party that would specifically address Polish Catholicism, Romanian Jews were also in fact asking for complete independence from the central party. Disguised as an attempt to foster reform and “criticism within the party,” *Lumina* was a testimony to the growing gap between the party leadership and (some, although important) Jewish socialists. The party responded by expelling the editors of *Lumina* from the party and the official socialist circles in Iași. In doing so, it showed that despite an egalitarian and often filo-Semitic rhetoric, Romanian socialism was not yet ready to address the Jewish question. Gherea, a Jew himself and still the theoretical leader of the Romanian socialist movement without occupying any official position in the party, made sure that the

⁶⁵ Graur, *Cați-va înși*, 72.

⁶⁶ See the first issues of *Lumina*, 1895.

“luminists” would be denied participation in the Second International by addressing a personal letter to Plekhanov which states that as Jews “unfortunately” do not enjoy civic rights in Romania, they cannot represent it at congresses of the International.⁶⁷ This declaration, as well as the denial of the Jewish question itself, although on different grounds, brought the Romanian socialists closer to other mainstream political parties and further away from their public. At the same time, it also pointed to deep insecurities, internal conflicts and political and ideological vacillations that would only deepen in the future.

Nationalism despite All Best Efforts

As the first decade of the twentieth century wore off, Romanian socialists had to confront and address the rise of vocal, vehement and very influential nationalistic and often anti-Semitic trends which took over the Romanian political and cultural arena. Without abandoning their commitment to internationalism, the new leftist cultural journals that were published during this time, *Viitorul social* (The Social Future), which appeared in 1907-1908 and 1913-1914, and *Facla* (The Torch), published between 1910 and 1914, engaged nationalism with greater frequency and in greater depth than the previous socialist press had. Admittedly, this was only another indication that times were changing. Given the extent to which the Romanian mass media were saturated with discussions of nationalism, avoiding them would have made socialists seem out of touch with current political realities. However, providing so much coverage to questions of nationalism, even if only to mock, question or dismiss them, ultimately legitimized nationalism, perhaps unconsciously, in the eyes of the socialists themselves. In disputes over nationalism, socialists found themselves borrowing concepts, using specific language and arguing against *certain* forms of nationalism in ways which made them, although

⁶⁷ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 8, 49.

unintentionally, equally nationalistic, although their goals and understanding of the nation were completely different.

When browsing through the collections of *Facla* and *Viitorul social*, two names stand out as targets of passionate socialist attack: the nationalist historian and politician Nicolae Iorga and the anti-Semitic politician A. C. Cuza. Ironically but understandably both had been influenced in their youth by the socialist intellectual current then at its peak. A. C. Cuza made his literary debut in *Contemporanul*, the socialist flagship journal, while Iorga speaks in his memoirs about the influence the socialist cultural outlook had on him during his studies in Iași.⁶⁸ Between the two, Iorga was considered by far more dangerous and *Facla* in particular led full-fledged campaigns against him. A. C. Cuza, then still at the beginning of his career, would sever ties with Iorga in 1922, after the latter accepted the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles concerning minority rights and toned down his anti-Semitism. In turn, Cuza would become a prominent right-wing politician, closely associated with the Romanian fascist movement. Before the war, however, Cuza had yet to rise to prominence and his vicious anti-Semitism coached in the rhetoric of nationalism, while definitely visible, was not yet respectable.

Iorga, on the other hand, was a prominent and extremely erudite scholar whose conception of nationalism was a coherent one despite the socialists' best efforts to prove the opposite. The last in a long line of "old-school" conservative nationalists who had arisen in the 1860s, Iorga was the advocate of an organic nationalism which emphasized the dangers of the indiscriminate and untimely adoption of Western institutions and behaviors in a society which was far from reaching Western standards. Unlike earlier organic nationalists, Iorga envisaged nations as "divine, mysterious formations"⁶⁹ which evolved independently of social or political

⁶⁸ Nicolae Iorga, *O viață de om așa cum a fost* (Bucharest: Editura N. Stroilă, 1934), vol. 1, 123-135.

⁶⁹ Nicolae Iorga, *Ce durează: Conferință la Liga Culturală din Brașov octombrie 1939* (Vălenii de Munte, 1940), 9.

developments and had a unique character which derived from their specific “national soul.”⁷⁰

The nation was inextricably linked with territory, what Iorga termed the “national soil,” and its authentic representatives, the peasants. The emphasis on the rural character of Romanian culture only served to emphasize an already pronounced anti-Semitic trend in Iorga’s thought, who argued that the merchant culture of the Ashkenazi Jews who settled in Moldova in successive migratory waves throughout the nineteenth century⁷¹ was incompatible with Romanian character.⁷²

Rabid anti-Semitism alone would have been enough to engage the socialists. Reacting to the rising wave of anti-Semitism in Romania, and staffed by many Jewish writers, socialist journals were as consistent as always in denouncing anti-Semitism, exposing anti-Jewish prejudices and denouncing the logical fallacies of anti-Semites. As ever, the defense of Jews was not without a critical and ironic note. Constantin Graur, a long-time committed Jewish socialist, noted sadly-sarcastically that a solution to the Jewish question would require “a different country, with different politicians, different public opinion....and different Jews.”⁷³ Echoing Gherea, Graur denounced what he considered to be the apathy and lack of solidarity characteristic of Jews themselves. Interestingly however, while agreeing with the importance of addressing the rising anti-Semitism and the injustices against Jews in general, some socialists felt uncomfortable about what they perceived as an unjustified growing emphasis on the “Jewishness” of the “Jewish question.” In his report on the socialist conference of 1907, M. Gh.

⁷⁰ Nicolae Iorga, *Cultura națională și politica națională* (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia Neamul Românesc, 1908), 7.

⁷¹ Frederick Kellogg, *The Road to Romanian Independence*, 72-84.

⁷² *Neamul românesc*, no. 8, 1909.

⁷³ *Facla*, no. 1, 1910.



Figure 5.3: The coffin of “dead nationalism,” with Iorga’s features, on the cover of *Facla*, 1911

Bujor, one of the rising leaders of the movement, complained that “comrade” N. D. Cocea, who covered the issue for the attending audience, placed too much importance on “religious, national and racial questions,” to the detriment of the “economic issues, which are just as central in this case as in other social problems.”⁷⁴

Bujor’s concern over the rising importance of ‘national questions’ in his fellow socialists’ thinking and writing was not misguided. While apparently denouncing nationalism itself, many diatribes against nationalism ended up condemning “wrong,” “narrow,” “superficial,” “chauvinistic,” “sectarian,” and “militaristic” versions of nationalism. For example, the nationalism of the political organizations of the Romanians in Transylvania was considered too narrow, as they failed to protest against the expulsion of Transylvanian workers from Romania. In the words of the indignant socialist journalist, “it is within the spirit of nationalism that as long as the government is of the same nationality as the people no tyranny or oppression is possible.”⁷⁵ In his outrage, the author seemed unaware that rather than exposing the faults of nationalism as such, he was deploring the limitations of the Transylvanian Romanians’ version of nationalism. Other Romanian socialists, especially outside Romania, were quicker to reconcile the opposing ideologies. In 1907 the Bukovinan socialist George Grigorovici defended socialism against nationalism by claiming that socialism emancipates people “both socially and nationally.”⁷⁶ While maintaining their status in the Hungarian Socialist Party, Romanian socialists from Transylvania were also increasingly in touch with their fellow “compatriots” in Romania, who reciprocated the interest through writing and visits. The time when socialists in Romania strongly urged Romanian socialists in Russian and Austro-Hungarian provinces to look for help solely within their respective socialist parties seemed to have passed.

⁷⁴ DDIMMDR, vol. 3, 585.

⁷⁵ *Viitorul social*, 1907, 310.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

The translation and publication of Karl Kautsky's *Patriotism and Social Democracy* in 1908 subtly reinforced the perceptible changes in the Romanian socialists' attitudes towards nationalism.⁷⁷ While Kautsky praised proletarian patriotism, so qualitatively different from bourgeois patriotism, and concluded that only internal proletarian revolution could lead to national emancipation, he did dwell at length on the very necessity of the national unification of territories inhabited by populations speaking the same language and, even if skeptically, allowed for the temporary alliance between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie for the achievement of this goal. That a proletarian revolution would lead to better and more constructive results than this alliance did not change the fact that he acknowledged and urged a solution to the problem of linguistic and territorial fragmentation in the first place.

Internationalism, of course, remained the officially sanctioned doctrine. While present in many articles, however, references to internationalism became vaguer and ironically no less lacking in substance than the much-accursed proclamations of nationalism. In particular, internationalism was less invoked in relation to Romanians abroad. It became rare to proclaim, as in the past, that "the hope of the Romanians in Transylvania rests not in the Romanian soldier but in the Hungarian proletarian, just as that of the Romanian in Bessarabia lies in the Russian Revolution."⁷⁸ In turn, just as they continued to attack nationalists like Iorga and Cuza, socialist arguments were transformed from a critique of nationalism in general to one of "bad" or "insubstantial" nationalisms in particular. In 1908 an important article against Iorga entitled "Internationalist socialism and democratic nationalism" emphasized the shallowness of the nationalist program.⁷⁹ While socialism would benefit from competition with a solid and well-prepared opponent, the author argued, nationalism was unfortunately "theoretically poor." Its

⁷⁷ *Viitorul social*, March 1908.

⁷⁸ *Facla*, February 11, 1911.

⁷⁹ *Viitorul social*, 1908, 441-516.

very definition, in Iorga's words, of "love of one's country," was practically meaningless. Self-proclaimed nationalists, the article continued, do not even understand themselves, let alone articulate a coherent doctrine that would explain nationalism to others. Replying to Iorga's accusation that socialists cannot even "consider Romania's future," the author claimed that, on the contrary, socialists cannot conceive of a better fate for the working-class in any other country and it is exactly within the Romanian future that they project this vision of emancipation.

In this vein, far from a commitment to anti-nationalism, socialists increasingly saw themselves as the *better* nationalists. This phenomenon was not unique. The Czech socialists studied by Beneš in his account of working-class nationalism in Austria-Hungary also saw their nationalism as superior to that of their bourgeois ethnic counterparts, and their party as "the most national" one.⁸⁰ In Romania, already in 1894 an editorial in *Adeverul*, written in reaction to a "hooligan" nationalist student rally that had taken place in Iași in support of Romanians from Hungary, read:

What is evil and unjust in Turda and Cluj [cities in Transylvania] is evil and unjust in Bucharest as well. We hate the oppressors of our people from Hungary and everywhere, but we feel that it is our duty to be superior in our manners and in our patriotism.⁸¹

In their view, people like Iorga and Cuza turned nationalism into a "villainous patriotic transaction," in a doctrine "allegedly nationalist," striking, with their "empty counterfeit nationalism" against the "truly and sincerely nationalist" young Romanians from across the borders. "The national idea," socialists argued, can in no way be confused with their nationalist opponents' "mongrel-nationalism."⁸² Most disturbing for socialists was the forced association of patriotism with religion. The Romanians, they insisted, had by custom and habit only a very

⁸⁰ Beneš, 145.

⁸¹ Quoted in Al. Piru, *G. Ibrăileanu: viața și opera* (Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1967), 77.

⁸² *Facta*, February 11, 1911.

superficial and shallow ritualistic relationship with religion. The new nationalist trends were instead trying to create an artificial “clericalism” akin to that of the Catholics, to what socialists saw as the worst possible effect:

Nationalism is, to the normal human feeling of loving one’s country, what the Inquisition was in the past to religious feeling. Nationalism means chauvinism, means blindness and fanaticism. In Germany, this way of understanding love of one’s country is mocked as ‘Hurra-Patriotismus.’ Nationalism, in the understanding of the likes of Iorga and Cuza, has for the country a jealous and tortured love, a love derived from suspicion, fear and irascibility. It sees enemies everywhere [...] a sort of peculiar hysteria makes it fear its own shadow. Suffering from persecution mania, nationalism in politics, is, logically, excessively militaristic.⁸³

In the frenzy of debates about nationalism and nationality, the socialist mainstream media was only now catching up with Gherea’s revolutionary remarks on the role of the national in literature and art, some of them published two decades earlier. It is worth noting here that it was the socialist and materialist Gherea, rather than his conservative and idealist Junimist rivals, who argued in favor of patriotism and “national” characteristics as legitimate literary and artistic subjects. Prior to Gherea, the Romanian literary establishment, in Maiorescu’s voice, dismissed expressions of patriotism and national belonging as vulgar and unaesthetic.⁸⁴ Many socialist sympathizers shared this perspective. The “proletarian poet” Traian Demetrescu, in an essay about Ioan Nenițescu, a minor writer later resurrected by the Romanian communist regime in its nationalist phase, was skeptical about the value or utility of the “modern patriotic poet.”⁸⁵ In the 1860s and 70s, when this view was consolidated, Maiorescu’s rejection of patriotism was validated by the flood of literary productions of little value which instead glorified the nation and

⁸³ *Facla*, no. 15, 1910.

