

## Book Reviews

### **Dan Lungu, Amelia Gheorghită, eds., *Books, music and other forms of entertainment from communism*, Polirom, Iași, 2014**

Dan Lungu (b. 1969), one of the most appreciated Romanian writers of the new generation, with works translated into French, German, Italian and Greek, brings, through this new volume, not only a new method of exploring the recent past, but also an innovative approach to these new sources. Among his most relevant works, there are *Fellow travelers. Female experience in communism* (Polirom, 2008) or *Life stories. Theory and documents* (published by the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press, Iași, 2003), both being works in which the author critically analyzes historical sources that can be labeled as "warm memories", personal experiences, intimate approaches on the recent past.

Amelia Gheorghită (b. 1988) holds a BA in Communication and Public Relations at the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași and she is the public relations responsible at the Romanian Literature Museum in Iași.

The volume edited by the aforementioned authors captivates not only by crafting a new method for collecting the sources, but also by the fact that the sources are allowed to tell their own stories, without suffering methodological or epistemological alterations. Even the title suggests a certain degree of detachment, easiness and a lack of constraint, thus being somehow opposed to the cold, hermetic headlines of "classic", scholastic history, allowing us to immerse into a personal universe, filled with books, music, film and theatre. Therefore, the study emerges as a collection of *ego-histoires*, of memoir and journal excerpts, a collection in which the two authors chose not to intervene, in order to allow memory to reconstitute itself. The work addresses those who prefer a more "vivid" approach on history, a history that is more personal, animate, over an academic version on the past, which is, in most cases, heavy, onerous, historicized. The result is a study very similar to those of oral history, a story which is able to transport us back in time and allow us to sketch the ways of cultural escapism during the communist regime.

From a thematic point of view, the study can be allocated to the - recent historiographical trend that aims to analyze the cultural aspects of

the Romanian communist regime. Thus, works such as Cristian Vasile's *Literature and Arts in Communist Romania, 1948-1953*, *Cultural policies during the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej regime* or *The Intellectual and Artistic Life during the first decade of Ceaușescu's regime: 1965-1974*<sup>1</sup> are all attempts to understand the mechanisms of censorship and the way cultural policies were conceived and implemented. But Lungu and Gheorghiu's work has a different approach. The study does not concern itself with the official discourse. On the contrary, it aims to give voice to those who did not have one during the communist regime, by asking them to tell their story, and, more importantly, letting them talk, without intervening and trying to historicize every aspect of the narrative.

Precisely the lack of intervention in the process of remembrance offers the reader the impression of a "relaxed, touching, diverting or unusual account of personal experience about books, music, film, theatre etc.". The process used by the two authors to gather the stories, has, too, its story. *Facebook*, the well-known social network, provided the environment in which the authors "met" with the people's stories, via a web page specifically created for this purpose. The invitation to remembrance was completed with e-mail messages and direct approaches to ordinary people, thus giving birth to an atypical historical study, one that feels, and is, closer to the reader, to the everyday life from behind a block of flats or from an alley in a poor village in socialist Romania.

In terms of structure, the book is divided into four thematic levels: one concerned with books and reading, the second one focusing on film, the third, dedicated to music and dancing, the final part of the book analyzing the other types of entertainment.

Thus, the study carries its reader through the various intimacies of people who, unlike the quasi-generalized perception has it, did not stoically resist the regime, but constantly sought to escape from the oppressive present through reading or films. Books were one of the main instruments with the help of which one could confine, could isolate himself from the regime and escape into a parallel present, in which those who had the possibility or the necessary connections could get in contact with the Western world, with ideas and realities from beyond the Iron Curtain.

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<sup>1</sup> Cristian Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă, 1948-1953*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010); *Idem*, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011); *Idem*, *Viața intelectuală și artistică în primul deceniu al regimului Ceaușescu: 1965-1974*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2014).

