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Pasts into Present: Ideology, Memory, and Monuments in Communist and Post-communist Romania

'Crossroads images', as Régine Robin called them, (Robin 2009: 29) monuments[1] are often at stake in the processes of appropriation or disavowal of the past, while preserving their status as marks of identity for the individual, the group, the city, and the nation. They are concrete images of the relation to the past of the society that builds, commemorates, and sometimes destroys them. Moreover, they can come under attacks of vandalism when changes occur in society, especially during revolutions and *coups d'état*. Furthermore, the public monuments are an attempt to control how events and characters are represented as part of the state spectacle of power (Merewether 1999: 183). They commemorate memorable events and render heroes and triumphs, victories and conquests, perpetually present (Young 1993: 3).

Destroying statues and other ideologically-charged monuments, renaming streets, towns, and squares, operating spatial reconfigurations and historical reinterpretations — all these speak about the interest of political order in manipulating history and controlling territory (Verdery 1999: 6). Often, the replacement of a regime with another entails the re-arrangement of space and the re-writing of the past in order to suit the new ideological paradigm.

This was the destiny of various monuments built during communist regime in Romania: statues representing communist leaders and ideological figures had been destroyed, victims of the regime's collapse. On the other hand, the monuments perpetuating the national memory were objects of active politics of remembering and / or re-appropriation while new monuments were erected in order to celebrate the heroes of the day.

[1] I am interested more in the ideology which drives the changes in monument creation/destruction/appropriation process and less in their function in the aestheticisation of memory or in their capacity of being/becoming a *lieu de mémoire*.

The aims of my paper are twofold: on the one hand, to explain how ideology influenced the choice of the historical figures / events / symbols to be represented in the public space during communism and post-communism, and on the other hand, to investigate the role of post-communist memory politics in defining the communist monuments' destiny after the regime's demise, looking at both the still standing and the now demolished monuments as well as in choosing new figures and symbols to be represented in the public space.

1. Ideology and Public Representation in the First Communist Decades

An offspring of modernism, communism was haunted by the 'Future.' The past had to be undone even if it involved torturing and murdering people, destroying material traces, and rewriting history. Erasing memory was another goal of the communists. Their destructive endeavours targeted the collective memory of specific communities, the historical memory of "invaded" nations, and the personal memory of the individual victims of repression.

This was no different in the case of the Romanian communist regime and its approach to Romania's past and memory. If anything, the Romanian communists went further than all the other communists of Central and Eastern Europe in their anti-national policies and politics. They dismissed the interwar national heroes and replaced them with communist figures. The history of Romania (as well as the history of the world) was narrated from the Marxist perspective of class struggle, while national events were reinterpreted to fit the new ideological paradigm. The memorable 1859 union of the Romanian Principalities was now viewed as a political move of the bourgeoisie, meant to serve its own, narrow political and economic interests. Similarly, the great union of 1918 was presented as an act of Romanian imperialism. (Boia 2001: 72)

By the 1950s, a new official narrative about the past, which highlighted the international communist core values, was widely publicized through textbooks, literature, theatre, films, art, and media. It was embodied in a series of monuments representing the international leaders of communism, Lenin and Stalin, as well as anonymous but crucial figures of communist propaganda, such as the revolted peasant, the diligent worker, the revolutionary woman, the antifascist fighter. Interestingly, owing to the factional power fights within the party, the Romanian communist leaders were quasi-absent from this monumental program.[2]

[2] Only in 1955, a bust of Ilie Pintilie, a former underground communist fighter (d. 1940), was erected in front of the National Assembly. There were no statues of important political leaders such as General Secretary of the Party Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej or other members of the Political Bureau. In 1971, the first pro-communist Prime Minister, Petru Groza, got his



Fig 1. Petru Groza at Mogosoaia. Photo: CFDobre, 2010

Having destroyed the monuments representing the former political leaders and the royal figures, the communists started a new program of monumental creation. The weaker its legitimacy and the more concerning its political fragility, the more massive were the regime's monuments. The gigantic statues testified about the communists' need to control, dominate, glorify, and ultimately mystify the past. These monuments were an attempt at overwhelming the spectator. But as Robert Musil once pointed out, there is nothing as invisible as a monument. (Musil 2003: 32) Lenin, Petru Groza, and the other prominent communist figures became truly noticeable only after the regime's collapse. Their statues were dismantled as early as March 1990, some destroyed for good while others dumped in some remote storage areas (e.g., Lenin and Petru Groza's statues were dumped in Mogoșoaia, near Bucharest). (Fig. 1)

1. 1. The International communism and its monuments (1944–1964)

The monumental nature of the communist public iconography conceals a desire and quest for origins. Romanian communists came to power through the might of the Soviet Red Army and the falsification of the November

own statue. Alexandru Moghioroș, a long term communist, deputy Prime minister, member of the Politbureau, also got a statue in a remote park of Bucharest.