⁸⁴ The most famous expression of this outlook is represented by Titu Maiorescu, “Comediile D-lui Caragiale” in *Critice* (Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1967), vol. 2.

⁸⁵ Traian Demetrescu, *Profile literare*, 27.

its people. Gherea himself blamed the “pașoptist”⁸⁶ ‘moralist patriotic’ school which demanded only nationalist-patriotic art.”⁸⁷ But he also argued forcefully that “patriotism, like any other manifestation of individual and social life, can be the subject of an artistic work, as long as the treatment of this subject is indeed artistic,”⁸⁸ and, of course, the presence or absence of national or patriotic feelings do not become criteria of critical evaluation. A local example of commendable patriotism was that of Coșbuc, whose poetry reflected the “moral atmosphere of the educated classes in Transylvania” and their genuine, as opposed to burlesque, nationalism.⁸⁹ Gherea’s solution was not “art for art’s sake,” as the Junimists advocated, nor the art with a “tendency” of the “patriotic school,” but a dialectical rejection of both theories into a superior synthesis.⁹⁰ Without being eclectic, this new conception retained from the forty-eighters’ emphasis on patriotism the idea of the “influence of the artistic work upon its environment” and from the Junimist aesthetics “the fact that it allows the free development of the artistic temperament.”⁹¹ Literary critic Andrei Terian-Dan sums up adequately Gherea’s stance:

At odds with both solutions, Dobrogeanu-Gherea opted for a “cosmopolitanization” of Romanian literature, which would overcome both individual and national imperatives and look at the world with the eye of social criticism based on universal solidarity. In Dobrogeanu-Gherea’s opinion, this was what all the great writers of the nineteenth century had done: “citizen artists” such as Goethe, Hugo, Dickens, Mickiewicz, Tolstoy, and Ibsen had configured world literature following a pattern similar to the socialist International.⁹²

⁸⁶ In Romanian the expression “pașoptist” refers to the generation of the 1848 Revolution.

⁸⁷ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Despre arta tendențioasă,” in *Opere complete*, vol. 7, 382.

⁸⁸ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Personalitatea și morala în artă,” in *Opere complete*, vol. 6, 287.

⁸⁹ Ornea, *Opera lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 72.

⁹⁰ Plămădeală, 81.

⁹¹ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 7, Notes, 491.

⁹² Andrei Terian. “National Literature, World Literatures, and Universality in Romanian Cultural Criticism 1867-1947,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* vol. 15, no. 5 (2013), 6. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2344>.

Terian-Dan refers to the contentious study “Citizen Artists,” which provided more insight into Gherea’s understanding of both patriotism and social ideals. Here Gherea puts forward a new theory of the genius, understood as a “born rebel” structurally inclined towards “good citizenship.” As a result of their “finer nervous system” and “more perfect psycho-physiological structure”, geniuses “feel more” and “hurt more,” and are thus naturally repulsed by social injustice.⁹³ A genius has no choice but to rebel and become the voice of the disempowered and underprivileged. Gherea’s overview of citizen geniuses unsurprisingly includes a list of realist novelists like Dickens, Hugo, Ibsen or Dostoevsky, but also includes less obviously social-minded authors like Byron and Mickiewicz. These latter are saved from denunciations of empty nationalism by their support for national self-determination, of the kind that did not succumb to the “narrow patriotism” that replaced foreign oppressors with those of the same ethnicity, but instead raised above this, to universal equality and solidarity.⁹⁴ Gherea’s humanitarian radicalism was shared by other socialists. In a conference from 1892 entitled “The Importance of the National Character in Human Progress,” Grigore Maniu argued in favor of a national literature, inspired by the history and character of a (free) nation, but against a chauvinist one which would lack humanity: “Isolation, chauvinism, and intolerance cannot produce great works. The literatures born out of these conditions can be national, but are never human, and do not count in the progress of mankind.”⁹⁵

As if anticipating later controversies, Gherea also made clear in an 1896 literary study that while “a national science cannot exist, a national art can.”⁹⁶ The reference to science was very fitting. In 1879 *Basarabia* already complained against the “nationalization of science,”

⁹³ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Artiștii cetățeni,” in *Opere complete*, vol. 7, 374.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 363-365.

⁹⁵ Gr. Maniu, *Importanța caracterului național în pregresul omenesc. Conferință rostită în seara de 27 februarie 1892* (Bucharest: Tipografia Gutenberg Joseph Gobl, 1892), 19.

⁹⁶ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “D.Panu asupra criticii și literaturii,” in *Opere Complete*, vol. 7, 135.

arguing, in protest that university positions were allocated to ethnic Romanians alone, that there was no such thing as a “national science.”⁹⁷ Almost three decades later, a text from 1908 entitled “Science and solidarity” emphasized the “unifying tendencies” of science. At the time science was commonly understood as being universal. For socialists the social correspondent of the universality of science was solidarity. As scientific knowledge continued to grow and spread, it was bound to bring people together, rather than divide them.⁹⁸ The very nature of science was thus antithetical to both antagonistic nationalisms and the hostile world envisaged by the pseudo-scientific concept of the ‘struggle for existence.’ Also in the 1900s another socialist journalist, known by the pseudonym Dr. Ygrec,⁹⁹ published a brochure entitled “Race and Racism: The Greatest Scientific Hoax of the Century,” which denounced racial theories and the anti-Semitism that accompanied many of them.¹⁰⁰

In the first decade of the twentieth century, what bothered socialists most was nationalism’s lack of a scientific basis.¹⁰¹ Forgetting that many former socialists also described their attachment to socialism as “sentimental,”¹⁰² socialist journalists at this time condemned nationalism as being based on “feeling” as opposed to strong theoretical and scientific foundations.¹⁰³ Unfortunately they did not elaborate on what they understood by “scientific nationalism,” a term mentioned briefly in a newspaper article.¹⁰⁴ It is obvious, however, that the socialists wanted to expose what contemporary nationalism claimed but failed to be.

⁹⁷ *Besarabia*, October 7, 1879.

⁹⁸ “Știință și solidaritate,” *România Muncitoare*, December 7, 1908.

⁹⁹ Unfortunately, while “Dr. Ygrec” was often present in socialist periodicals and also authored a series of brochures, I could not find enough information about him to include him in the group analyzed in Chapter One. The only things that can be ascertained from the sources of the time are that he was of Jewish origin and had indeed completed some medical studies.

¹⁰⁰ Doctorul Ygrec, *Rasa și rasismul. Cea mai mare escrocherie științifică a secolului* (Bucharest: Editura Adam).

¹⁰¹ *Facla*, no. 5, 1910.

¹⁰² Ben Zion Liber, *A Doctor’s Apprenticeship: Autobiographical Sketches*, 248.

¹⁰³ *Facla*, no. 5, 1910.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Accordingly, nationalism was not idealist, humanist, democratic or just.¹⁰⁵ Rather than a coherent doctrine, scientific nationalism was hence an attempt to deconstruct the various versions of nationalism circulating by exposing their fallacies. However, the only thing socialists could offer in exchange was a reaffirmation of ideals of social justice, equality and humanism.

The inability to replace nationalism with something equally persuasive forced socialists to use the same vocabulary and fall back on the same nationalist tenets. Obviously, when they were talking about nationalism as a “national danger”¹⁰⁶ they were envisioning the same kind of community that nationalists had always had in mind. Similarly, their language when they dismissed nationalism was no less indicative of their essentially nationalist commitments. In October 1911, *Facla* explained the futility of the nationalist cause by the simple fact that “our brothers across the Carpathians don’t want us.” Only a radical social reconfiguration of Romania would make it appealing to Romanians from other provinces and thus enable the fulfillment of the “national being.”¹⁰⁷

Conclusion

The experience of the early Romanian socialists underscores many of the complexities and ambiguities that an analysis of the relationship between socialism and nationalism must take into account. Considered within the broader literature on the subject, this case presents several distinctive features. The history of Romanian socialism’s encounter with nationalism does not revolve around theoretical works of major thinkers or the evolution of formal political allegiances, nor does it take place in imperial contexts, although pressures from the surrounding empires play an important part. Instead, it follows the ongoing, often contingent, dialogue of

¹⁰⁵ *Facla*, May 21, 1911.

¹⁰⁶ *Facla*, no. 15 and 20, 1910.

¹⁰⁷ *Facla*, October 29, 1911.

rank-and-file socialists with the shifting nationalist questions dominating the public agenda of their time. This history shows that, unlike in the case of the French Marxists examined by Stuart,¹⁰⁸ the attitudes of Romanian socialists towards nationalism did change, although not always in the ways their protagonists intended. It also suggests that, as Cahm and Fisera assumed, socialism does adjust to moments of national crisis, and it often does so by engaging in the nationalist issues at stake.¹⁰⁹ However, these moments of negotiation or adaptation do not necessarily amount to a failure of socialist and internationalist dogmas, as some scholars argue.¹¹⁰ More accurately, the case of Romanian socialism before the First World War suggests the difficulties of disentangling the socialist from the national discourse and the unintended consequences of engaging in nationalist debates.

Politically marginal, internally divided, ideologically ambiguous and ‘foreign,’ early Romanian socialism faced many challenges in legitimating itself both to the international socialist community and its home public. Within these challenges, confronting nationalism probably did not rank high. However, in a country deeply affected by predicaments of nation and state-building, socialism was inevitably bound to address the national question. The various phases in the socialist approach to nationalism show that socialists were ultimately unable to engage with this question without borrowing the language, the concepts, the concerns and ultimately the outlook of the ideology they were rejecting. In confronting, dismissing or deriding nationalists, socialists became no less nationalistic themselves, albeit of a different kind and with a different, but distinctly national, project for the future.

¹⁰⁸ Stuart, *Marxism and National Identity*.

¹⁰⁹ Cahm and Fisera, 1980.

¹¹⁰ Howorth (1985); Judt (1989).

CHAPTER SIX: DILEMMAS OF PREWAR SOCIALISM: THE “GENEROUS” REVISITED

It’s easy to say that socialism brought no results, when those results cannot be expressed in numbers. (Constantin Graur)¹

One of the most constant and deceptive tropes in the historiography of the early socialist movement in Romania has been the myth of the ‘betrayal of the “generous.”’ The term “generous” was used at the time to refer ironically but also affectionately to the socialist leaders of middle- and upper-class origins who used their wealth, skills and connections to sponsor the socialist movement. In 1899, some of these individuals, led by Vasile Morțun, George Diamandy and Alexandru Radovici, left the Romanian Social-Democratic Workers’ Party (PSDMR) and officially joined the Liberal Party. The move, discussed and negotiated at the last congress of the Socialist Party, came at a moment of extreme disarray for Romanian socialism and effectively ended its political presence. Traditional histories blame the “generous” betrayal for the dissolution of the organized socialist movement and point to 1905-1906 as the time of the emergence of the new, ‘second’ Romanian socialist movement.² This was the moment when a second, more successful, edition of the socialist newspaper *România muncitoare* (*Working Romania*) appeared, followed by the socialist circle with the same name and eventually the constitution of the Socialist Union. The second movement was supposedly ‘working-class,’ as opposed to the ‘intellectual’ first one, whose members were out of touch with the workers and inevitably drifted back to their middle-class allegiances, thereby ‘betraying’ the socialist cause.

¹ Constantin Graur, *Cați-va inși*, 67.

²See N. Copoiu, *Le socialisme Européen et le mouvement ouvrier et socialiste en Roumanie, 1835-1921*; N. Copoiu, *Refacerea Partidului Social-Democrat din România 1900-1910* (Bucharest: Editura științifică, 1966); I. Căpreanu, *Mișcarea muncitorească în luptele politice din Romania între anii 1900-1914* (Iași: Junimea, 1983); Ion Popescu-Puțuri and T. Georgescu, eds., *Purtători de flamuri revoluționare*.