The film was another form of escapism through which the West could have actually been seen, even heard. In order to do this, mainly young people used to organize "videos", meaning they would gather at one friend's house, rent a VCR and watch movies starring "beniihil" or "brucele"<sup>2</sup>. If the authorities were ever to intervene to stop the activity of such illegal cinemas, the ones who wore the state's uniform were usually bribed with "original" cigarettes or threatened with serious repercussions from an uncle or an aunt who had "links" with the Party.

Music and dance evenings were other ways to ignore, even partially, the gray reality. People used to jostle and set in motion a whole system of connections, relatives, friends and acquaintances in order to "get" tickets to performances by *Cenaclul Flacăra* (The Flame Literary Circle), which, contrary to the remarks uttered by Adrian Păunescu's detractors, was not exclusively dedicated to praising socialist Romania's ruling couple. It also provided the environment and gave the opportunity to young and talented artists to perform on stage. Moreover, even though the regime was quite strict when it came to "imperialist influences", discs that contained known voices, like that of Michael Jackson or rhythms like those of the well known rock band AC/DC were a regular presence in a young man or woman's room.

In conclusion, cultural preoccupation and leisure time appear to us as a footnote of the communist regime, a place outside the official discourse, where people spent their time doing activities that were repudiated by the regime, read books that were obtained "under the table", signed by authors which could not be found on bookshop's shelves and listened to "imperialist" music. These realities emerge from the stories collected by the two authors, and the lack of analysis and interference in the text grants, in my opinion, a stronger mark of veracity to the life stories, combined with a touch of privacy.

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<sup>2</sup> Benny Hill and Bruce Lee.

**Dragoş Sdrobiş, *The Limits of Meritocracy in an Agrarian Society. Intellectual Unemployment and Political Radicalization of the Youth in Interwar Romania*, Polirom, Iaşi, 2015**

Holding a Ph.D in history and currently conducting his research at the “George Bariţiu” History Institute in Cluj-Napoca, Dragoş Sdrobiş is an up-and-coming historian whose field of study includes various social aspects of interwar Romania. His work has dealt with a wide range of topics so far, such as higher education, cultural politics-promoted or enforced by the state, or the social status of intellectuals in the decades between the two World Wars, all seen through the theoretical framework of either social history or historical sociology.

The book hereby reviewed, quite significantly titled *The Limits of Meritocracy in an Agrarian Society. Intellectual Unemployment and Political Radicalization of the Youth in Interwar Romania* (Polirom, 2015), is an attempt at reconstructing, in an interdisciplinary manner, particular elements of Romania’s social and political life between 1918 and the dawn of the Second World War, more specifically the interaction between youth, intellectuals, government, the university system and society as a whole. Naturally, the approach of a theme so complex requires the use of a significant amount of sources, in this case consisting mainly of archival material, relevant books and publications that appeared throughout the studied period and a large number of carefully selected secondary works. The end result is a compelling book, owing a lot to some of the most important ideas previously enounced in the field of study it belongs to, but at the same time taking those ideas further, adding to them and applying them to proper case studies.

By following the works of and making use of the concepts and methods developed by great scientists of the last few decades, such as the renowned French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, what Sdrobiş tries in *The Limits of Meritocracy...*, as it is stated in the introduction, is to outline the impact that the cultural politics of the Romanian state in the interwar era had on the socio-professional evolution of university students around the country, from the ranks of which several important intellectual figures would later rise. Therefore, having a scientific goal of this nature, the book belongs to a larger historiographical field, that has had valuable additions along the years, one of the most notable ones being a remarkable monograph by Irina Livezeanu, concerning the process of redefining national identity in a time of profound social and

cultural crisis. In *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Livezeanu identifies the origins and the manifestations of a "populist nationalism" that ended up dominating the political, social and cultural discourse, acting both as a product and as an agent of nation building. Her work analyzes the ways in which (higher) education was mobilized as an effective tool to the same extent, as well as the institutional transformations that took place, the focus on creating a new elite and the ideal of a completely unified Romania, ethnically homogenous and purged of its inner conflicts, which inspired both radical movements and state policies.