1946 election results; they then forced the king of Romania to abdicate. Consequently, the communists were keen to forge a new past in order to control the future.

It comes as no surprise that the Red Army was glorified through monuments as early as the end of 1944, when a monument representing a soviet tank was put up in Cluj.[3] The monument stood near the Orthodox Cathedral for nearly fifty years, and was transferred to the city's Soviet cemetery after the fall of communism.

On 10 May 1946 King Michael joined by the Soviet ambassador and Red Army officers and seconded by his pro-communist government inaugurated in Bucharest another monument dedicated to the Soviet soldier. Created by Constantin Baraschi, a sculptor who renounced his own artistic past in order to become accepted by the communist ideologues, the statue was erected on a twelve-metre marble pedestal surrounded by bas-reliefs depicting battle scenes (Georgescu, Cernovodeanu, Cebuc 1966, 194). The three-metre high statue represented an armed soldier ready for battle.[4]

The monument was first placed in Victory Square in the centre of Bucharest. In 1986, when the new metro station was built at the square, the statue was transferred to a corner of the near-by Kiseleff avenue. After the fall of communism, the statue, its pedestal considerably diminished, was moved to the soviet cemetery of Bucharest. Many times vandalized in the 2000s, the statue and the cemetery were finally encircled by a wall, and are now guarded day and night. (Fig. 2)

In 1947, a statue dedicated to the Red Army was also unveiled in Iași.[5] Created by the sculptor Boris Caragea, the monument was made of bronze and stood eight metres tall. On the pedestal an inscription glorified the 'liberating' Soviet army. Placed initially in the Copou Park, the central park of Iași, after the fall of the regime the statue was transferred to the Soviet

[3] "The monument was put in the centre of Cluj, behind the Orthodox Cathedral by the Soviet soldiers themselves, at the end of 1944. At the time, all the monuments honoring the Soviets were built quickly. ... Some soldiers were in battle while behind the battlefield, others built monuments." Nicolae Edroiu, *Ziar de Cluj*. http://www.ziardecluj.ro/istorie-de-cluj-tancul-stalinist-din-piata-avram-iancu-se-odihneste-cimitirul-central, last accessed May 2014.

[4] The pedestal was very high and was subject of jokes that circulated in the country. The most famous was the epigram of Pastorel Teodoreanu, a well known writer at the time:

Soldate rus, soldate rus,/ Te-ai înălțat acolo sus / Că liberași popoarele / Sau fiindcă-ți put picioarele? (Oh, Russian Soldier, Oh, Russian Solder / why are you standing so high? / Because you have freed people / or because your feet stink?, *my translation*)

[5] At the time, three monuments were built in order to celebrate the Soviet army: a bronze statue in the central park, a stone statue in the Soviet soldiers' cemetery, and an obelisk in the yard of a local writer, Vasile Pogor. See http://www.monumentul.ro/pdfs/Catalin%20Fudulu%2009.pdf, last accessed May 2014.



Fig. 2. The Soviet Soldier in the Russian cemetery of Bucharest. Photo: CFDobre, 2010

cemetery. In 2001, the bronze statue was taken away to be restored but the municipality decided to use the bronze in order to build a statue of the medieval prince and a national key figure, Michael the Brave. In 2007, the Russian Federation embassy publicly protested this decision, asking the authorities to restore the statue. A police investigation revealed that the bronze statue had already been melted. Its place in the cemetery was taken by a new stone statue of the Soviet soldier.

Similar statues were built in important cities such as Arad, Baia Mare, Oradea, Timișoara, Vaslui — to name but a few.[6] After the fall of communism, most of these statues were removed from the city centres and relocated at the periphery. Some of them disappeared for good. None of these monuments is now considered a national monument; therefore, they are not protected by law, and their fate depends on the local authorities' ideological and / or personal preferences.

Having thus celebrated the 'Liberation Army' of the Soviet Union, the Romanian communists next focused on ideological figures. Following King Michael's forced abdication and exile (30 December 1947), the Communist

[6] The statue in Vaslui, Arad, Oradea are still standing in the initial place. In Baia Mare on the very spot of the soviet soldier's statue was built a fountain after the fall of communism.

Party enjoyed complete control over the country; its artistic and iconographical programme was intended to glorify the symbols of the new political order.