This chapter questions this interpretation by reassessing the episode of 1899, the internal situation of the party before its disintegration, the socialist activity in the interval between 1900 and 1905, the ‘intellectual’ versus ‘working-class’ dichotomy, and finally the evolution of the “generous” and other former socialists after they left the movement. By examining these threads, it shows the continuity between the two movements, the harmful inaccuracy of the ‘intellectual’ and ‘working-class’ labels and the enduring impact of socialist ideals in the careers and activity of those who officially or unofficially parted ways with the socialist movement.

The transition of the “generous” leaders to the Liberals and the dissolution of the socialist party was prefaced by the resignation, in February 1899, of Ioan Nădejde, the long-term head of the party. In a long article published in *Lumea nouă* he explained his decision by citing disagreements between him and the other leading socialists, as well as the widening gap between the party and the workers. He professed his enduring faith in the socialist cause and confidence that the remaining leaders will be able to reorganize the party and continue its mission. In a confession of fatigue and defeat, he openly admitted his incapacity to find solutions to the movement’s many problems:

After twenty years dedicated to the party, I allow myself the liberty to let others carry the difficult task of organizing the party in its everyday struggles [...]. The party must organize itself again and decide its strategy for the future. But *I* can no longer be the man of the time. New circumstances require new people. This is why I resign and will continue to supervise the workings of the party only until measures will be taken to solve the situation. Obviously this must take place as soon as possible.³

At the time Nădejde made no plans for himself, apart from his withdrawal from political life. In the same article he also denounced the Liberal Party for recent abuses, including the suppression of socialist clubs in the villages, and the expulsion of socialist Jews, both sensitive matters which

³ *Lumea nouă*, February 22, 1899.

will be discussed below. In this article he also intriguingly endorsed the Conservatives as the only party in Romania capable to uphold the rule of the law. This comes as a strange exception in an otherwise long history of condemning the Conservative Party and must be seen in the immediate context of the repressions and expulsions. It is clear however that at least at the time Ioan Nădejde did not consider joining the Liberals himself, nor did he condone it as an option for other socialists. Indeed, he only started to contribute to liberal newspapers four years later, in 1903, without ever truly returning to the Romanian political arena.

Nădejde's departure brought to the surface a deep-rooted crisis that reached its culmination at the sixth party congress which took place in April 20-22, 1899. The only forty-three delegates present were soon divided into two camps led by Vasile Morțun and Georges Diamandy on one side, and C. Z. Buzdugan on the other. Basically agreeing with the familiar argument leveled against Romanian socialism for the previous two decades, Morțun and Diamandy claimed that the lackluster history of the socialist movement sadly proved that Romania was indeed not ready for a socialist party. The Romanian socialists made little headway towards accomplishing their social, political and economic goals, and it was uncertain whether their efforts actually made a difference in the lives of the social categories on whose behalf they worked. As a result, they asked for the transformation of the party from a socialist into a "national democratic" one, with a broad democratic agenda, which will fight for the creation of the conditions that would eventually allow the formation of a real and effective socialist party. In spite of vigorous protests from C. Z. Buzdugan and Alexandru Ionescu, the latter a well-known workers' leader, the motion was adopted, in effect signaling the dissolution of the party. The members who opposed the transformation boycotted the future informal congress, scheduled for June 1899, which was supposed to decide the program of the new party. The "National

Democratic Party” was thus “born dead”⁴ and instead of a new political organization the sixth congress initiated the demise of the old one. Historian and interwar social-democrat Constantin Titel Petrescu is probably right in arguing that the “generous” did not really contemplate the formation of a new party, seeking instead an elegant preamble to the proposal to join the Liberals, which came soon after it became clear that the transformation of the party was not favored by all socialists.⁵ After all Morțun later confessed that he resorted to this solution out of fear that he would be accused of deserting his old comrades.⁶

The acrimony of the last congress and its immediate aftermath obscured the fact that the Romanian Socialist Party had been plagued by significant structural problems for at least several years prior to the ‘defection’ of its leaders. The membership, not very high at the best of times, was dwindling, participation in the workers’ circles was declining, propaganda among the working class was stagnating, and the official newspaper, *Lumea nouă*, was in dire financial straits. The atmosphere among the leaders was one of fatigue, disillusionment and impatience. As Georges Diamandy argued at the last congress, after twenty years of hard work for the socialist cause, they felt that they achieved little. Especially in the 1890s, the initial enthusiasm of finally having a socialist party proved hard to maintain, as membership and support for party-sponsored initiatives steadily declined. Participation in the party congresses decreased each year. Propaganda among workers was also stagnating, while meetings and public lectures were increasingly fewer. The industrial working-class continued to be small in size and, as historians note, mostly “foreign,” made up of Hungarians, Germans, Czechs, Italians and, of course, Jews.⁷ Disagreements within the party further alienated many socialist supporters or produced fractions.

⁴ Constantin Titel Petrescu, *Socialismul in Romania 1835- 6 Septembrie 1940*, 195.

⁵ Ibid., 189.

⁶ *Adeverul*, February 15, 1900.

⁷ Petrescu, 141.

For example, the party was weakened by the leadership's decision to forbid socialist journalists from contributing to other newspapers, even if democratic in character. This alienated several important professional journalists who resented both the tyrannical nature of the interdiction and the loss of income that came from abandoning other publications. As they were quick to point out, writing for the party newspaper alone hardly allowed them to make a living. This issue would reemerge in 1912, when after heated debates party members were allowed to contribute to other newspapers, as long as they did not share the latter's political endorsements. From this point of view the 'old' socialist movement was definitely stricter, to the point of being unreasonable, than the 'new,' allegedly more legitimate one.

The Romanian socialists also had a hard time agreeing on the most appropriate strategy for the party. Individual members were questioning the validity of the "legal path" preferred by the leadership, arguing instead for a more revolutionary approach. The "legal path," inspired by German social-democracy and staunchly defended by party head Ioan Nădejde, centered on the socialists' participation in election but brought few satisfactory results. Vasile Morțun won the elections for the Second College in Roman in 1892 and 1895.⁸ However, his success had more to do with his popularity and the electoral alliance with the Liberals than with grassroots support for socialism and it was unlikely that the party would have done any better in the future.

Finally, it was proved once again that the movement was not financially self-sustainable. Journal subscriptions and workers' membership fees were negligible and could not cover the costs of publishing a daily newspaper, renting a permanent headquarters as well as halls for public meetings and lectures or financing propaganda activities. For most of its existence, the socialist movement had been sponsored by its richer members. A considerable part of the profits

⁸ Vasile Niculae, *O istorie a social-democrației române*, vol. 1.

made by Gherea at his railway station restaurant in Ploiești went towards the various expenses incurred by the movement. Traditionally wealthy members, like Morțun or the Radovici brothers also contributed to the cause constantly. Even so, as I. C. Atanasiu recalls, following the suspension of *Lumea nouă* in 1900, the socialists were left with a debt of seven thousand lei to the creditors. Gherea urged his comrades to gather funds to settle this final “debt of honor,” which was eventually paid off from the last savings of Sofia Nădejde.⁹ The momentary demise of organized political socialism thus came as a result of a culmination of factors, many of them long in the making, rather than as the abrupt result of some of its leaders’ decision to join the Liberal Party.

An even more worrisome development was the emergence of a new “anti-Semitic dissidence.” Much to the dismay of many members, a workers’ group led by one Tache Georgescu insisted that the Romanian Workers’ Party should not include Jewish members. The best characterization of Georgescu, a previously obscure figure, comes from Benzion Liber, the contemporary Romanian Jewish socialist who emigrated to the United States in 1904 and became professor of psychiatry at the University of New York as well as treasurer of the Anarchist Red Cross:

A printer by trade, who although having no official function in the party, was perhaps the most destructive member of the Bucharest workers’ club. He distorted socialism into something unrecognizable and finished by founding purely nationalistic trade unions and a socialist anti-Semitic party, similar to that of Hitler in Germany, long before Hitler. This gave him the votes by which he was elected a deputy to the chamber on his own program.¹⁰

While initially arguing that this was for the Jewish workers’ own benefit, safeguarding them from expulsions and potential government abuses targeting socialists, the dissidents later

⁹ I. C. Atanasiu, *Mișcarea socialistă: 1881-1900*.

¹⁰ Liber, *A Doctor’s Apprenticeship: Autobiographical Sketches*, 233.

confessed that they “want an association of Romanians, since the Romanian voter understandably asks: ‘What? Did you bring me to the workers’ club to be with the Jews?!’” For a movement which prided itself for the rejection of anti-Semitism (even if, as we have seen, actual support for Jewish demands was ambiguous), this development was profoundly disturbing. Here were workers, party members, who were openly xenophobic, disregarding one of the first rules of their socialist training. Even if the other members condemned the anti-Semites and excluded them from the party, the incident remained a disappointing one which made leaders wonder whether their efforts to educate the working masses were indeed worthwhile.

The episode coincided in time with a government-initiated campaign of expelling the Jews connected with the socialist movement. Itself an abuse, the action was also illegal as it targeted Jews born in Romania. Although, like all Jews in Romania at the time, they did not enjoy political rights, these Jews were considered native (“pământenii”) and according to the constitution should have been safe from arbitrary expulsions. The socialists thus lost twenty-four members, including veterans of the movement, like Barbu Brănișteanu, Adolf Clarnet and I. Edelstein. These individuals, some of whom returned to Romania after a couple of years, became known in the socialist literature as “the travelers of 1899,” a designation introduced by the writer Barbu Lăzăreanu, himself one of the expelled Jews.¹¹ This episode understandably fueled the socialists’ ire against the government and especially the Liberals who authorized the operation.

The second major event that turned the socialists against the Liberals was the suppression of the socialist clubs in the villages. The most successful socialist initiative of the late 1890s was ironically the agitation in the villages and the emergence of rural socialist clubs. This interesting, and uniquely Romanian, project of prewar socialism, bears testimony to the Romanian socialists’

¹¹ Barbu Lăzăreanu, *Const. G. Radovici. Agatha Barseanu. Nora Marinescu. “Drumetii” din 1899* (Bucharest: Depozitul General la Agenția de expediție și vânzare I. Brănișteanu, 1917).

awareness of the centrality of the ‘peasant question’ in Romanian politics and their commitment to addressing it despite its supposed non-socialist character. “Socialist propaganda in the villages,” as it was known at the time, was remarkably successful, especially considering the party’s minimal resources. In effect, the enterprise, which led to the formation of over two hundred socialist village clubs, rested almost entirely on the shoulders of two socialist enthusiasts, I. Banghereanu, a former mechanic who became the manager of the party newspaper, famous for his integrity,¹² and Th. Ficșinescu, a future distinguished energy and petroleum engineer who would maintain his socialist convictions throughout his life. While the long-term objectives of the socialist clubs were land redistribution, universal suffrage, and the tightening of the connections between peasants and workers, their immediate activity centered around denouncing abuses of the landlords or the rent-collectors, providing legal assistance and educating the peasant about their rights.¹³ It is uncertain whether these organizations would have lasted. However, the developments were eventually considered worrisome enough by the Liberal government to warrant the termination of the clubs and the arrest of Banghereanu and Ficșinescu. Granted, the Liberals’ reaction, much spurned by the socialists, especially those who later opposed the ‘treason of the “generous,”’ was prompted by the Conservative opposition which launched a hysterical media campaign against the alleged anarchist threat posed by the socialist rural clubs. Whether these young and rather innocuous entities would have indeed started a revolution anytime soon, as the Conservatives warned, is rather doubtful. However, their suppression was real enough, although definitely less brutal than the socialists of the time and future historians made it out to be. Following trial, Banghereanu and Ficșinescu were also convicted and served two years in jail.

¹² Liber, 236.

¹³ See Gh, Matei, *Cluburile socialiste la sate, 1898-1899*.