Following these epistemic lines, the author places the relationship between the three main actors involved in the process of higher education – state, academic staff and students, as a central mark in his analysis. The diachronic perspective projected upon their interaction unveils a complex situation: after an initial stage of collaboration, when higher education was clearly subordinated to the purpose of achieving cultural uniformity and the necessity of redefining the nation and creating a native bureaucratic elite was stronger than ever, the so-called "cultural offensive" gradually lost momentum, as tensions between the aforementioned actors was revealed in often violent forms. The book focuses on the conflicts brought on by the intensifying claims for reform, as well as the politicization of the university system, outlining the inadequate coping mechanisms of the state, which, more often than not, amplified structural and contextual deficiencies and generated new ones. Furthermore, the historian tries to identify the origins of these processes and phenomena, their causes and effects, their place in the complex ensemble of the state and their social and political impact.

As the author himself admits, the book in its entirety has a somehow "eclectic aspect", given by the thematic choices involved, yet the argumentative lines remain easy to follow. For example, when observing certain social dynamics, political transformations or even conceptual shifts regarding the matters at hand, some recurring elements are being brought into discussion, the complex role of higher education in the process of social mobility being one of the most important. Moreover, even if the interaction between the social and the political component plays a central part in the analysis, other related aspects are not forgotten, such as the impact of education on economic transformations and the way in which university graduates and young intellectuals try to find a proper place in an extremely competitive and unpredictable labour market.

These interpretations lead towards a few relevant conclusions and observations, which seem to be confirmed when applied to the case in point. For example, it is accurate to say that the state was not able to perceive the multiple uses of higher education in a balanced manner, as it excessively insisted on its role in shaping and implementing an authentic national culture, yet at the same time neglecting its consequences as far as socio-professional allocations were concerned. That is why an environment in which radicalism would thrive soon emerged, and the brutal ways in which younger generations chose to cope with social challenges they confronted found a favourable context, hence the subtitle of the book – “intellectual unemployment and political radicalization of the youth in interwar Romania”.

Structurally, the book is divided into three parts exploring the subjects mentioned above, allowing the reader to connect the dots himself, and thus gain an accurate overview of how higher education in interwar Romania looked like. The first part deals with the origins of those principles that defined Romanian culture and society between the two World Wars, and it involves thorough definitions of some essential concepts, as well as following certain intellectual threads. In the second part, the challenges that came along the re-evaluation of the university system in Greater Romania are analyzed, being linked with the generalization of intellectual unemployment, that meant both the incapacity of a proper allocation of workforce in intellectual professions (which came to play a marginal role in the labour market), as well as the inadequate distribution of university graduates in other sections than their field of study, which then became either overcrowded or underrepresented. The final part presents what the author calls “the competition for the social project” that engaged both King Carol II and the Legionary movement. At this point in the book, some of the premises that are being used in the analysis are somewhat vulnerable. For example, the idea that the Legionary view of the world was fundamentally opposed to modernism can be questioned based on valuable research conducted in Western historiography, some scholars of fascism seeing the phenomenon as a whole and each of its distinct versions as proposing different ways of understanding modernity, rather than rejecting it altogether (Emilio Gentile). Furthermore, using some valuable recent contributions regarding the Legionary movement’s social base (Michael Mann), its activism (Roland Clark) or its ideological complexity (Constantin Iordachi) would have made for a more nuanced analysis in the third chapter.

With that being said, the general quality of the book is not profoundly affected by its slight shortcomings. Its conclusions, outlining the failure of the university system as a means of social mobility in interwar Romania, which thus became a “barometer of the limits of meritocracy in an agrarian society”, are supported by significant sociological inquiries, as well as an impressive amount of statistical data collected throughout the period, which the author makes available for the reader to interpret. Therefore, his arguments are compelling enough for it to be said that the book manages to achieve its goals, as they are stated in the introduction. Dragoş Sdrobiş’s work offers a clearer picture of interwar Romania’s intellectual world, and its universities in particular, and while his analysis is not exhaustive, it brings up valid explanations concerning such complex and fundamental phenomena as social mobility or political radicalization.

