

Argument

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Last year my predecessor, Mihail Neamțu – whom I want to thank for his enthusiasm initiative to establish an international peer reviewed Romanian journal of comparative studies – and his team proposed the topic *Avatars of Intellectuals under Communism* for the 2011 issue of *History of Communism in Europe*. The main idea behind this project was that the relationship between intellectuals and the communist state is of outstanding importance for scholars and readers willing to understand the fate of academia, arts and culture under communism. The present issue of HCE hosts original contributions on the complex problems that developed out of the interaction between intellectuals and the party-state. The articles are relying on a fundamentally comparative approach, using a wide array of research sources, while also aiming at an interdisciplinary understanding of the subjects discussed.

The attitude of Western intellectuals towards communist ideology is discussed by Andreea Zamfira's paper. The author analyzes some of the most interesting cases of French intellectuals seduced by the communist project in the early interwar years. One of the objectives of this article is to present the manner in which communist ideology and the regime embodying it were imagined by widely known intellectuals at that time. Intellectuals' willingness to be politically engaged had different origins: revolutionary romanticism; the revolt against the bourgeois order; Marxist convictions; anti-liberalism; anti-capitalism; and, anti-rationalism. The Italian and French communists especially had a strong influence on their countries' public and political spheres and on the international communist movement. Valentine Lomellini shows that one of the reasons behind the failure of Western Communists (Italian and French) was the persistence of the myth of the reformability of developed socialism, a constant in the world-view of Western left. Analyzing the myths of Romanian national Stalinism, Alina Pavelescu chose Adrian Păunescu's literary and artistic circle *Flacăra*. This was a significant case of undermining the

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alternative and underground culture under communism. Moreover, Păunescu also challenged the leadership of the Writers Union.

In order to impose its cultural program for changing the structure of the painters' and sculptors' creative associations (UAP), the Propaganda and Agitation Department used in Romania both the *avant-garde* and traditional artists. In communist newspapers, after 1948, the Party exerted its ideological guidance by maligning reputable artists, including Constantin Brâncuși, the great Romanian sculptor living in Western Europe. Some authors have analyzed the relationship between Romanian artists and the political power, especially the ideological authorities of Agitprop in the 1950s and 1960s, focusing on both the legislative framework on visual arts, mainly in painting and sculpture, and how the Fine Arts funding system worked during the Gheorghiu-Dej and Ceaușescu regimes. The entire network of royalties contributed to the obsequiousness of many painters, while the Neo-Byzantine Realism of some historical paintings was repudiated. Those artists who remained recalcitrant were purged in 1958.

Focusing on the post-1965 period, Alice Mocanescu explores the instruments and mechanisms used by the Ceaușescu leadership to control and organize art production according to State cultural policy. Especially since the beginning of the 1970s, a combination of stricter ideological control and scarcity of funds led to deep transformations inside the UAP. She analyses the policies of the regime toward the creation of new exhibitions, namely, the requirements and profile of their themes, the distribution of resources or of any other advantages (loans, personal exhibitions, trips abroad, etc.) that contributed to a polarization of the Union's members and to an increased competition for limited resources.

Over the last years some Romanian researchers shed more light on aspects regarding both the financial support for intellectuals and the royalties received by writers, scientists, and artists during the communist period. In the future it will be useful to focus research on topics such as the annual budget for culture, pension system, and salaries given both to intellectuals and cultural bureaucrats, using especially documents from newly declassified Archives. Comparing the archival sources with the data provided by the Official Bulletin might be a way to find out what was the percentage of the annual budget allocated for the arts, scientific research, and education.

Another subject discussed in the present issue of History of Communism in Europe is the evolution of the social sciences under communism. Ștefan Bosomitu deals with the re-emergence of sociology in the 1960s. Bogdan Iacob analyzes the profile of the historical front at the end of the fifties. He argues that this epistemic environment gained a polycentric profile, thus allowing for a transition from producing history on the basis of "Party dictated truth" to writing history within a "Party defined worldview".