The overlap in time between the repression of the socialist clubs and the transition of the “generous” to the Liberals amplified the feeling of betrayal among the remaining members and obscured the structural problems that had been affecting the party long before these two scandals. Contemporary accounts falsely accused the “generous” of abandoning Banghereanu and Ficșinescu to their fate. In fact, both former and current socialists rallied together in their defense. Vasile Morțun, the artisan of the move to the Liberals, lobbied tirelessly in Parliament in their favor, and paid for their legal defense. The accused were actually represented by ‘big name’ lawyers, including socialists who had already broken away from the party, like Constantin Mille¹⁴, or who were on their way to the Liberals, like Ion C. Atanasiu. Neither were the “generous” silent on the matter of the expulsion of socialist Jews. They denounced the law, provided funds for the exiled and sometimes even accompanied them to the train station in a demonstration of solidarity.¹⁵

Reexamining Treason

The socialists’ move to the Liberals had generally received little sympathy. The communist-era literature depicts it as a massive and unexpected shift of allegiances. In the preface of his book on the early Romanian socialist movement I. C. Atanasiu, one of the former “generous,” claims that “all” socialist intellectuals joined the Liberals in 1900.¹⁶ This statement is obviously false. Gherea, the uncontested intellectual leader of the movement, did not join the Liberals, nor did he condone the move. In fact, the ‘deserters’ were fewer, if prominent, and some joined the Liberals at different times, not in 1899. As mentioned before, Ioan Nădejde, the former party head, became a contributor to liberal newspapers almost a decade later and would

¹⁴ He left in 1895 following disagreements with Ioan Nădejde.

¹⁵ Graur, *Cați-va inși*, 76.

¹⁶ Atanasiu, 9.

never hold office. C. Z. Buzdugan, one of the most vocal critic of the “generous strategy” in 1899, joined the Liberals in 1902. Doctor Ion Cantacuzino transitioned to the Liberals in 1908, while retaining close contacts with the socialist movement. At the opposite end of the specter, Zamfir Filotti had joined as early as 1891. Also, the Romanian socialists’ decision was hardly unique in the context of fin-de-siècle European socialism. More famously, at the same time leading French socialists like Alexandre Millerand, Aristide Briand and Rene Viviani entered the coalition government led by the Republican Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau. In his post-1989, otherwise balanced account of the political history of Romanian social-democracy, historian Vasile Niculae dismisses the comparison claiming that the French socialists left individually, without attempting to refashion the goals and strategy of the representative parties of the French Left, the Radical and Radical-Socialist parties.¹⁷ While valid, the observation overlooks the great difference in size, strength and influence between the French and the Romanian political Left. Given the fragility of the Romanian socialist party, it is understandable that the departure of important figures had a much more resounding impact than in the French case.

On the other hand, the affinities between Romanian socialists and liberals were deep and longstanding. The political leaders of Romanian socialism had been collaborating with left-wing liberals for more than a decade. Before the constitution of PSDMR, the Romanian socialists frequently urged their sympathizers to cast their ballots with the liberals. While the doctrinal boundaries between the nineteenth century Romanian liberals and conservatives were not always clearly drawn, the socialists nevertheless saw the Liberals as infinitely preferable to the Conservatives, whom they identified with the owners and staunch defenders of large latifundia. Even after the creation of the party, as their own candidates were few and often unsuccessful, the Romanian socialists continued to support, even more vocally, the Liberal representatives. The

¹⁷ Niculae, 189.

alliance with the Liberals also ensured the four-years presence in the Chamber of Deputies of the only notable socialist politician, Vasile Morțun, who spent his mandate campaigning vigorously for universal suffrage. While this goal was accomplished only after the First World War, Morțun's appealing personality and passionate speeches attracted a fair number of adherents to the cause. While this strategy of political alliance with the Liberal Party was later much maligned by future socialists and historians¹⁸, the alternative, which meant giving up a political presence altogether, is unlikely to have served the pre-1900 Romanian socialist movement better.

The decision of the “generous” did not come without warning. Morțun had suggested switching to the Liberals already in 1895, in a “secret meeting” later described by the party secretary, journalist Constantin Graur.¹⁹ Morțun backed his proposal by promising that the move would ensure, “within five years,” the passing of legislation guaranteeing universal suffrage. At the time Ioan Nădejde and the rest of the leading socialists rejected the suggestion, replying that within five years of joining the Liberals Morțun would likely become a minister, but even given a decade he would most certainly not succeed in extending the franchise. Obviously in 1895 Nădejde still retained some faith in the strength and direction of the socialist party, faith which gradually dissipated in the course of the following four years.

Nădejde's comment echoes the frequent accusations of opportunism heaped against the “generous” both at the time and retrospectively. Indeed, in time, some former socialists who joined the Liberal Party achieved high political and administrative positions. However, to ascribe political expediency as the major reason behind the “generous” decision means to overlook the precarious position of the Liberal Party at the time. The socialists joined the Liberals in a

¹⁸ Petrescu, 138, 142-143, 180.

¹⁹ Constantin Graur, *Din istoria socialismului român*. 2nd edition (Bucharest: Institutul de Editură “Avântul”, 1912), 27.

difficult moment for the latter. In 1899 the Conservative Party had just succeeded in overthrowing the Liberal Cabinet. The long-time Liberal leader D.A. Sturdza was forced to resign as prime-minister following allegations of “national treason,” (in effect the temporary suspension of funding for the Romanian-language high-school in Braşov, Transylvania, following pressures from the Hungarian government). The Liberal Party was in crisis, looking to reorganize and reform, to ‘refresh’ its ranks. The timing fits poorly with the accusation of opportunism that was often leveled against the “generous.” Having just fallen from power, the Liberals could offer little to new members at the time or in the near future. On the other hand, this was probably the best moment for the transitioning socialists to negotiate their position within the Liberal Party. Given their precarious position, the Liberals were more likely to welcome and consider the former socialists’ agenda. At that time, probably both select Liberals and the “generous” genuinely believed in the reorganization of the party.

The goal behind co-opting the “generous” was to consolidate the young, progressive, left wing of the Liberal Party, under the leadership of the charismatic Ion I. C. (Ionel) Brătianu. Son of the famous forty-eighter Ion Brătianu and descending from a distinguished family of liberal politicians, Ionel Brătianu was then at the beginning of a remarkable political career which included five mandates of prime-minister. Historians often refer to him as the most important Romanian statesman, or as the maker of modern Romania, given his crucial contribution to the peace negotiations following World War One, which brought the territories of Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia and Dobrogea under Romanian rule, thereby creating what is known as “Greater Romania.”²⁰ In 1899 Brătianu already affirmed himself as a talented and astute politician who was carving his place as the future successor of the Liberal leader D. A. Sturdza. Contrary to popular expectations, the latter died only in 1908, thus delaying Brătianu’s official

²⁰ For an overview see Keith Hitchins, *Ion. I. C. Brătianu*.

ascendance to power. There is no doubt however that he had become the true head of the party even before Sturdza's demise.

It is fair to argue that the socialists' transition to the Liberals would not have happened if it were not for Ionel Brătianu. The combination of his magnetic personality with his commitment to democratic reforms and the actual possibility to implement them in the future as head of one of the two 'historical' parties in Romania was irresistible to socialist leaders who had long looked to the Liberals for support and could finally rally behind a leader whose convictions came close to their own. In his turn, Brătianu had carefully cultivated his relationships with many socialist intellectuals and was a close friend of Vasile Morțun, Alexandru and Ioan Radovici, George Diamandy, Dr. Ion Cantacuzino, Iancu Procopiu, I. C. Atanasiu, as well as the future *poporanist*, then still socialist sympathizer Constantin Stere.

These individuals did not join the Liberals without a platform of their own. In an interview from January 1900, Morțun claimed that by joining the Liberals, the socialists aimed to "rectify" the recent political trajectory of the Liberal Party, recently accused, especially by the remaining socialists, of deviating from its original modernizing and democratizing goals.²¹ In short, the socialists would restore and revive the traditional liberal agenda, in keeping with their revolutionary heritage. The socialists joined the Liberals under the condition that together they would implement the so-called "Iași Program," a party pledge to the continuing struggle for "the rule of the law and the respect of public freedoms and civic rights."²² This program, at least according to Atanasiu, came as a result of negotiations between interested socialists and Ionel Brătianu.

²¹ *Adeverul*, February 15, 1900.

²² Atanasiu, 307.

Any assessment of the “treason of the “generous”” must thus consider the specificities of the Romanian political system and the position occupied by the Liberal Party and its leader within it. Ionel Brătianu had often been compared with Eleftherios Venizelos, his Greek counterpart. Like Venizelos, Brătianu led a powerful party generally inclined towards modernization and democratic reforms, in a country characterized by a strong executive branch and bureaucratic apparatus but which nonetheless safeguarded the fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens. While badly in need of an agrarian and electoral reform, Romania’s was not an authoritarian regime and as such did not prompt the emergence of truly sizeable radical opposition. The Liberal Party was able to absorb the socialist intellectuals who left their party because its promise to accomplish, in time, at least some of the socialists’ political goals, was realistic. By themselves, the socialists would never have been in a position to initiate social and political reforms. When backed by the solid Liberal party network, they could at least try. It is tempting to think that the former socialists became technocrats in the Liberal Party in exchange for jobs and honors. However, as noted, the moment was not propitious for Liberal fortunes. But even if the socialist leaders joined the Liberals at a time other than the beginning of a long and uncertain cycle in opposition, it is unlikely that personal ambitions, while perhaps present, played a crucial role. The “generous” were largely independently wealthy political figures or well-established professionals. They would have probably done well in the future whether they joined the Liberals or not.

Workers, Intellectuals and the Myth of Absolute Breaks

A common misconception in the literature on early Romanian socialism is that of the total disruption of socialist activity after the dissolution of the socialist party in 1899, followed

by a five years hiatus until 1905 when the revolution in Russia prompted the organization of a ‘new’ Romanian socialist movement which differed from the ‘old’ one in constituency, character and goals. Accordingly, a working-class syndicalist movement committed to the organization of the urban workers but abstaining from political ambitions replaced an intellectual and cultural movement which attempted but mostly failed to gain a political presence. The interval between 1900 and 1905 was indeed modest for Romanian socialism. It was not, however, characterized by complete stagnation. The remaining socialists in Bucharest continued their activity in the newly-founded circle “România muncitoare.” Initially centered around ‘old’ socialists who denounced the “betrayal of the generous,” the circle would gradually expand to include left-wing sympathizers, both formerly associated with (although not regimented in) the socialist movement, like the democrat journalists Constantin Mille and Ion Teodorescu, and new, younger partisans. The leftist scientists discussed in Chapter 4, Ion Cantacuzino, Dimitrie Voinov, Alexandru Slătineanu and Ștefan Irimescu would eventually resume their public lectures, as would the socialist doctor Ecaterina Arbore.²³ Like in the past, Dobrogeanu-Gherea paid the rent for the circle’s headquarters. The first years after the turn of the century were also prolific for the proletarian poet Theodor Neculuță, discussed in Chapter Three. His death in 1904 and then the publication of his works in an edited volume in 1907 constituted rallying points for the socialist movement. The circle managed to publish a new socialist newspaper, *România muncitoare*, first in a short-lived series in 1902, and then regularly, under Christian Racovski’s leadership, from 1905 onwards. In fact Racovski, the unquestioned political leader of Romanian socialism in the early twentieth century, made an appearance as early as 1900. He then signed the petition for the reorganization of the movement, wrote an article on the “socialist crisis” in one of the very last issues of the newspaper *Lumea nouă* and delivered a speech at the ‘old’ Workers’ Club in

²³ Ibid., 172.

Bucharest.²⁴ At the same time, in 1903 a new Circle for Social Studies was established in Iași, under the leadership of the well-known Jewish socialist militants Leon Ghelerter and Max Wexler. While Ghelerter in particular had often clashed with the leadership of the former socialist party on problems pertaining to the “Jewish question,” there was no doubt that these two intellectuals had belonged to the ‘old’ movement and were continuing its work.²⁵

The political strategy of the ‘new’ movement was not radically different from the old one. Despite accusing the socialists before 1900 of electoral alliances with the Liberals and other progressives, the new movement, convened at its second conference in 1907, also advised its constituency to vote with independent, democratic candidates, given the scarcity of representatives of their own. Apart from excluding the historical parties of the Liberals and the Conservatives from potential alliances, the approach was not very different. Like before, the socialists were too weak to make a political impact by themselves. This would change after 1910 when the prohibition on voting for other candidates effectively barred socialists from political life. Even at the time, some leaders declared that the new socialist movement was not interested in having a political presence. In truth, this was untenable whether it was intended or not.