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**Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe (1944-1956)*, New York, Doubleday, 2012.**

*“The terms ‘Stalinism’ and ‘totalitarianism’ are often used interchangeably, and rightly so.”<sup>3</sup>*

This quote taken from Anne Applebaum’s newest book, the *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe (1944-1956)*, best expresses her attitude toward the communist regimes imposed by the Soviets at the end of the Second World War. In her latest attempt at trying to re-tell the story of those caught behind the Iron Curtain, she tackles a series of methodological and epistemological issues, while simultaneously trying to illustrate the suppression of democracy in this part of the world.

In the past she has done a marvellous job with the 2003, Pulitzer-prize winning *Gulag: A History*<sup>4</sup>, making her one of the most respected

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<sup>3</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe (1944-1956)*, (New York: Doubleday, 2012), p.19

<sup>4</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

scholars writing about such issues. Although her background as a journalist should cast doubt on her historical abilities, this could not be further away from the truth. *Iron Curtain* proves once again that she possesses skills any history researcher should. In fact she manages to combine the two, creating one of the best true stories. The combination of hard data, obtained from archives, a rich bibliography, and an impressive number of interviews all add up to one of the most realistic re-tellings of the installation of communism in Eastern Europe. Not only does she make the reader feel the victims' fear and pain, but she also helps us empathize with the perpetrators. Still one should not be blind, at certain points, we can notice her obvious disdain for Stalinism, but this is skilfully masked, thus not hindering the text's quality. Also, absolute objectivity does constitute an unattainable ideal, in this respect we cannot condemn her for having a position or opinion.

Studying the past of East-Central Europe is not the easiest of tasks and Norman M. Naimark, Tony Judt, and Timothy Snyder are just some of the greatest minds in recent times, which have tried to do this. In fact, some might argue that Naimark and Gibianskii's volume of studies, *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*<sup>5</sup> is the best book on the topic, yet we must not ignore other collective efforts such as Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, *Stalinist terror in Eastern Europe*,<sup>6</sup> and Corey Ross's *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots*.<sup>7</sup> Applebaum's efforts are even more impressive if we take into account that the best scholarly works on this topic have been the result of a number of authors collaborating, and never of one man's or woman's single efforts.

As Anne Applebaum has put it, this is a region that has never been defined geographically, but politically. There is no ethnic homogeneity, which means there are no less than eight very different nations living here. Each one has its own language and tradition. One single person would have to be the world's greatest linguist in order to read all the archives. And then when would he study history? The most common answer to this question has been compendiums, more authors

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<sup>5</sup> Ed. Norman Naimark, Leonid Gibianskii, *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*, (Boulder & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Kevin McDermott, Matthew Stibbe, *Stalinist terror in Eastern Europe: Elite and mass repression*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Corey Ross, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots. The Transformation of East Germany, 1945-65*, (London & New York: Macmillan, 2000).



banning together in an attempt to re-create the larger picture, leaving no one out in the cold.

She opts to do her own research, not bothered by the world of academics, and she does an amazing job. Indeed, this has meant she could not focus on all of Eastern Europe, choosing only Poland, Hungary and East-Germany as her main targets. Of course she did not exclude the others from her analysis, but they do not represent the focus of her book. In a sense it is better that she reduced the area of research to just these three countries, otherwise she would have risked not being able to cover them properly. Still one could argue that even those short mentions might help a young student or researcher find his own path.

The author begins with the most important part, terminology, and trying to give the reader at least some basic understanding of 'totalitarianism', and how it manifested itself in real-life. From Hannah Arendt to Seton-Watson's visions, she takes us through the whole set of definitions and perceptions of non-democratic regimes. Her emphasis on literature from all corners of the region makes this endeavour more legitimate and believable.