At the same time, other contributions assess the role of social memory in the dynamics of intellectual life during state socialism. In the 1970s and 1980s, the dissident mathematician Botez strove to generate protest actions against Ceaușescu's erratic policies. His attempt failed due to the fact that the Party and the Securitate adamantly prevented any collective critical endeavour. Botez was forced to leave Romania in 1987. Starting with the 1980s Mihai Botez put forward a series of provocative hypotheses regarding the decline of Marxism as a legitimizing force in Ceaușescu's Romania. Botez argued that original Marxism had become a relatively marginal and potentially subversive doctrine. This happened as a consequence of the regime's appropriation of nationalist, ethnocentric themes, motifs, and symbols. Ana Maria Cătănuș's study emphasizes Mihai Botez' road to dissidence, the main directions of his project, similarities in terms of ideas with other dissidents in Eastern Europe/Soviet Union, and, last but not least, the relevance of his dissent in relation to communist power and the Romanian society. It also discusses Mihai Botez's conceptualization of *solitary dissidence* as first step towards individualizing a group of independent critical intellectuals.

Another text that deals with the opposition to the regime is Iulia Vladimirov's contribution about the activity of Monica Lovinescu, one of the most important personalities of the voice of the Romanian exile, maybe the main voice of the Romanian section of Radio Free Europe. Lovinescu's opposition to the communist regime continued in spite of all the strategies employed against her by the Securitate (including assassination attempts). After 1989, this tremendous and unique voice of the Romanian intelligentsia persevered with her calls for democracy, lustration, and freedom. The aforementioned contribution is quite well doubled by Cosmina Tanasoiu's study that sheds new light on the interaction between Romanian intellectuals and the communist regime from the point of view of the constant balancing act between collaboration, resilience, and rebellion. The author states that the end result of such phenomenon was the development of a sort of art of daily survival, which was a counterpart to the party-state's repressive tactics, censorship, and/or surveillance.

Another topic discussed by the present issue is that of the political upward mobility of women within the Romanian Communist Party. Luciana Jinga focuses on the attitude adopted by the RCP leadership toward the implementation of the principle of equal opportunity between men and women. She identifies to the new profile of the woman as a political actor under communism. The article provides insights on the shift in women's perception of their role within the Party, while also trying to discuss the general problem of political participation of women in the system.

The present issue of HCE covers a diverse spectrum of fields with view to the avatars of intellectuals under various communist regimes. Fjoralba Satka's contribution deals with the interplay between Albanian alternative painting

and the officially endorsed painting under state socialism. Shawn Clybor analyzes several Czech communist intellectuals whose ideas heavily affected the history of twentieth century Czechoslovakia. Nevena Dimova discusses the interaction between Macedonian and Albanian intellectuals and the communist party in the Republic and Macedonia. She thus sets the group for a better understanding of the national program of either ethnic communities in the context of the creation of a Macedonia state. Marta B. Erdos and Gabor Kelemen's article focuses on the discursive practices of "soft dictatorship" in Hungary between 1957 and 1989, more precisely on the interplay between *manipulation* and *parrhesia*. Nataliya Hristova's contribution dwells upon the different attitudes of the Bulgarian artistic elites (mainly writers), between mid 1950s and 1980s. She then follows their political attitudes and cultural behaviour during the first post-communist decade.

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In conclusion, the current issue of *History of Communism in Europe* ("Avatars of Intellectuals under Communism") tried to promote an interdisciplinary and comparative approach towards the complex relationship between those bearers of ideas and expert knowledge and each specific communist regime. This problem holds a central place in the history of communism. The latter's collapse can be traced to economic or social reasons, but 1989 or 1991 could not have been possible without the ideological exhaustion of these "patrocratic ideocracies" (Martin Malia). The "utter moral rot" (Daniel Chirot) of communism did appear ever more flagrant among intellectuals. Breaking away with the tradition of the French Revolution and the absolutism of social Utopia, the Eastern European intellectuals denounced ideology in order to perform the role of "national-popular" critics (Michael Walzer), rejecting the Messianism of 20th century's radical political modernisms. It is the aim of *History of Communism in Europe* to add new information and maybe some answers in relation to the myriad of questions and puzzles that are encompassed by the meandered trajectories of intellectuals in the civilization of European communisms.

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