Another trope concerning the differences between the ‘first’ and ‘second’ Romanian socialist movements is the replacement of intellectuals with working-class leaders. While the percentage of workers who participated in the ‘second’ movement had undoubtedly increased,²⁶ this likely had more to do with the overall development of Romanian industry and the expansion of the working class in general, than the programmatic intentions of the party. Even if the socialist leaders of the 1890s complained of insufficient efforts to attract the workers, there is

²⁴ Petrescu, 157.

²⁵ Ibid. 163.

²⁶ Unfortunately, statistical data is lacking, since the archives of the movement, initially in the possession of the Communist-era Institute for the History of the Communist Party, have been scattered after 1989 and whatever remains of them has not yet been re-inventoried by the National Archives of Romania and is not available to researchers.

plentiful evidence to suggest that the ‘first’ movement was as dedicated to recruiting the working class as the ‘second.’ There were simply more industries, and more workers, better educated and more active, in the 1900s than the 1880s. This does not mean that the departure of the “generous” did not produce deep rifts at the time. In particular Alexandru Ionescu, the printer who rose to the top ranks of the first party, was the author of several acerbic articles in the surviving socialist press, denouncing the fickle “intellectuals” and the gap that separated them from the working class.²⁷ Of course Ionescu was no ordinary worker himself. Educated, articulate, well-travelled and fluent in foreign languages, he was no less “intellectual” by the criteria used in Chapter One than the socialist leaders he condemned. However, his origins and working experience provided legitimacy and allowed him to make accusations that would have sounded hypocritical coming from others. The historians of the communist era embraced wholeheartedly the narrative of the intellectuals’ betrayal and the workers’ righteous rise to prominence. Observers like Constantin Titel Petrescu, himself a representative of the ‘second’ movement, who wrote before World War Two, had a more nuanced understanding of the events of 1899-1900. “The truth,” he notes, “is that not only the intellectuals deserted the socialist movement at that time, but also many militant workers, especially among the better educated ones.” These “traitors to their class,” he argues, became “electoral agents for the ruling parties, happy to forge a petit-bourgeois life for themselves.”²⁸ On the other hand, resentful intellectuals who indeed abandoned the movement, like Liber, who left the country in 1904, had very different ideas about who betrayed whom. A 1915 study by Robert Michel entitled *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* includes the following revealing footnote:

²⁷ See for example his article “Suntem si rămânem,” in *Lumea nouă*, March 28, 1899.

²⁸ Petrescu, 152 (my translation).

We are assured by a Roumanian socialist B Librescu, formerly editor of the socialist journal *Lumea Noua* of Bukharest, that his party which from 1880 to 1885 was strongly represented at the international congresses and had then already two deputies in Parliament had been so utterly ruined in consequence of the attacks made upon the intellectuals that hardly a trace of it remained. He reports: "Because a few intellectuals had left the party in order to secure good positions the intellectuals in general were regarded with contempt. People had no confidence in them, and this sentiment went so far that the word intellectual became equivalent to a term of opprobrium. But since our cultured comrades were unwilling to abandon the laboring masses, they allowed themselves to be maltreated and did not even venture to reprove the workers for some of their mistakes. To a working man everything was permissible. Gradually however these tendencies led into the great and gloomy sea of indifference and death." (B Librescu, "Il Socialismo in Rumenia, sua Vita e sua Morte," in *Il Socialismo*, anno II, p.184)²⁹

Liber's assessment is not to be taken at face value. Although his autobiography, *The Doctor's Apprenticeship*, is a very valuable and informative resource, it is also indicative of the deep resentment that Liber harbored towards some leading socialists. In 1930 he also published a disparaging article about Ioan Nădejde, whom he singlehandedly accused for the disintegration of the socialist movement.³⁰ Liber's book, replete with many instances of the author's bravery, influence and originality, also hints at a degree of megalomania that makes it understandable why he would think that the movement had "died" following his own departure. Many intellectuals, especially those who eschewed political involvement, did not leave the movement. The most eloquent example is that of Gherea who despite his legendary status among socialists, was not in fact politically active. The various circumstances of other intellectuals who may have become less visible after the turn of the century is predictably more complex than a simplified explanation of "intellectuals' betrayal" allows. Constantin Titel Petrescu himself does not doubt

²⁹ Robert Michel, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (Hearst's International Library Co, 1915), 324, footnote.

³⁰ B. Liber, "Ioan Nadejde. Socialism in Romania in the Nineteenth Century," *The Modern Quarterly* vol. 5, no. 4 (1930-1931).

the sincerity of his contemporary colleagues who, driven by the “need to acquire their daily bread went away from the socialist movement, without losing their faith in the socialist idea and ideal.”³¹ This was the case of journalists whom the party did not allow to write in non-socialist newspapers as well. Other socialist intellectuals simply did not belong within the structures of an organized party. Talking about N. D. Cocea, an important socialist writer and journalist, editor of *Facla* and *Viitorul social*, the two journals which were at the forefront of the socialist campaign against nationalism, Petrescu mentions that he left the party, being “unable to accommodate himself with party discipline.”³² The myth of the complete replacement of party leaders with workers is equally problematic. The number of workers both within the movement at large and within its upper echelons definitely increased. However, the undisputed leader of the movement after 1900 was Christian Racovski. It was around his figure that socialists rallied, defending him when he was expelled from Romania in 1907, plotting his return, publishing his writings and advocating for him when he reentered the country illegally in 1909 and 1911. Highly educated, affluent, polyglot and cosmopolitan, Racovski was a perfect example of an old-world intellectual. If it were not for the real persecution that he faced, his articles in *România muncitoare*, condemning the betrayal of the intellectuals and extolling the new working-class leadership of the party, would be ironic.

The Aftermath of the “Generous”

The most effective way to debunk the myth of the “treason” is to follow the careers of the most important “generous” after they joined the Liberal Party and assess whether they indeed betrayed the values that attracted them to the socialist movement almost two decades earlier. For

³¹ Petrescu, 219.

³² Ibid., 259.

this purpose, I will focus on the trajectory of five former socialist leaders: Vasile Morțun, Georges Diamandy, Alexandru and Ioan Radovici, and C. Z. Buzdugan, while occasionally referring to others as well. It is important to note from the beginning that the reputation of all members of the Liberal Party at the time of the peasant revolt of 1907, including the “generous,” was tainted by the generally brutal repression of the uprising by the authorities. The 1907 peasant revolt, commonly considered by historians a “modern jacquerie,” was the culmination of decades of partial and inefficient attempts to alleviate the “peasant question.” While the 1864 land reform eliminated serfdom, the Romanian peasants received very little land if any and continued to depend on large landowners. The situation worsened as the rural population grew and the landowners turned to intermediaries (“arendăși”), often Jewish, to draw contracts and collect rent. The added burden of paying the sub-letters was too much for a population that was already struggling in abject poverty. The uprising was violent and caused the fall of the existing Conservative government and its replacement with a Liberal one deemed capable of restoring order. The repression was violent and caused the death of thousands of peasants. While many individual politicians, including some Liberals, warned against the use of force, the means of “pacifying” the rural areas were harsh and bloody. Many committed socialists took advantage of the situation to denounce the “generous” once again. Even if few former socialists were personally accountable for inflicting violence and some actively opposed it, they do share in the collective responsibility of the Romanian government of the time for the tragic outcome of the revolt. Focusing on this momentous event, however, does not do justice to the broader careers of the “generous,” many of whom retained their commitment to democracy, education and social justice.

As his former colleagues predicted, the mastermind behind the “treason of the generous,” Vasile Morțun, indeed went on to pursue a distinguished political career. Until his death in 1919 he was always either deputy, senator or minister. Following his election as deputy in his native district of Roman in 1901, he became vice-president of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies already in 1902 and served as president of the same body in 1916. He was Minister of Public Works between 1907 and 1910, as well as Minister of Internal Affairs during World War One, between 1914 and 1916. Although relatively old at the time, he volunteered and fought in the second Balkan War of 1913. As Minister of Public Works, he oversaw the reorganization of the Romanian railways system and passed legislation for the improvement of roads as well as fluvial and maritime transportation. Most notably, from a socialist perspective, he worked towards improving the living and working conditions of railway workers, as well as providing them with life insurance. To this end he sent his close friend and former socialist leader Ioan Nădejde to Germany and Switzerland to observe and report on the welfare of railway workers and the legal framework regulating their protection. He was responsible for the relatively successful liberal propaganda among industrial workers starting in 1912. Most importantly, as president of the Chamber of Deputies, he supervised the two major postwar reforms undertaken by the Romanian government: the institution of universal suffrage and a new agrarian law. This was a fitting conclusion for a politician who advocated vocally for universal suffrage for more than twenty-five years. And although he was associated, by virtue of being a Liberal, with the brutal repression of the 1907 peasant revolt, Morțun was also acknowledged as one of the politicians who contributed most towards the solving of the “peasant question” and the new rural law. In the words of Garabet Ibrăileanu, the *poporanist* critic, Morțun was “in our country, within his class, almost the only one who paid back to the peasantry what his class had squeezed for centuries.”³³

³³ Garabet Ibrăileanu, *Scritori români și străini*, vol. I (Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1968), 335 (my

It would be unfair to overlook the trajectory of the other artisan of the move to the Liberals, the problematic frondeur Georges Diamandy. As noted in the first chapter, Diamandy, also the son of a wealthy landowner, was one of the leaders of the Romanian students' socialist circle in Paris and had close connections with various French revolutionaries. He was the editor of the short-lived socialist journal *L'Ere Nouvelle* (1893), considered by historian Leslie Derfler “the first theoretical journal in France.”³⁴ Aiming at promoting literary naturalism and historical materialism, the journal published articles by important current and future European Marxists like Friedrich Engels, Paul Lafargue, Georgi Plekhanov, Clara Zetkin, Karl Kautsky, Jean Jaurès, Gabriel Deville, Alexandre Zévaès, Jules Guesde, Georges Sorel and Alexandre Millerand. It was also one of the very few outlets for the translation of works by Romanian socialists, including Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Emil Racoviță, Ioan Nădejde, Ștefan Stâncă and Raicu Ionescu-Rion. Diamandy was the Romanian representative to various congresses of the International and other socialist student organizations and, once back in Romania, one of the editors of *Lumea Nouă*. In spite of his constant presence and activity in the socialist ranks, Diamandy's eccentric personality and proclivity for farces and pranks acquired him a bad reputation early on. Sorel recalls that in 1895 Diamandy simply “disappeared, leaving his magazine stranded.” He was otherwise a “ferociously orthodox Marxist” and a “jolly good chap, entirely unreliable,” spending “more time in the taverns of Montmartre than at University.”³⁵

This reputation followed him in Romania, before and after his transition to the Liberal Party. Diamandy was one of the socialist leaders who argued at the last congress of the party that socialism in Romania, while still a viable option, had been unsuccessful in its current form and

translation).

³⁴Leslie Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Flowering of French Socialism, 1882-1911* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 169.

³⁵ Georges Sorel, “Lettres de Georges Sorel à Jean Bourdeau. Deuxième partie: 1913–1921,” in *Mille Neuf Cent* nr. 15 (1997): 127–214, 165–166.

accomplished little for the workers it claimed to be representing. The socialist party, Diamandy maintained, was a “top-down” organization, currently plagued by severe internal disagreements, with limited impact on the masses. He thus initially suggested the replacement of the party with a new one, broadly democratic in character. This proposal having failed, he eventually joined the Liberals where, like Morțun, he served as deputy for his entire career. His first years were uneventful, Diamandy himself having no illusions about his role: “I entered the ranks of the Liberal Party, where I played a mostly silent and irrelevant part.”³⁶ In the second decade, however, Diamandy became an increasingly vocal liberal dissident, questioning the integrity of Ionel Brătianu and pushing for faster and more extensive reforms. In 1910, he founded the weekly *Revista Democrației Române* (The Review of Romanian Democracy), arguing for universal suffrage, but also for sociological and ethnographic projects that would explore the Romanian village. In 1911 he edited the collected works of the deceased proletarian poet Ioan Păun-Pincio, a key figure in earlier socialist propaganda. Inspired by the Russian Revolution, in 1917 he founded the “Labor Party” (“Partidul Muncii”), which attracted other “old” socialists like Ioan Cantacuzino, Constantin Parhon and Alexandru Slătineanu. In the same year he visited Russia but, having long suffered from a heart disease, had an attack and died at sea on his way back.