As I have mentioned above, what makes this book so valuable is that it manages to create a connection with the victims. Contemporary Humanities have a tendency to become more scientific, which in turn leads to a distancing from the human element, which constitutes its essence. It might be because of her journalistic background, but Anne Applebaum succeeds in bringing back this essence, and thus she brings the past closer to us. We no longer face difficulties in empathizing with victims or perpetrators, they are in front of us, brought back to life in the present-day. In fact the first chapter can be perceived as a perfect example of this. She manages to break the connection with our time and takes us back in time.

Also one cannot avoid noticing that Applebaum tackles several issues which could put her in the revisionist corner. As Antony Beaver, in his bestseller *The Fall of Berlin*, before her, she brings to light the horrors of the Red Army's invasion of Germany, without downplaying the previous Nazi crimes. This is, in fact, a show of character and courage, since those who had done this in the past have been the subject of Russian scholarly criticism. Her decision to take this issue head-on could be linked to her Polish affinities, but it does not influence her judgement in any manner.

Three chapters are dedicated to a close analysis of the perpetrators, both policemen and the political class. This helps break down the myth created around the first Communist leaders of Eastern Europe. She goes beyond the legend of freedom fighters and presents to the reader with harsh reality. This is not just a simple biographical research, as Applebaum also tries to explain the ideological motivations behind those people. This last word best defines her attempt, as they are turned from former leaders of Communist regimes into people, who are easier to understand. Most Eastern Europeans know the basics of how the secret police functioned, but the readers of *Iron Curtain*, have an advantage as they are familiar with the cadres selection mechanisms. Until reading the book it can be hard to imagine how complex and yet how simple it was. In the same note, it must be mentioned that Anne Applebaum explains the logistics of totalitarian regimes. We can better comprehend the level of state implication in all aspects of life, from industrial workers to youth organizations. The Party played an important role in each and every segment of a person's existence, by using almost any means at their disposal. One's destiny behind the Iron Curtain was designed and controlled by the state from the beginning to the very end.

The most sensitive issue touched in this book is that of ethnic cleansing. Although we have been brought up with the knowledge of the Nazis' racially motivated crimes, the Soviets were not so different themselves. Norman M. Naimark has been one of the most vocal people with regards to this problem, but he does not stand alone in his beliefs. Applebaum focuses an entire chapter of ethnic cleansing in the new post-war Communist countries. "*One of the myths that the international communist movement propagated about itself was the myth of its own indifference to national and ethnic distinctions.*"<sup>8</sup> In fact what she points out is that this could be considered the culmination of Communist hypocrisy. Even before the Second World War, Stalin had deported hundred thousands of Chechens, Kazaks and other ethnic minorities living in the Soviet Union. Still it is the author's belief that ethnic cleansing in Europe should be seen as Hitler's legacy, as he had opened the flood-gates for such actions.

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Anne Applebaum focused a consistent part of her book on societal and economical changes

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, p.156

brought on by 'Stalinism'. Not only did this regime attempt the creation of a 'new man', but it also shook the foundation of past traditions. Communism meant a rupture from historical time, and this symbolised the dawn of a new age, in which the collective need was to prevail. In fact it was the exact opposite. One example the author offers us is the widening of the generational gap. Parents and children could no longer get along, family ties were strained or broken. And they did not stop there, entire cities were thought up, and then built with no regard for human suffering. This new regime decided to reconstruct the entire world from the scratch and then place these traumatized people within it. What shocked Applebaum, most, was "the system's ability to get so many apolitical people in so many countries to play along without much protest"<sup>9</sup>. Indeed this was an amazing phenomenon still she manages to prove that this was only a façade, and that there was a kind of passive opposition in the form of jokes and graffiti, which she gives us examples of.

In the end, I would have to say that *Iron Curtain* is one of the best historical book of the new decade and it will probably remain so a long time from now. Anne Applebaum has done a remarkable comparative research, with an impressive array of sources. The value of the insight into the earlier parts of Eastern European Communism which it offers is hard if not impossible to express. The fact that one single person was able to write such a thorough analysis should act as an inspiration for all young researchers.