In 1948, a 'war on monuments' was initiated in order to cleanse the public space of the regime's enemies. The statues of the former kings of Romania, Carol I (1866–1914) and Ferdinand (1914–1927) realized by the well-known Croat sculptor, Ivan Meštrović, were dismantled and destroyed. This endeavour was followed by the destruction of the monuments dedicated to most of the liberal and conservative politicians who played an important role in the modernisation, development and the unity of Romania. Only a few statues were kept, such as those of Mihail Kogălniceanu or C.A. Rosetti, both involved in their youth in the radical left faction of the liberals — and as such amenable to be re-appropriated by the communist regime as revolutionaries.

In the 1950s, the revolutionary historical figures who illustrated the class struggle became the regime's favourites. The leaders of peasant or / and petty noblemen uprisings enjoyed special attention. The deeds of Gheorghe Doja (leader of a revolt in sixteenth century Transylvania), Horia, Cloşca and Crişan (the leaders of Romanian origin of an eighteen century revolt in Transylvania), Tudor Vladimirescu (the leader of the 1821 Wallachian revolution), and the 1848 revolutionary, Nicolae Bălcescu[7], became the new mantra of the regime. These characters, alongside the fifteenth-century prince and hero of the anti-Ottoman wars, Stephen the Great, were immortalized through numerous statues, and frescos, textbooks, historiographical works, and historical novels and films. Streets and even villages were named after them.

Let a part the revolutionaries, the leading figures of the new iconographical program were by far the founding father of soviet communism, Lenin, as well as its so-called 'little father', Stalin. They were joined in the public space by local figures such as Ștefan Gheorghiu, a Romanian socialist leader (d. 1914) transformed by the communist propaganda into a forerunner of communism, Ilie Pintilie and Alexandru Moghioroș, both members of the Communist Party during its underground years, when it was officially banned in Romania.

As in the other communist countries, after 1947, the Stalinist cult of personality was greatly developed in Romania. Stalin's writings were published in Romanian (even after his death), streets and even an entire city, Brașov, were renamed after him (between 22 August 1950 and 24 December 1960 Brașov became Stalin city). Naturally, statues had to be built to honour the Soviet leader.

[7] Nicolae Balcescu seems to be the most appreciated personality to be represented in the public space even nowadays. After the fall, new busts were built all over the country and even outside Romania. For instance, even the Romanian Orthodox Church took under its patronage Bălcescu, in 2012 the Patriarch himself inaugurated a bust of Bălcescu in Bucharest.

In 1948, a national contest was initiated for building a statue of Stalin in Bucharest. Overwhelmed by the high number of proposals, the national committee decided to delegate the decision to a Soviet advisor. The selection process ended up in 1950 when the designs of a young sculptor, Dumitru Demu (1920–1997), were approved by the Soviet expert (Şerban 2014: 187-190). The statue depicted a benevolent Stalin, smiling to the imaginary crowds. It was placed at the entrance of Herăstrău Park in 1951. Another copy was erected in the centre of the Stalin city (Braşov). Stalin's Bucharest monument was the central point of state visits, celebrating meetings, and of the commemoration rally following the soviet leader's death in 1953 (Şerban 2014: 192).

Mimetically transposing the destalinization, initiated by Khrushchev in 1956, into practice, the Romanian communists took the decision to take down the statue — a task that was accomplished in 1962. After tearing down Stalin's statue, the interwar *Madura* fountain was replaced at its initial spot. Nowadays, on the same spot, a statue of former French president, General De Gaulle, welcomes the people at the entrance of the park.

After almost two decades of rule by force, the communists succeeded in imposing a new historical narrative, which came to replace the earlier historical and collective memory (now restricted to the small circles of individuals). The national memory became a vehicle of communist ideology, particularly well reflected in public monuments.

1. 2. The national communism (1964–1989)

At the beginning of 1960s, the Romanian communists re-oriented their ideology as well as economic, social, and cultural policies towards a national approach. In July 1964, Secretary General of the Romanian Communist Party Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej[8] made an official statement about the new direction in Romanian politics: more independence towards Moscow, a national economic plan, an independent foreign policy, and a national historiographical, artistic, and memorial programme.

The shift of official ideology energized a change in historical memory. The beneficiaries of this change were the medieval princes (or 'voivodes'), now re-appropriated and reinterpreted to fit the new nationalist communist paradigm. (Boia 2001: 74)

[8] Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901–1965), a worker born in a poor family, joined the communist party in illegality. Imprisoned several times during the interwar period, he became the secretary general of the communist party in 1944. He kept his function until his death in 1965. Between 1947 and 1965 he was *de facto* ruler of Romania. He succeeded to grasp the whole power after the 1952 Stalinist type of purge, which relegated from all important functions his Politburo colleagues Teohari Georgescu, Vasile Luca and Ana Pauker.