Diamandy was the most idiosyncratic of the “generous” and contemporaries had not been kind to him. Historian Nicolae Iorga referred to his “old socialism” as “a seigniorial adventure”³⁷ while literary critic George Călinescu dismissed him as “an amateurish and sumptuous

³⁶ George I. Diamandy, “Autobiografie,” in *Almanahul Societății Scriitorilor Români pe anul 1912* (Bucharest: Editura Revistei *Flacăra*, 1912), 70.

³⁷ Adrian Butnaru, “File din viața unei familii. Frații Constantin și George Diamandy în preajma și vremea Primului Război Mondial,” in *Gândirea Militară Românească* no. 2 (2013): 177-188, 178.

proletarian.”³⁸ Even former colleagues did not forgive his social status. Already a wealthy landowner, he inherited from his wife’s relatives a large estate in Moldova which came together with lingering conflicts with the peasants. The former socialist turned *poporanist* Artur Gorovei accused him of exploiting the peasants, although the allegation is debatable given the animosity between the two.³⁹ During the 1907 peasant revolt, having been appointed, like most of the “generous,” as prefect in an affected district, he resigned quickly, without using force against the peasants. The leaders of the future Peasant Party that emerged after the war suspected him of hypocrisy in his demands for land reform, arguing that he would never in fact acquiesce to a comprehensive redistribution of property. Even those who did not doubt his sincerity worried about his eccentricity and ascribed his penchant for criticism and reform to his own need for recognition, rather than commitment to social ideals. His enthusiasm for his last project, the Labor Party, was met with ridicule by political rivals:

George Diamandy, thinking about ways to support the ideas of the Labor Party, born from personal ambitions stoked by the Russian revolution, imagined that he should necessarily show up in Chamber in Tolstoy’s costume. This operetta thing is produced for the benefit of peasants.⁴⁰

These assessments are probably too harsh. Diamandy may have been a colorful and even self-centered individual. His beliefs and actions, however much for his own benefit as a recognized rebel as for that of others, were nonetheless consistent. For almost three decades, Diamandy advocated for democratic socialism, universal suffrage, and land reform. As writer and editor, he inspired younger colleagues and provided a platform for their writings. Even late in his career, in 1913, as Director of the National Theater, he envisioned the creation of a Romanian “People’s

³⁸ George Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini pînă în prezent* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1986), 657.

³⁹ Artur Gorovei, *Alte vremuri. Amintiri literare*, 156–158.

⁴⁰ Gheorghe Gh. Mârzescu, quoted in Gheorghe I. Florescu, “Însemnări zilnice din anii Primului Război Mondial,” in *Convorbiri Literare* (November 2004), (my translation).

Theater” directed at the rural population. While ridiculed at the time, the idea of a theater for the peasants is compatible with the socialist and then *poporanist* commitment to educate the masses.

The same dedication was shared by Alexandru and Ioan Radovici, also foremost “generous.” The Radovici brothers descended from a wealthy family in Ploiești and, like most others, joined socialist circles during their studies abroad in Paris and Bruxelles. Alexandru Radovici in particular played a leading role in the early socialist movement and was an important liberal politician afterwards. Together with Gherea, Radovici contributed to the transformation of Ploiești, his hometown, into a bustling socialist center. In the early 1890s he founded a workers’ circle and even a socialist gazette here. Given his high-profile family, Alexandru Radovici was on his way to a successful political career before officially joining the Liberals, having already been mayor of Ploiești between 1897 and 1900. Although the Liberals’ support was instrumental in his election, Radovici still considered himself only “on loan to the Liberals”⁴¹ and rejected Morțun’s first proposal, dating from 1895, for the socialists to switch definitively to the Liberal Party. After he finally made the transition, in 1899, together with the other “generous,” he continued his successful career. He was recurrently elected deputy and senator, then Minister of Industry and Commerce during 1914 and 1916 and then Director of the Romanian National Bank until his death in 1918. He was overall considered an astute and competent official and it is noteworthy that the socialist journals of the 1900s, always eager to point out the faults of the “generous,” could only pick on the irony of Radovici denouncing the supposed anarchism of the individuals responsible for a failed assassination attempt against Ionel Brătianu in December 1909, when in fact he himself apparently harbored anarchist sympathies in his youth.

His brother, doctor Ioan Radovici, was a less salient but equally influential public figure, unanimously appreciated by both current and former socialists. As prefect of the Vaslui district

⁴¹ Petrescu, 134.

in 1907 he was one of the few leaders who managed to contain the revolt without violence. Afterwards, as member of parliament, he continued to focus on the peasant question, gathering materials and drafting proposals for the eventual land reform. Among the greater public he was remembered as a great humanitarian. According to Constantin Graur, Ioan Radovici “did not practice medicine for clients, because he had a fortune of his own. Instead he always practiced in hospitals and in the houses of the poor who would not have received proper care without him. Perpetually concerned about our sanitary problem, he was always at the sanitary council, at the sanatorium for tuberculosis (itself his own creation), at various policlinics.”⁴²

Another particularly interesting case is that of C. Z. Buzdugan. Unlike the other “generous,” he was the main speaker of the socialist camp opposed to joining the Liberals, and argued, at the last congress of PSDMR, for the reconstitution of the party, without the “generous,” in a separate, “workers’ party.” After 1900 he settled in Galați, on the Danube, a stronghold of Romanian socialism, and began his activity as lawyer, acclaimed for both “science and conscience.”⁴³ He was also among the contributors to the first, short-lived edition of the newspaper *România muncitoare* from 1902. In the same year, however, he also moved to the Liberals, becoming editor of the local liberal newspaper *Tribuna liberală* (The Liberal Tribune) and later, from 1906, together with the long-term socialist and then *poporanist* Mihai Pastia, the editor of the journal *Votul universal* (Universal suffrage). Buzdugan remained very aware of his responsibility as intellectual to foster culture. Like Pastia, he was a lifelong advocate and supporter of schools for adults, remaining faithful to the socialist ideal of facilitating workers’ access to education. He was one of the founders of the local “popular university” and various literary circles. His house became a center of cultural activity in Galați and a headquarters for

⁴² Graur quoted in Sevastos, *Monografia orasului Ploiești*, 137, (my translation).

⁴³ Felix Aderca, *Oameni și idei* (Bucharest: Alcalay et Calafateanu, 1922), 281.

journals, meetings and public lectures. Communist-era works remember him after 1899 only for his translation of the *International* into Romanian, dating from 1907. Far from isolate, however, this episode fits well within the life and career of an individual who remained constant in his democratic beliefs and commitment to culture for the masses. It also fits with the profile of the “generous” on whole. Reexamining the trajectory of Romanian social-democracy in a rare post-1989 work, historian Vasile Niculae, although critical of the transition to the Liberals, sums up well the limitations and possibilities of this decision, as well as the importance of the socialist legacy:

The socialist party served [the generous] as veritable political school and launchpad in the public life. It also gave them a progressive, enlightened mode of thought which remained essentially unchanged after their move to the Liberals. We believe in the sincerity of their gesture, made in a moment when the Liberals were in Opposition and were affected by internal conflicts, just as we believe that they honestly considered that it was beneficial to work in a party that, due to its political force and its future role in the government, had, both theoretically and practically, the possibility to turn into reality several goals for whose achievement the socialists had worked unsuccessfully for many years.⁴⁴

Poporanist Pathways

Poporanism represented another alternative for several important socialists who were disappointed in the apparent stagnation of the leftist cultural movement. Indeed the demise of *Contemporanul*, already in 1889, and then of *Lumea nouă* and its cultural supplements ten years later, left a literary and scientific vacuum in the socialist environment that would only really be filled by the publication of *Viitorul social* in 1907 and then especially *Facla*, starting from 1907. *România muncitoare*, while crucial for the continuity of the movement, was primarily a political and trade-unionist newspaper, which left little room for in-depth cultural articles of the kind that

⁴⁴ Niculae, vol. 2, 189 (my translation).

socialist intellectuals grew accustomed to in the past. Several well-known socialist figures thus turned to *poporanism*, which already had a history of association and affinity with socialism since the late 1880s. As described in Chapter One, Constantin Stere, the leading *poporanist*, started out by endorsing socialism, perhaps strategically, before embracing the ideal of Romania as a rural democracy, built on the basis of its peasant majority and agricultural character and hostile to industrialization and Western-style capitalism. As a political ideology, *poporanism* lacked a party. The eventual establishment of the Romanian Peasant Party, which matched the *poporanist* doctrine best, came late, after World War One and the heyday of *poporanism*. By that time, while some *poporanists* joined the Peasant Party, others were too old or disillusioned to get involved in politics. Before the war, however, the *poporanists*, led by Stere, chose the same solution as the “generous:” the joined the Liberals, again through the intervention of Ionel Brătianu, who had close ties with Stere as well. Unlike its political program, the *poporanist* cultural platform came much closer to that endorsed by the socialists. The overview of socialist literary criticism showed how Garabet Ibrăileanu, the chief *poporanist* literary critic, started out as one of Gherea’s most talented, and most intransigent, disciples. Even as he matured into his own writing, his criticism was often perceived, in Caragiale’s memorable characterization, as “the tea from Ploiești, boiled once again.”⁴⁵ Even before 1899, committed socialists were among the contributors to journals of ambiguous socialist/*poporanist* direction like *Evenimentul literar* (The Literary Event). Directed by Sofia Nădejde herself, the journal published in 1894, among others, Stere’s programmatic *poporanist* articles. Sofia Nădejde justified the inclusion of these pieces with the following argument:

We can very well be socialists and work towards the economic reform that would prevent the expropriation of the products of individuals’ labor and

⁴⁵ Caragiale about the literary criticism of G. Ibrăileanu, quoted in Paul Bujor, *Amintiri de A. Vlahuta si I. L. Caragiale*, 81.

at the same time be *poporanists* and seek to enlighten the people through schools for adults, scientific lectures, and popular libraries, which would elevate the cultural life of our people.⁴⁶

The socialists, she followed, could thus join *poporanism* without giving up the “socialist fight and principles.”⁴⁷ Of course, not all socialists were so easily convinced. But the similarity between the socialist and *poporanist* cultural and educational projects was real. Socialists had long championed and implemented schools for adults, for examples, and it made sense for dedicated teachers like Mihai Pastia or N. Damian to support *poporanism* after 1900. It also explains while several socialist writers, as well as scientists, endorsed the *poporanist* journal *Viața românească* (The Romanian Life), which appeared in 1906 and is sometimes considered the legitimate successor of *Contemporanul*. Like the latter, *Viața românească*, had a literary and a scientific section, directed by Garabet Ibrăileanu and Paul Bujor respectively, although Constantin Stere also figured as editor. Bujor left after only one year, following political disagreements with Stere. Other socialist contributors remained, especially novelists and short-story writers like Izabela Sadoveanu, Jean Bart, Henric Sanielevici, Artur Stavri, Ion Teodorescu and, from 1909, Alexandru Vlahuță. A letter from A. Toma to Elena Farago, dated 1905 or 1906, is revealing for the mixed origins of the publication. Toma describes a recent meeting with Jean Bart, who had been in touch with other socialists and *poporanists* about the publication of a new periodical which would be “the same great journal that Gherea wanted to start, but would now appear with the same contributors under the care of Stere [sic], Bujor, Vraja;⁴⁸ with the contributions of Gherea, Vlahuță, Voinov, Brătescu-Voinești, Jean Bart, Sanielevici, etc. Just because Gherea is too tired and skeptical, others should take the initiative and supervise the

⁴⁶ *Evenimentul literar*, quoted in Vișinescu, *Sofia Nădejde*, 84.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Vraja was Ibrăileanu’s pseudonym.

publication.”⁴⁹ Toma himself was entrusted with delivering some poetry, and was sharing the opportunity with Elena Farago, herself a respected poet who had matured under Gherea’s influence. As Toma’s letter makes clear, most socialists were aware that Gherea had indeed envisioned and planned, for quite some time, the publication of a new substantial journal that would follow in the footsteps of the far-reaching but short-lived *Literatură și știință*. But it is also true that Gherea’s health, always poor, had deteriorated in his old age, and it is very likely that he declined to direct the journal. In a letter to Ibrăileanu from 1905, Gherea qualified his plan of a new journal saying that the times when he “wrote the entire *Revista socială* by himself” were gone and given his worsening health he had doubts on whether he could “write something adequate” any longer.⁵⁰ Moreover, Gherea’s own relationship with Stere had always been amicable, even friendly, and there was no animosity between him and the *poporanists*. The same letter to Ibrăileanu reveals that he perceived socialism and *poporanism* as two different ways of serving the same ideal.⁵¹ It is thus not surprising that for many socialist writers the transition to *Viața românească* seemed natural. Eugen Herovanu, one of socialists turned *poporanists*, explained their perspective thus: “The socialists’ move to the Liberals did not kill the idea that brought together the first architects of the movement. Instead, it gave birth to *poporanism*, inaugurated by *Evenimentul literar* and continued by *Viața românească*.”⁵²

Contributing to the *poporanist* cultural project did not mean abandoning the social desiderata of the socialist movement. Perhaps the most representative figure in this sense is none other than Jean Bart (1874-1933), the subject of Toma’s letter to Farago mentioned above, a writer who played a significant part in the emergence of *Viața românească*. A notable author of

⁴⁹ Letter from A. Toma to Elena Farago, in Traian Demetrescu and Elena Farago. *Corespondență*, edited by C. D. Papastate (Bucharest: Minerva, 1976), 200.