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### ***Tiberiu Tănase, Sides of the Coin. The Legionary Movement between 1941 and 1948***

The most important monographs which have approached the history of the Legionary movement from a diachronic perspective usually set their starting point in the early interwar years, during the initial organizing stages of the Romanian far right, and go no further than the short-lived government of September 1940 – January 1941. Not many historians have focused on the evolution of the movement after its political demise

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 445

(the most notable works in that regard are those of Ilarion Țiu), meaning that Tiberiu Tănase's book, titled *Sides of the Coin. The Legionary Movement between 1941 and 1948* (Tritonic, București, 2010), tackles mostly unexplored topics. The author has a Ph.D in history from the University of Bucharest and is a lecturer at the National Intelligence Academy. His wide range of scientific interests includes various fields of study, such as international relations, the history of the Romanian intelligence service as well as the Romanian far right. The book hereby reviewed successfully brings these themes together, while the author's background and expertise allows him to follow certain aspects that are usually left out by other works.

As the Romanian Academy member Dinu C. Giurescu states in the foreword, the book may be divided into three separate sections, based on the focus of the research. Its first goal is to draw a clear picture of the distinct organizational components which were part of the legionary movement, from its upper echelon to its lowest levels, while at the same time outlining its power structures and describing its chain of command, its internal control mechanisms, its recruitment practices and the function of its bodies that dealt with repression or information gathering. Secondly, the analysis provides a classification of the several factions formed within the Legion between the events of 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> of January 1941 and the final stages of the communist regime's institutionalisation around 1948, factions which emerged both inside the country and abroad and assumed either a cooperative or a hostile stance towards the authorities. The comparisons that are drawn between these various groups are meant to reveal the political and ideological motivations that generated and then amplified struggles within the Legion after its removal from power. Thirdly, the book brings up the most significant projected as well as materialized actions that the Legionary factions engaged in between 1941 and 1948, both within the country and abroad, mostly in order to destabilize and/or overthrow the governing regimes. In connection with this, the analysis is less concerned with the international transformations brought on by the end of the Second World War and the early phase of the Cold War, their impact on the state of the country or the gradual coming to power of the communist forces. However, a clear picture of the significant changes that took place is provided through a thorough description of the strategic reorientations of all Legionary groups, which had to choose whether to actively oppose or to collaborate with the communist regime. However, it is important to note that the three part structure presented

above is only related to the main themes discussed throughout the book, since each of its six chapters focuses on a separate, autonomous subjects.

One of the first arguments that can be made for the reviewed book's noteworthy contribution to its historiographical field is related to the extensive archive material which the author bases his research on. Aside from using some of the most significant monographs and studies to date, as well as adequately selecting essential primary sources, such as a number of memoirs or a wide range of interwar publications, Tiberiu Tănase heavily focuses on previously unpublished documents, mostly belonging to the Romanian Intelligence Service and the National Archives of Romania. Some of the documents that are deemed as most relevant were collected in an annex which is available at the end of the book, comprising of numerous notices which belong to the interwar Secret Intelligence Service that concern the organization and activities of the legionary movement, informative notices of regional police and gendarmerie inspectorates, as well as notices belonging to several central structures under the authority of the Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs, reports, references, orders and instructions given within those respective institutions etc. The author manages to effectively utilize all these sources in his compelling reconstruction of the legionary movement's organization after 1941, as it is seen through the proactive initiatives of the authorities. The depiction of Romania's institutional labyrinth on which the successive regimes of 1941-1948 relied, particularly that of the intelligence services, is all the more clearer given the author's expertise, allowing a comprehensive description of complex mechanisms, otherwise hard to follow.