For instance, if in the 1950s Prince Michael the Brave was considered a tyrant who exploited the peasants and protected the rich boyars, in the 1960s and afterwards he became a national hero, the first ruler to have accomplished the 'unity of the Romanian countries'. A vast program of building a national memorial discourse around him was put into practice. In 1975, even the communist party programme mentioned Michael the Brave among the historical personalities meant to be promoted and honoured. Furthermore, monuments were erected in Alba Iulia (1968), Iaşi (1971), and Cluj (1976).

Another medieval prince promoted by the regime was Stephen the Great. The Moldavian prince never lost his place in the communist Pantheon — not even in the 1950s — thanks in part to his close relations with medieval Muscovy through his wife, Evdokia. Nevertheless, he was fully rehabilitated only in the 1970s. Four new monuments were erected in order to honour the 'defender of the Christianity': in Iași (1971), Piatra Neamț (1974), Suceava (1975), and Vaslui (1975). All his monuments are proudly standing in their original spot as Stephan the Great became not only an important post-communist national figure, but also an Orthodox icon as he was sanctified by the Romanian Orthodox Church.

A few other medieval princes were embraced by the regime's propaganda: John the Terrible, Vlad the Impaler, Mircea the Great, and Petru Rareș[9]. They were joined in the 1980s by the chieftains of ancient Dacia (a tribal union presumptively organised as a polity and roughly corresponding to present-day Romania), Burebista and Decebal.

The late-sixteenth-century John the Terrible (also known as John the Brave or John the Armenian), was rediscovered by the communists due to his exploits against the boyars, the medieval nobility. In the 1950s, his deeds illustrated the class struggle, while in the 1980s he embodied, through his campaign against the Ottomans, the 'national' fight against the foreign enemies. The communist regime erected an entire memorial complex at the presumptive place of his death and burial, Roșcani, in Galați county. His statue was also chosen to replace King Ferdinand's in a memorial complex erected in Iași in 1934 which included at the time of its construction a series of rulers: Dragoș I, Alexander the Good, Stephen the Great, Vasile Lupu, Michael the Brave, Dimitrie Cantemir, Carol I, and Ferdinand.[10]

[9] Petru Rareș was considered to be the illegitimate son of Stephan the Great and ruled Moldavia between 1527 and 1538 and between 1541 and 1546. He was as cruel towards boyars as his presumptive father and thus his deeds were depicted by communists as a symbol of class struggle.

[10] The Romanian interwar period had its own national Pantheon which included the medieval voivodes and modern kings. The emphasis was made on the continuity of the Romanian kingdom and the linkage between the modern kings and the medieval princes. Dragos I was considered to

Vlad the Impaler, world known as Bram Stoker's Dracula, was promoted as an example of patriotism and protection of the poor peasants. A monument erected in Giurgiu in 1976 displays him as a princely incarnation of justice and order.

Mircea the Elder was similarly promoted by the regime through historiography, films, and monuments. He enjoyed a great deal of attention from Ceaușescu, who identified with his allegedly wise character. A series of statues were dedicated to the Wallachian ruler in Pitești, Târgoviște, Turnu Măgurele, and Tulcea.

Another figure of medieval times who haunted the communist imaginary was Gheorghe Doja (Hungarian: Dózsa György). A petty noble of Szekler origins who lead a sixteenth-century revolt against the establishment, he best illustrated the class struggle. Bucharest and Timișoara welcomed his statues while streets and villages were named after him.

The monuments' force of representation, their seemingly eternal status, and their role in the commemoration rituals explain their constant appeal in the eyes of the communist authorities. Furthermore, the symbolic representation of medieval princes offered the opportunity to re-enact the heroic deeds and victories of the Romanians. The medieval princes' statues spoke about endurance and the continuity of the nation and its teleological destiny. They were the messengers of a national discourse that placed communist Romania on a continuum with the medieval Romanian principalities, thus projecting back into the Middle Ages an alleged national unity. The communists' interest in the medieval period can be further explained by the appeal of the idea of a feudal system that met the requirement of the Marxist ideology of class struggle.

The communist totalitarian 'memorial centralism[11]' that promoted medieval princes and revolutionaries alike seems to have attained its goals. A survey conducted in the spring of 2006 on the 'Greatest Romanians' showed that many individuals internalised the communist public discourse about the Romanian past. Michael the Brave, Stephen the Great, and Vlad the Impaler still populate the Romanian Pantheon. This confirms Maurice Halbwachs's

be the founder of Moldavia while Alexander the Good was depicted as its organizer. The Moldavian princes were well represented in the above mentioned statuary with Vasile Lupu (considered to be a renaissance type of ruler in Moldavia between 1634 and 1653) and Dimitrie Cantemir, the intellectual prince who ruled Moldavia between 1710 and 1711.