⁵⁰ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 8, 189-90.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Herovanu, *Orașul amintirilor*, 109.

novels and short-stories, Bart (whose real name was Eugeniu Botez) was also a lifelong militant for social welfare who maintained close connections with socialist leaders and initiated a series of important reforms designed to improve the working conditions in Romania's port cities. A naval officer, Bart never joined any party since members of the military were not allowed to have political affiliations. He made his debut in socialist publications in 1894 and since 1897 he played a major role in the workers' movement in Galați, together with Izabela Sadoveanu. Soon after, he became a maritime inspector at Sulina, in the Danube Delta, where he founded a professional association of port workers and instituted a system of work by rotation. He then moved to Constanța, Romania's most important naval hub at the Black Sea, where he acted as "port captain." He joined the workers' circle there, and became close friends with Racovski, whose own estate was nearby, in Mangalia, approximately 27 miles south from Constanța. In a letter from 1905 Racovski asked his "beloved Eugeniu" to act as his witness in a duel, noting that he had "no other friend in the whole country to whom [he] would entrust his honor."⁵³ Bart continued to rise to prominence after World War One. In 1919-20 he participated, as the Romanian expert on the Danube question, at the peace conference in Paris, and later in the same year joined the International Danube Commission. But his real work was done at home. Based on his close acquaintance and experience with the problems of the workforce in the port cities where he was stationed, Bart became in 1921 the first director of the newly founded service for social assistance ("Asistența socială"). The provision of social welfare was Bart's most cherished goal. As director, between 1921 and 1924, and then general inspector of the same institution (at his own request due to deteriorating health) until 1930, Bart sponsored projects for the protection of children, widows, orphans, disabled individuals, the homeless and the elderly. He also wrote

⁵³ Quoted in Constantin Mohanu, *Jean Bart (Eugeniu Botez): Viața și opera* (Bucharest: Editura Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2001), 103.

and lectured extensively on these topics and his works constitute valuable sociological documents. At the same time, he continued his efforts on behalf of Romanian naval workers and in 1929 he was their representative at the 1929 Maritime Convention of the International Labor Bureau in Geneva. His notes from those years show a socialist intellectual who is concerned about the embourgeoisement of the working class in the context of the expansion, rather than demise, of capitalism, but who continues to believe in the validity of the socialist cultural and spiritual ideals.⁵⁴

Conclusion

Not all socialists went on to pursue distinguished careers upholding the social ideals of their youth. Some gradually withdrew from public life and others became absorbed by their research. Some “strays” even went in the opposition direction to socialism. This is the case of Henric Streitman, discussed in Chapter One, who became a fascist collaborator, or of C. I. Istrati, who joined the Conservative Party and then went on to develop disturbing racial theories in the 1920s. But these were exceptions. In general, whether they remained affiliated with the socialist movement or not, most of the intellectuals analyzed in this study did not betray the leftist principles. This applies to the maligned “generous” as well. When prosecuting this group, both fellow socialists and historians point to Gherea’s verdict, expressed in an article published several years later, where he condemned the move to the Liberals.⁵⁵ What is often forgotten is that at the time of the transition, in 1900, Gherea wrote an article in *Lumea nouă* where he argued that the characterization of the “generous” as traitors is unjust, since it makes sense for those who want to achieve political results to move to an organization which, unlike the socialist

⁵⁴ Jean Bart, “Se burghezește clasa muncitoare?” in *Însemnări și amintiri*, 82-83.

⁵⁵ See Copoiu, Nicoale, and Petrescu.

party, would actually allow that.⁵⁶ Almost a decade later, in 1909, in a letter to Ibrăileanu, he stated again that while he could not condone the “generous,” he did believe that many of those who joined the Liberals did so with good intentions.⁵⁷ This chapter shows that, within the limitations of historical circumstances, most of the intellectuals who chose to leave the official socialist movement nevertheless retained their socialist convictions not only in intention but also in practice.

⁵⁶ *Lumea nouă*, August 20, 1900.

⁵⁷ C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 8, 240.

CONCLUSION

At its broadest, my dissertation consists in a reevaluation of the Left before World War One. From the golden age of socialism in the 1880s and 90s to the essential disputes that followed the turn of the century and the crystallization of leftist ideological camps, this constitutive period witnessed the emergence of an astonishing diversity of opinions, beliefs and representatives. Under the banner of equality, progress, and social justice, very different men and women, from various backgrounds, with diverse experiences, trainings and interests, came together to imagine and debate the making of a better world. These individuals were not always politically or institutionally regimented, nor were their views clearly identifiable as belonging to the main ideologies of the Left at the time, usually understood as variations of contemporary socialism and anarchism. Instead they voiced beliefs that ranged from the orthodox to the deviant, joined official organizations or not, advanced political platforms or simply doctored the poor, taught literacy skills or wrote realist prose portraying the life of the masses.

The apparent lack of a socialist tradition makes Romania an auspicious choice for a reexamination of the prewar Left. An almost non-existent industrial working-class and a rigid political system made the development of institutional socialism very difficult. Both the so-called “first” (1893-1899) and “second” Romanian socialist party (1910-1914) were small, fractured, short-lived and electorally unsuccessful. It thus makes sense to look for the Left elsewhere: within democratic and left-leaning periodicals and associations, student and workers’ groups, émigré organizations and literary and scientific circles. Although more controversial, it is also worth identifying devotees of the Left within other political movements and organizations, some traditionally considered antithetical to mainstream socialism. I thus look at select members

of the Liberal Party, the Radical Party, and the populist (*poporanist*) movement. As one of the two “historical” parties (along with the Conservatives) that dominated the political scene of prewar Romania, the Liberals represented the interests of the smaller landholders and the rising bourgeoisie comprised of wealthy merchants, bankers, lawyers, doctors and public servants. It is this latter constituency, the rising middle-class, that resembled many of the socialists in background, education and outlook, and came to form the “young,” progressive wing of the Liberal Party. The many similarities in essential beliefs and long-term goals, if not necessarily political affiliation and strategy, made me include select members of the “left” Liberals in my overall analysis of the Romanian Left. The Radicals, a smaller party which seceded from the Liberals and militated primarily for a swift and broad expansion of the franchise, belong here as well. Finally, the Romanian “poporanists,” many of whom started out as committed socialists, continued to share the socialists’ dedication to education and social justice, even as they focused only on the peasantry, by far the largest social class in Romania of the time. Indeed, the centrality of the peasant question did not escape the formal socialists either, as they tried to address it both by implementing local projects, particularly through the establishment of the socialist village clubs, and by trying repeatedly to bring the issue to the attention of the Second International.

After establishing the boundaries and criteria of my definition of the early Romanian Left, I analyzed the main features of a critical mass of individuals belonging to this group. In Chapter One I identified and reconstructed the life stories and characteristics of over one hundred leftist intellectuals. These men and women represent, among many more, the ones about whom I could find enough information to put together at least a short individual biography, as well as the main elements of my prosopography, a quantitative study that examined the group from the

perspectives of “place of origin,” “social origin,” “ethnicity,” “education,” “occupation,” “political activism,” and “period of affiliation.” The individuals under analysis range from the famous to the obscure, from the celebrated to the forgotten, and I discovered them by moving from one to another, among relatives and friends, senders and recipients of letters, and contributors to leftist journals. The prosopography further revealed the group’s great diversity of backgrounds, experiences and life trajectories. However, it also demonstrated the existence of a substantial number of educated, whether formally or not, well-travelled, socially engaged intellectuals who shared at least the social and cultural, if not always political, agenda of the Left. The shared social mission, together with the multiple and overlapping networks between them are the main reasons why I chose to look at these intellectuals as a community. They were linked not only by their ideals and commitments, but also by personal and professional relationships, friendships and rivalries. Almost all knew each other, or knew of another. The more well-known, or the more sociable, functioned as main centers of concentric circles and nodes of communication and intersection within the community at large. Even without delivering very clear demographic results, the prosopography is nonetheless proof that a real, countable community did exist and can be analyzed.

In the absence of strong institutional structures, individuals were socialized into the language and values of the Left through personal examples and ethical commitments. The early Romanian Left is more akin to Durkheim’s “moral communities” or Barbara Rosenwein’s “emotional communities” than to Vernon Lidtke’s “alternative culture,” the distinctive culture of the German working-class of the same period, developed, however, on the basis of pre-existent political organizations. Romanian intellectuals often referred to their connection to the Left as “sentimental.” My treatment attempted to emancipate them from their own occasional self-

deprecating interpretation of “sentiment,” and conceive it instead as a bridge over artificially imposed boundaries and a genuine foundation for social and political commitment.

I refer most often to sentiment in connection to leftist literary criticism and to what I argue functioned as the unofficial headquarters of the prewar Romanian Left, the train station in Ploiești. In the words of historian Georges Haupt, Romania is the paradigmatic case of socialism being “born through (literary) critique.” This telling characterization owes much to the activity of the prominent Russian-born socialist theoretician Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a pioneer of the materialist approach to literature, whose contributions anticipated those of later and more famous Marxist cultural critics like Georg Lukacs and Antonio Gramsci. Surprisingly, “Romania’s Marx”, as Karl Kautsky, the leader of German Social-Democracy, labeled Dobrogeanu-Gherea, was not only a respected literary and cultural critic but a very successful restaurant manager as well. From 1882 onwards, under his leadership, the restaurant train station in Ploiești (incidentally the site of Romania’s large oil fields, and a key strategic, industrial and commercial hub) became one of the best restaurants in the country and a famous meeting place for writers, journalists, politicians and revolutionaries of all kinds. Chapter Two looks at this physical and symbolic space and explores its many layers of significance for the Romanian Left.

Building on scholarship on the public sphere and social spaces, I argue that Gherea and his associates took ownership of the train station and transformed it into the center of a specific public sphere, open to multiple publics but nonetheless bearing the stamp of a visible leftist culture. In doing so I contribute to the literature on the public sphere in several ways. Firstly, I aim to recover the egalitarian nature of the public sphere. Critics have long denounced the Habermasian bourgeois coffeehouse for its exclusionary and class-bound character. A train station, however, is public in a different way than a coffeehouse or a literary salon even if the

topics under discussion are the same. Populated by necessity by individuals of all social backgrounds, they come as close as possible to the ideal of interaction and dialogue across class boundaries. Secondly, by emphasizing the emotional and affective character of this public sphere, often referred to in Romanian socialists' writing as "sentiment," my research confirms critics' skepticism about the inherent rationality of the public sphere. Thirdly, I intervene in debates on the regulation of the public sphere. Most scholars agree that the state plays an important role in organizing, controlling and censoring the public sphere. Given their highly regulated character, train-stations are often perceived as carriers of order and discipline. However, this image fits poorly with a train station often referred to in socialists' memoirs as "at Gherea's," which was a crucial node in the physical and ideological travels of socialist sympathizers, be they local activists or foreign revolutionaries.