The first two chapters of the book are meant to integrate the legionary movement, by way of a short conceptual analysis, into the larger landscape of interwar European fascism, and they involve the evaluation of the most important Romanian and foreign historiographical contributions, starting with the perspectives that were promoted by members of its ranks and ending with the research of contemporary historians. The author accurately notices the epistemic challenges associated with such labels as *fascist* or *non-fascist*, especially when dealing with the particular case of the legionary movement, a phenomenon illustrating a very specific set of characteristics and means of expression. In this first section of his book, Tiberiu Tănase makes an attempt at portraying the intellectual climate of interwar Europe by paying attention to the first coherent ideological formulations of the

Western far right, as well as by outlining the decisive influence which the thought of several major intellectual figures (such as Gustave LeBon, Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Sorel or Gaetano Mosca) had on their appearance. Although the contextualization is certainly welcome, the analysis does not follow up on any of the themes that are shortly mentioned, so that the first chapter itself becomes merely an attempt to project several components of an extensive definition, that of *eternal fascism* or *Ur-Fascism* formulated by Umberto Eco, upon the Legion itself, for the purpose of indicating its similarities with other versions of European fascism. From this theoretical model, the author selects such traits as the cult of tradition, irrationalism, nationalism, popular elitism, the cult of death and the specific language and vocabulary, which by themselves are hardly sufficient to create an ideal type of generic fascism. Furthermore, the part that refers to the historiographical evolution of the legionary movement does not equally make use of all available sources. While there is a thorough classification of all the most significant memoirs, as well as a useful presentation of both the published and unpublished documents relevant to the topic, when it comes to the monographs, studies and articles that concern the movement, only the main ones are briefly brought up, while the newer contributions are completely overlooked and there seems to be no interest shown to the impact which Western research and its spectacular paradigm shifts, may have had on how the Legion is currently seen. With that being said, the shortcomings of the conceptual and historiographical analysis are understandable given the nature of this particular research, which focuses on facts themselves rather than ideology, even though the perspective upon the latter would be in need of substantial additions.

The section of the book in which the organization of the movement is described is an innovative one, given the fact that a detailed taxonomy and an accurate description of its inner components, either analysed from a vertical (that is, from its lowest to its highest structures) or a horizontal (by noting the particularities of each hierarchic level) point of view, has not been attempted until *Sides of the Coin*. Therefore, Tiberiu Tănase's book provides a wide perspective on the proper functioning of the legionary movement both before and after 1941, although an accurate account of the way the identified nuclei within the Legion interacted with one another is missing, which makes the analysis seem rather incomplete.

In the final part of the book, focused on the factions that emerged within the Legion after its brief governing period, the approach is significantly more nuanced, as it is not only concerned with defining and characterizing the main groups that appeared in Romania and abroad, but also explains their relationships, their common points and their differences. Frequent references and footnotes that provide biographical information about key members of the Legion during these years make each of the factions easier to trace by following the actions of their most significant leaders. The particular ideological traits and political stances of each side (especially their relationship with the authorities) is necessary for a better understanding of the last two chapters of the book, which deal with the planned and executed actions of the Legionary groups between 1941 and 1948. At this point, the author depicts the movement as being clearly undermined by internal power struggles and turned into an insignificant political and social phenomenon, especially compared to the height of its power in the final interwar years. The activity of the Secret Intelligence Service (particularly the role played by Eugen Cristescu in the annihilation of the movement's remnants), the relationship between different offices and institutions of the Third Reich and the exiled leaders of the Legion, the naive expectations, which almost all factions shared, of eventually coming back in power, as well as the gradual acceptance of the new regime that came after the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 1944, all come in to play in these last chapters. By bringing into discussion some of the decisive moments of the Legion's history throughout the above mentioned time frame (even though some of them are omitted, such as the connections between the Legionary groups and the Western Allies in the early stage of the Cold War), the author registers what was, in retrospect, one of the final stages of the movement's existence.

Seen as a whole, TiberiuTănase's book is certainly a useful contribution to the research field it belongs to. Although the ideological interpretations lack thoroughness and the historiographical analysis does not take the recent perspectives of Western academia into consideration, *Sides of the Coin* steadily addresses a set of significant issues and mostly manages to achieve its goals. Future research concerning the legionary movement's evolution after 1941 will most likely find it to be a useful and well-documented tool.

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