[11] According to Johann Michel, the memorial centralism, 'le centralisme mémoriel', means that the state is the most important producer of memorial politics and policies. (Michel 2010: 50) I called it totalitarian memorial centralism as in communist Romania the state was the one and only producer of memorial politics and policies.

assertion that the personal and the collective memory are socially mandated, as part of a socializing system. (Halbwachs 1994: 129)

In sum, the communist regime turned to past in order to forge a shared national identity. The need for national aggrandizement, the effort to educate the next generations, ennoble past events, recall the martyrdom of those who gave their lives in the struggle for national survival, as well as the drive to control and legitimize the regime's ideology, shaped the communist public discourse about the past. Institutions like national memorial days, monuments, and anniversaries were meant to foster the sense of a common past, a valuable present, and an idealistic 'communist' future.

2. After the Fall: The Monuments Built by Communists and their Destiny

During the first post-communist decade, the communist past was a major stake in Romanian politics and public life. After the fall of Ceaușescu's regime and the bloody events of December 1989, the power was sized by the neo-communists, second-rank economic, social, and political elites created by the communist system. The offspring of national communism, the new elite put on display a nationalist vision of Romania which hindered any debate on communism.

Legitimized by the May 1990 general elections, the neo-communists managed to stay in power until 1996. Their public discourse promoted a complete break with communism by outlawing the Communist Party, and dismantling all the former regime's public symbols. Converted to capitalism, the neo-communists were adamant about forgetting the recent past. The material traces of the communist years were destroyed, reused, and / or reinterpreted.

Another perspective on the public memory of communism was promoted by the right-wing intellectuals (the self-styled "democrats") who denounced communism as a foreign regime imposed by the Soviet Union on the Romanian nation after the allied powers "betrayed" Romania during the peace negotiations at the end of the Second World War. This discourse emphasizes the uniqueness of Romanian communism by pointing to the brutality of repression and the chilling efficiency of the secret police. Challenged in the beginning by the neo-communists, this perspective became consensual among public actors, especially after the opposition forces won the general elections and took power in 1996. Although they lost 2000's general elections in favour of neo-communists, the anticommunist discourse became predominant in the public space[12]. This public consensus leads among others to former

[12] More on these aspects in Claudia-Florentina Dobre, *Uses and Misuses of Memory: Dealing with Communist Past in Postcommunist Bulgaria and Romania*, [in:] M. Pakier and J.



Fig. 3. The empty pedestal of Lenin statue in front of the House of the Press. Photo: CFDobre, 2010

political prisoners' rehabilitation, to a new monumental program promoting the anticommunist fighters and the national heroes, and eventually to the condemnation of communist regime, in December 2006.[13]

After Ceaușescu's fall, a liberating feast took place in the capital and all over Romania. A growing desire to break with communism overwhelmed the entire nation. The exorcism started as early as January 1990, culminating on 3-5 March 1990 with the dismantling of the statues of Lenin and Petru Groza in Bucharest.

Lenin statue was created by Boris Caragea and unveiled on 21 April 1960. The statue represented Lenin standing while delivering a speech. Built

Wawrzyniak (eds.), European Memory: Eastern Perspectives, Berghahn Books, series Studies in Contemporary European History, New York, Oxford, 2016, pp. 299-316; Claudia-Florentina Dobre, *Avatars of the Social Imaginary: The Myths about Romanian Communism after 1989*, [in:] C.-F. Dobre, C.-E. Ghiță (eds.), Quest for a Suitable Past: Myth and Memory in Eastern and Central Europe, CEU Press, 2016 (under publication).

[13] In April 2006, the president Traian Băsescu, lead to power by a right wing coalition, decreed the creation of a commission meant to study the communist crimes in Romania. After 6 months, the commission presented its report in more than 600 pages. Based on this report, the president condemned in a public session of the Romanian Parliament the entire communist regime as "criminal and illegitimate."

in bronze, it was six-metres high and was placed on a red marble pedestal (Cucu, Ștefan 1979: 210). The monument was placed in front of the newly built House of the Press. Soon, it became a symbol of the regime, and featured prominently in parades during state visits. After the statue was dismantled in 1990, the pedestal stood empty for years. (Fig. 3)

From time to time, the public space hosted discussions about a proper replacement of Lenin's statue. In the 2000s, a sculptor won a competition to produce a sculpture representing a ball with an inscription, a symbol of the new free press and more generally of the freedom of speech. But this monument never materialised. Another idea was to erect a monument in honour of the victims of the communist repression, specifically a statue of Elisabeta Rizea, a peasant woman tortured by the communist authorities in 1950s who enjoyed national fame after the fall of the regime for her anticommunist endeavours.[14] The campaign to raise the funds for this project was not successful.