After introducing this unlikely dimension of the Romanian Left and its leading thinker, Chapter Three goes on to explore the specifically literary contribution of Gherea and his followers. As noted, the Romanian case is unique in its close identification between socialism and a strong tradition in literary criticism. Gherea's contribution to Marxist literary and cultural criticism, mostly unknown and unacknowledged outside Romania, often led to calls for his recovery among the main Marxist thinkers of the time. However, in examining the tradition that started with him, my goal has been different. Rather than recovering Gherea's place among Western socialist and literary figures, I argue for the merits of continuing to consider him a minor, local figure, whose rise to fame is emblematic of the cultural environment that produced him. In a time and place where literary critics' verdicts and advice concerned not only literary works but also broader cultural, social, and political questions, Gherea's prestige was reinforced by the popularity of leftist cultural journals, which set records of distribution and readership.

Examining these journals, as well as newspapers, brochures, memoirs, and works of literature and literary criticism, I contend that Gherea, while rigorously applying Marxist principles to literature, discovered and promoted writers that later became classics of Romanian literature, thus actively shaping the national canon. In doing so, he also enhanced the visibility of the Romanian leftist community and established the foundations of a leftist culture.

Nineteenth century leftist intellectuals linked literature to science, ascribing the same ability to shape and improve the social environment to both. Chapter Four explores two facets of the Romanian Left's involvement with science: campaigns for the popularization of science, undertaken mostly in periodicals and public lectures, and campaigns for public health and social hygiene, generally undertaken by socialist doctors, and documented in articles, dissertations, official reports and personal correspondence. I locate the popularizing endeavor both within the broader European and American 'epidemics of popularization' which reached its heights in the 1880s and 90s, and along a specifically socialist fascination with science, based on a common methodology of rational inquiry, experimentation and the elaboration of deterministic laws. The second dimension, campaigns for public health, is indicative of the leftist intellectuals' sense of social mission and traces their immersion in poor villages and working-class neighborhoods, from where they reported on squalid living conditions, epidemics, poor education, and scant medical resources. The leftist scientific effort was legitimated by the authority of a series of well-known socialist scientists. Looking at Emil Racoviță and Ion C. Cantacuzino I examine processes of circulation of knowledge and challenge the distinction between alleged scientific centers and peripheries. The work of Racoviță, a world-famous pioneer in the exploration of cave flora and fauna, and Cantacuzino, an important bacteriologist, attracted foreign specialists and turned the institutions under their leadership into centers of these fields. Racoviță's case, in

particular, questions theories of production and circulation of scientific knowledge which posit Western Europe as a producer of science and the rest of the world as a receptor or at most adapter of said knowledge. This study shows how scientific peripheries can themselves become centers, or how it might be more fruitful to reject notions of centers and peripheries altogether and talk instead of transnational networks with various nodal points.

The socialist scientists' careers and life trajectories reflect the intrinsic internationalism of the prewar Romanian Left. As Chapter One has shown, some members of this group were not ethnic Romanians. Many more had studied or travelled extensively abroad, had foreign contacts, and were familiar with other European socialist and leftist movements. Unusually for the period, even the workers were often trained in foreign languages and sent abroad to acquaint themselves with the workings of larger and more prestigious parties and organizations. However, this internationalist spirit, common at least in theory to the nineteenth century Left in general, did not preclude engagement with nationalist discourses at home. Tracing the evolution of the Romanian Left's reactions to nationalism, Chapter Five argues that simply by operating in the Romanian national public and political arena, the Left could not avoid engaging in debates on nationalism and the nationalities question. While initially clinging to a staunch internationalism and dismissing any allusion to national affiliation, the representatives of the Romanian Left became increasingly entangled in public discussions on nationalism. In engaging with the rising nationalistic trends of the time, leftist journals eventually resorted to the same language, concepts and imagery that they were dismissing, and advanced different, but essentially no less nationalistic projects for the future. This is confirmed by the analysis of nationalism and 'national character' in discussions of literature and science, which confirm the image of leftist intellectuals as subtle negotiators between ideals of social justice and national development.

Finally, Chapter Six completes the portrait of this community by questioning several entrenched tropes in the historiography of the Romanian Left. The first and the most important is the so-called “treason of the generous,” the move, in 1899, of several leading socialists from the socialist party to the left wing of the Liberal Party. Traditionally this moment has been interpreted as a betrayal of the intellectuals, who abandoned the working class in pursuit of political and financial gain, and a break in the history of prewar Romanian socialism, which coalesced again only in 1905, under a different leadership. Looking closely at the political context and the persons involved, I conclude that the “generous” joined the Liberals in an attempt to strengthen the left wing of the party and pursue social and economic reforms with more chances of success than those afforded by the small and inconsequential socialist party. I note that even according to contemporaries the party had been struggling for a long time before the departure of the “generous,” who were in fact joined by many disillusioned workers as well. The distinctive class character of this move was subsequently imposed by historians of the working class, most of them belonging to the communist era, and does not reflect the complex historical realities of the time. Moreover, the period between 1899 and 1905, while less vibrant than the previous, continued to see the publication of leftist literary and cultural journals and the efforts of leftist educational campaigns. To underscore the continuity of the leftist project, I examined the post-1899 trajectory of five former “generous” and showed that their views and actions remained faithful to their earlier socialist convictions. The Romanian Left did not disintegrate in 1899, nor did it revive, completely changed, in 1905. Instead, it underwent a process of change and transformation common to leftist movements everywhere.

A new definition and interpretation of the fortunes of the Left in Romania before World War One contributes to both the national historiography and the general understanding of the

prewar European Left. My study calls into question the pernicious overlap between the postwar communist regime and the historical Left which characterize the current intellectual and political discourse in Romania. Against the background of rabid anti-communism, the examination of the early leftist culture emphasizes the relevance of the Left for an analysis of Romanian modernity. The visions of socialist intellectuals impacted late nineteenth-century Romanian notions of literature, culture, progress and social development. However, the significance of these ideas, like their producers themselves, cannot be confined to national boundaries. Leftist intellectuals in Romania never abandoned their ongoing conversations with their counterparts elsewhere and their thoughts and actions are relevant for the Left in general. Rather than discarding it as an idiosyncrasy, it is more useful to view Romanian leftists' passion for literature and scientism as a telling symptom of a broader trend. Doing so enhances our understanding of the role of intellectuals, the complex relations between centers and peripheries, and the multidimensional character of the Left.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF SOCIALISTS INCLUDED IN THE CHAPTER ONE PROSOPOGRAPHY

1. Anagnoste, Vasile (1875-1963)
2. Anghel, Const. D. (1868-1935)
3. Anghel, Dimitrie (1872-1914)
4. Arbore, Ecaterina (1873-1937)
5. Arbore, Nina (1888-1942)
6. Arbore, Zamfir (1848-1933)
7. Atanasiu, I. C. (1866-1940)
8. Bacalbașa, Anton (1865-1899)
9. Bacalbașa, Constantin (1856-1935)
10. Bădărău, Al. (1859-1927)
11. Băncilă, Octav (1872-1944)
12. Bart, Jean (Eugeniu P. Botez, 1874-1933)
13. Beldiceanu, Neculai (1844-1896)
14. Beldiman, Alexandru (1832-1898)
15. Brănișteanu, Beno or Barbu (1874-1947)
16. Bujor, M. Gh. (1880-1964)
17. Bujor, Paul (1862-1952)
18. Buzdugan, C. Z. (1870-1930)
19. Călin, Ottoi (1886-1917)
20. Cantacuzino, Ion C. (1863-1934)
21. Clarnet, Adolf (Adolf Burah Cuperman, 1877-1937)
22. Cocea. N. D. (1880-1949)
23. Codreanu, Nicolae Zubcu (1852-1878)
24. Constantinescu, Alecu (1872-1949)
25. Costaforu, Constantin Gheorghe (1856-1935)
26. Crărescu, Victor (1850-1917)
27. Demetrescu, Traian (1866-1896)
28. Diamandy, George (1867-1917)
29. Dimitrescu-Iași, C. (1849-1923)
30. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Constantin (1855-1920)
31. Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Alexandru (1879-1937)
32. Djuvara, Al. G. (1858-1913)
33. Fagure, Emil D. (Samuel Honigman, 1875-1945, 1875-1946)
34. Farago, Elena (1878-1954)
35. Ficșinescu, Th. V. (1877-1949)
36. Filotti, Zamfir (1863-1937)
37. Frimu, I. (1878-1919)
38. Galaction Gala (1879-1961)
39. Georgescu, Alexandru (1866-?)
40. Ghelerter, Litman (1873-1945)
41. Gheorghiu, Ștefan (1879-1914)
42. Gorovei, Artur (1864-1951)

43. Graur, Constantin (1880-1940)
44. Gruber, Eduard (1861-1895)
45. Herovanu, Eugen (1874-1956)
46. Hurmuzescu, Dragomir (1865-1954)
47. Hussar, I. (probably Iosif Hussar 1867-1933)
48. Ibrăileanu, Garabet (1871-1936)
49. Ionescu, Alexandru (1862-1929)
50. Ionescu, Andrei (1874-1943)
51. Ionescu-Rion, Raicu (1872-1895)
52. Iordăchescu, Teodor (1884-1958)
53. Irimescu, Ștefan (1874-1956)
54. Istrati, Constantin I. (1850-1918)
55. Istrati, Panait (1884-1935)
56. Kernbach, Gheorghe (1859-1909)
57. Kirițescu, Constantin (1876-1965)
58. Lăzăreanu, Barbu (1881-1957)
59. Leon, N. (1862-1931)
60. Liber, Benzion (1875-1958)
61. Lupu, Eugen (1855-1883)
62. Maniu, Grigore (1860-1911)
63. Many, Dionisie (1866-1920)
64. Marinescu, Dimitrie (1882-1916)
65. Mille, Constantin (1861-1927)
66. Morțun, V. G. (1860-1919)
67. Mușoiu, Panait (1864-1944)
68. Nădejde, Gh. (1856-1937)
69. Nădejde, Ioan (1859-1928)
70. Nădejde, Sofia (1856-1946)
71. Nădejde-Armașu, Iosif (1879-1930)
72. Neagu Negulescu, Iuliu (1878-1940)
73. Neculuță, D. Th. (1859-1904)
74. Niculescu-Mizil, Gheorghe (1886-1945)
75. Nottara, Constantin I. A. (1872-1923)
76. Olcescu, Constantin (1855-1892)
77. Panu, Gheorghe (1848-1910)
78. Parhon, Constantin (1874-1969)
79. Pastia, Mihai (1860-1928)
80. Păun-Pincio, Ioan (1868-1894)
81. Pencioiu, G. D. (1869-1936)
82. Petică, Ștefan (1877-1904)
83. Popescu, Spiridon (1864-1933)
84. Popescu, Ștefan (1872-1948)
85. Proca, Gheorghe (1867-1943)
86. Procopiu, Ion (1863-1918)
87. Quinez, Nicolae (?)
88. Racoviță, Emil (1868-1947)

89. Racovski, Christian (1873-1941)
90. Radovici, Alexandru G. (1860-1918)
91. Radovici, Ioan G. (1868-1908)
92. Roman, Ioan N. (1866-1931)
93. Rosetti, Vintilă C. A. (1853-1916)
94. Sadoveanu, Izabela (1870-1941)
95. Sanielevici, Henric (1875-1951)
96. Sanielevici, Simion (1870-1963)
97. Scorțeanu, Paul (1856-1916)
98. Sion, Ioan (1880-1920)
99. Slătineanu, Al. (1873-1939)
100. Speranția, Th. (1856-1929)
101. Stavri, Artur (1869-1928)
102. Stânca, Ștefan (1865-1897)
103. Stere, Constantin (1865-1936)
104. Steuerma-Rodion, A. (1872-1918)
105. Streitman, Henric St. (1873-1949)
106. Sudzilovski-Russel, Nicolae (1850-1930)
107. Teodorescu, Ion (1867-1931)
108. Teodoru, Dimitrie A. (1866-1910)
109. Toma, A. (Solomon Moscovici, 1875-1954)
110. Vaian, Eugen (1870-1897)
111. Vereia, Adrian (1876-1944)
112. Vexler, Max (1870-1917)
113. Vissarion, Iancu C. (1883-1951)
114. Vlahuță, Alexandru (1859-1919)
115. Voinov, Dimitrie (1867-1951)
116. Zosîn, Panait (1873-1943)