In January 2010, the pedestal became the central point of an artistic project called 'Project 1990,' designed and managed by Ioana Ciocan, an artist and university professor. The first item placed on the pedestal was a statue of Lenin, as big as the original, designed by Ioana Ciocan and made from boiled corn and fruit drops. This 'pink' Lenin regained its old pedestal for one cold day in January. During the following years, other nineteen artistic installations occupied the pedestal. The project ended in April 2014. It was the first project of public art to be performed in Bucharest after the fall of communism. Through its artistic installations, it stands for an unaccomplished anamnesis process of the communist and transition periods.[15] (Fig. 4)

The artistic installations of "Project 1990" correspond to a new memorial trend, a result of a generational change, which I call the "pink" memory, after the book of memories published by a few young artists, writers, and scholars, under the title, *The Pink Book of Communism*.[16] At the beginning of 2000s, a new generation of artists, scholars, and political leaders gained influent positions in the cultural, political, and social fields. Less fashioned by the communist regime, and not feeling guilty about it, they promoted a more balanced, and sometimes (self) ironic, image of communism.

[14] See more on this topic in Claudia-Florentina Dobre, 'Elisabeta Rizea de Nucșoara: un "lieu de mémoire" pour les Roumains?', in *Conserveries mémorielles*, 2006, http://cm.revues.org/57

[15] This project was characterized by Caterina Preda as a temporary counter-monument. See C. Preda, *'Project1990' as an Anti-monument in Bucharest and the Aestheticisation of Memory*, "Südosteuropa" 64 (2016), no. 3, pp. 307-324.

[16] G.H. Decuble (ed.), *Cartea roz a comunismului* [The Pink Book of Communism], vol. 1 (Iași: Editura Versus, 2004). *The Pink Book of Communism* is a collection of personal memories about childhood and adolescence during the communist regime, in which auto-irony and "golden age" nostalgia dominate the narrative.



Fig. 4. Hydra. Project 1990.
Photo: C.F. Dobre, 2010

As anticommunism became the dominant discourse in the public space after the 2006 official condemnation of the communist regime, the "pink memory" trend was relegated to its intellectual and artistic background. This ideological and memorial turn can be traced to the monumental level by looking at the new function of Lenin' pedestal. A sculpture representing two big wings was installed in the spring of 2016 on the very spot of Lenin statue and pedestal. Realised by the sculptor, Mihai Buculei, the wings are meant to symbolize the Romanian people's quest for freedom and the resistance of the anti-communist fighters. 27 meters high, 40 tones each wing, the monument has already stirred controversy. Erwin Kessler, a journalist and editor, would have preferred the empty pedestal and its temporary monuments instead of a permanent artistically 'insignificant' statue.[17]

The statue of the first pro-communist Prime Minister, Petru Groza (1884–1958), was built in bronze, on a granite and marble pedestal; it was the work of the sculptor Romulus Ladea. It represented a standing Groza,

[17] "The empty pedestal was a symbol of liberty and a possible reference point of a sharp public morality. Its destruction and replacement by a monument of Guinness book type represent another moment of weakening the national ethic.' Erwin Kessler, "Dupa soclu" (After the pedestal), in *22*, May 2014 on http://www.revista22.ro/dupa-soclu-41895.html, last accessed 27 May 2014.

more than four metres tall (Tuca, Cociu 1983: 110). Placed at a square near the Medical School in Bucharest, it was inaugurated on 6 March 1971.[18] After it was dismantled on 5 March 1990, its pedestal was given a new destination as soon as 1993, when it was used to display a statue dedicated to the Romanian artillery.

Having been taken down from their pedestals, the statues of Lenin and Petru Groza were stored at Mogoșoaia estate[19] where at one point they were painted in pink and white as part of an artistic performance. After erasing the colours, the authorities have hidden the two statues behind the wall of Mogoșoaia. Finally, at the initiative of Ioana Ciocan, the two statues were placed in a warehouse of the mayoralty of Bucharest in 2011. This action not only hide away (maybe for a future re-appropriation?!) these decayed remnants of the communist past, but also put an end to a potential tourist attraction, considering that the French-language guide, *Le Petit Futé de la Roumanie*, recommended the architectural assembly of Mogoșoaia not only for its rich history and its Romanian national style featured there, but also for the two dismantled statues, then hidden in the park: 'The pleasant near-by park hides two statues, including one of Lenin, stored here after the Revolution.' (Petit Futé 2004–2005: 119)

The destiny of the communist leaders' statues failed to generate a national debate on the status and function of monuments in post-communist Romania. As an intellectual pointed out, 'in Romania the monuments never stirred any debates, [instead] they were objects of bitter jokes' (Ioan 2010).

At the time of the monuments' dismantling, the historian Andrei Pippidi was among the few intellectuals who took a stand against such practices. In an article published on 8-9 March 1990 he argued that: 'It would have been preferable that our statues stood for ever… instead of mirroring the changes that took place in our country during the last century' (Pippidi 2000: 225-226). The architect Constantin Enache stated that this type of monuments should be preserved in the public space as a symbol of the historical evolution of Romania and its capital (Iosa 2006: 139).

If the leading figures of communism's statues were dismantled or / and destroyed, the 'Pantheon of the socialist heroes and of the socialist revolution', as it was named by the former regime, better known as the Mausoleum was re-used by the new post-communist political order. Built in

[18] Another statue of Petru Groza was inaugurated in 1962 in Deva. Created by Constantin Baraschi, it was dismantled after the fall of communism. In 2007, the statue was replaced in the birthplace of Petru Groza, in Bacia.

[19] Mogosoia castle and estate is to be found near Bucharest. The palace built in the Neo-Romanian style and the celebrity of its owners, the medieval Wallachian voivode, Constantin Brancoveanu, or used to be very known princess Bibescu, attract many visitors and tourists.



Fig. 5. The Mausoleum.
Photo: CFDobre, 2010

the centre of the interwar Carol I Park, renamed the Park of Liberty during communism, the monument was to serve as a burial place for the Romanian communist leaders. Inaugurated on 30 December 1963, the 48-metre high mausoleum hosted in its circular hall the tombs of Petru Groza and C.I. Parhon (the first president of the communist National Assembly), and the embalmed corpse of the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. On the two sides of the central hall, there were the tombs of the socialists I. C. Frimu and Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, of the communists Alexandru Moghioroș and Ilie Pintilie (among others), as well as of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, the communist leader executed during the 1950s purges (Berindei, Bonifaciu 1980: 89). (Fig. 5)

After the fall of communism, the corpse of Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej was given to his family and buried at Bellu cemetery in Bucharest. In 1991, the remnants of the other socialists and communists were given to theirs families as well. In 1993, the neo-communist authorities decided to bring into the mausoleum the remnants of the soldiers from the First World War.

In 2004, in the context of a plan to build an orthodox cathedral in Bucharest, the then neo-communist Prime Minister, Adrian Năstase, decided to offer the place to the Church. The mayor of the time and the future president of Romania between 2004 and 2014, Traian Băsescu, backed by a few NGOs, refused to sign the agreement that would have led to the dismantling of the mausoleum.

Final Remarks: New Monuments after the Fall

In its final years, Ceaușescu's regime turned nationalism into a secular religion that preserved only a vague resemblance of the principles of 1950s international communism. After 1989, while the communist rhetoric was abandoned by practically everyone, the nationalist spirit remained alive. It can be recognized in textbooks, political speeches, and the public space. The monuments representing national figures still dominate the urban landscape.

In the 1990s, new monuments dedicated to historical figures were built largely as a result of private and local initiatives.[20] The controversial figure of the commander-in-chief and authoritarian leader during the Second World War, Ion Antonescu,[21] also enjoyed the right to be publicly displayed. A few of his busts were built in various parts of the country, and in the capital, but, after his condemnation for the genocide of Jews in Transnistria, Antonescu's busts were relegated from the public space to museums.[22]

After 2002, the public space accommodated few monuments dedicated to the Holocaust victims. Bucharest, Oradea, Cluj, Satu Mare welcomed memorials that commemorates the Jews deported from Romanian territories during the Second World War by the Hungarian authorities. The inauguration, in 2009, of a Holocaust Memorial in Bucharest generated few debates on the non-existing memorial of communism' victims.

Actually, the victims of the communist persecutions were honoured according to a local type tradition. Beginning with 1990, crosses meant to keep alive their memory were built all over Romania. Furthermore,

[20] After the fall of communism, the communist patrimony acts became obsolete. During the first post-communist decade, the communist laws concerning patrimony were not replaced by new laws thus creating a legislative vacuum. Only in 2001, a new law of national patrimony was voted. The new law provides a communist type of dealing with monuments by centralizing the decision of building, restoring, etc. the national monuments. (Kovács 2003: 32-34).

[21] Ion Antonescu, an army officer, became the chief of the state during the Second World War. Arrested on 23 August 1944 by King Michael with the support of all political parties, he was deported to Russia with the help of Romanian communists. He was brought back to Romania where he was judged, condemned to death, and executed in 1946. After the fall of communism, in 1991, the Romanian Parliament dominated by neo-communists celebrated Antonescu as a hero and a victim of communism. In 2000, he was condemned for the genocide of the Jews in Transnistria. Nevertheless, he seems to enjoy a large sympathy as proved by the 2006 national survey organized by the public TV channel, TVR, as regards the 'Ten Greatest Romanians' among whom he ranks sixth. Cf. http://caplimpede.ro/top-10-mari-romani-foto/ retrived on 11th of November 2016.

[22] According to the decree no. 31 from 2002, article 12, it is forbidden to build statues of persons condemned for crimes against humanity and to display them in public space, except for museums.



Fig. 6. Iuliu Maniu's statue in Bucharest. Photo: CFDobre, 2010

the Association of the Former Political Detainees built commemorative monuments in some of the hotspots of the communist repression. At the end of 1990s, statues of Iuliu Maniu, the president of the former National Peasant Party who died in the communist prison of Sighet in 1953, and Corneliu Coposu, imprisoned for eighteen years, were built in the very centre of Bucharest. (Fig. 6) A bust of Corneliu Coposu was also built in Satu Mare, and a monument dedicated to the anti-communist fighters of Nucșoara was built in the same village. (Fig. 8)

Lately, the former monuments dedicated to King Carol I and interwar politicians were rebuilt or restored in their original location. A few others dedicated to kings Carol I, Ferdinand, and Mihai were built all across Romania. In 2000s, busts dedicated to the founding fathers of the European Union or to other political personalities, such as Simon Bolivar, Charles de Gaulle, and the founding father of modern Turkey, Ataturk, were built in the capital.

A monument entitled the 'memorial of rebirth' was dedicated to the 1989 revolutionaries in Bucharest at the initiative of former neo-communist President Ion Iliescu. Unveiled in 2005, the monument by sculptor Alexandru Ghilduș generated much controversy as regards both its underlying message and its artistic form. Shaped like a spike or pale, the monument prompted associations with impalement, the execution method of the medieval Romanian prince Vlad the Impaler / the notorious Dracula. There was also criticism of the overpriced budget for the monument. (Fig. 7)



Fig. 7. The Renaissance Memorial in the Revolution Square in Bucharest. Photos: CFDobre, 2010

After the fall of the regime, the fate of the monuments built by the communists can be broken down into two contrasting categories: those illustrating the communist ideological figures and symbols were dismantled, while the monuments representing the national figures remained standing, objects of new politics of memory. Furthermore, new figures and symbols joined the standing monuments to commemorate the key figures of national memory, including anticommunist fighters, royalties and interwar politicians. The adhesion at European Union was also inscribed in the monumental program of the country by building monuments dedicated to leading European figures.

During the transition period, the monumental public space reflected the transformation of the Romanian society. Private and local initiatives joined the public, central program of monument building. The 'memorial centralism' was replaced by a plurality of collective memories, and the monumental program followed this trend. Therefore, crosses, busts, and other type of monuments were built to celebrate events and / or personalities of local, regional, and national importance and to honour the victims of Holocaust or / and communist persecutions' memory. Not necessarily deprived of any artistic value, these monuments are primarily meant to illustrate the new (generally mainstream) discourse on the past.



Fig. 8. The monument dedicated to the Nucsoara anticommunist fighters in the village of Nucsoara. Photo: CFDobre, 2011

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Claudia-Florentina Dobre

Pasts into Present: Ideology, Memory, and Monuments in Communist and Post-communist Romania

Abstract

My article deals with the struggle to control the representation of the pasts both by communist and post-communist authorities. It focuses on monuments as core items of cultural memory and of ideological driven politics and public policies. Monuments are contradictory, versatile symbols, being invisible or over-visible depending on political situation and historical contexts. They are among the first to be demolished or built when changes occurs in a society. By destroying, re-appropriation and re-interpretation as well as constructing new monuments both communist and post-communist authorities engaged in a process of creating a (new) national/cultural memory and identity as well as in legitimating the (new) political order. I argue that the communist monuments were meant to legitimize and glorify the regime and its main figures and symbols while the post-communist statues and memorials reflect the plurality of discourse on the Romanian past and present while stimulating reflection and debates (at least among elites). Furthermore, I stress that the artistic value of the analyzed monuments is subdue to theirs ideological and memorial functions.

Keywords: Monuments, Ideology, Romanian Communism and Post-communism, Cultural Memory, National Identity.