

RAISING SOCIALIST CITIZENS: CULTURAL MODERNITY AND SOCIAL PERFORMATIVITY IN LATE SOCIALIST ROMANIA

Starting its inquiry from the ideological construction, institutional organization, and lived experiences of childhood in Nicolae Ceaușescu's Romania (1965-1989), this article seeks to advance an interpretive model of Communism rooted in theories of modernity and concepts of performativity. My study capitalizes on the affinity between childhood and selfhood, approaching childhood as a formative period that can illuminate the process of growing into a socialist citizen and thus, the regime's ambitions of creating a new socialist man. It argues that working with a notion of modernity that eschews the teleological implications of unabated progress can illuminate the Communist regime's illiberal, but decidedly modern, ambitions of social engineering. Acknowledging the modernity of the regime has significant implications for how we conceptualize the relationship between state and society and the formation of socialist subjectivities out of the intersection of official ideology and subjective experience.

This essay will rely on a critical notion of modernity in order to read the archives of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) for indications of the changing nature of the regime's social engineering ambitions under Ceaușescu and of the extent to which the construction of society as an object of scientific observation and rational management informed the regulation of family life and the socialization of children. It will draw on insights about the progressive bureaucratization and rationalization of all spheres of life in theories of modernity in order to examine the expansion of the party and state bureaucracies during late socialism and their role in the implementation of ideological imperatives. Finally, it will employ

the concepts of social practice and performance to better explicate the regime's specifically modern technologies of selfhood.

To some extent, the focus on socialist childhood in this essay is a pretext for the discussion of broader theoretical trends in the study of Romanian Communism. Read against the background of Ceaușescu's infamous demographic and reproductive policies, the reforms in education and the Pioneer Organization that set the trends in the state socialization of children during late socialism can give insights into the conceptions of society, family, and childhood that informed the regime's large-scale social engineering projects. The official archives of the Pioneer Organization can further illuminate the mediating role played by a series of institutions, lower rank party activists, journalists, and teachers in the process of translating ideological discourse into practice. Focusing on the widespread practice of organizing pioneer expeditions throughout the 1970s and 1980s, this study will examine the social and discursive practices generated by the attempts to implement the regime's reforms and ideological imperatives.

My intention is to examine the socialization of children into a set of socialist principles and national values through the lens of "the last socialist generation", i.e. of those who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, spending their formative childhood years during the historical conjuncture of Ceaușescu's Romania, and came of age after the collapse of the regime. In many ways, this generation was central to the socialist regime's struggle for legitimacy. Symbolically, childhood and youth served as metaphors for the transformative potential of socialism, the familial solidarity of the nation, and the nurturing ambitions of a strongly paternalist regime that presented itself as the guarantor of its citizens' basic needs. Yet, children and childhood were not merely symbolic currency for the regime. Throughout its last two decades, the regime had to contend with the sociological reality of the generation of Romanian children it engineered into existence through drastic measures of population control, such as the banning of abortion in 1966. Initially meant to ensure the necessary labor force in a command economy that depended on the availability of human capital, this generation put additional pressures on the welfare state's abilities to deliver on its promises, weakening its legitimacy.

These demographic and reproductive measures were an integral part of a broad range of reforms elaborated in the years immediately following Ceaușescu's rise to power in 1965. My own research centered on child and youth policies that developed out of debates concerning the reform of education and of the Pioneer Organization, but alongside these, I read

discussions regarding the legislation on reproduction, divorce, and welfare provisions for “families with many children.” Partly because these policies were elaborated in parallel, reading them in tandem can give us a sense of the holistic vision of society with which the party leadership operated. To the extent that these reforms were motivated by a strong belief that society can be scientifically known, rationally managed, and perfected, they amounted to a social engineering project. In this sense, the socialist regime was engaged in an essentially modern endeavor that exhibited both the unchecked triumphalism of teleological visions of society and their dark facets: bureaucratic intervention, social atomization, and individual alienation.

Cultural Modernity

With few exceptions, both foreign and domestic scholars refuse Romanian Communism the attributes of modernity, approaching it either as a static regime (through the lens of totalitarian theories) or as a backward political formation (through the lens of modernization theories). My intention is to explore the interpretive limits of the notions of modernity and modernization underpinning such analyses and propose that we operate with a broader conception of cultural modernity in our study of Communism.

Political scientists lead the way with works that argue for the essentially anti- or pre-modern political character of Ceaușescu’s regime. They measure Communism against a normative notion of modernity that is equated with liberal democracy, the existence of a public sphere and civil society, and the participation of free thinking individuals in the deliberative political process. In his *Stalinism for All Seasons*, Vladimir Tismăneanu introduces the notion of “Byzantinism” to explain the emergence of “Ceaușescuism” out of “the commingling of Leninist and Byzantine traditions in a uniquely cynical and manipulative political formation” (2003: 18). Similarly emphasizing the pre-modern character of Communist Romania’s political culture, Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan drew on Weberian nomenclature to coin the term “Totalitarianism cum Sultanism,” a concept readily embraced by later scholarship (1996: 344-365). Far from being an exclusively retrospective phenomenon, the emphasis on the “neo-absolutist” character of Communist politics can be traced back to the Cold War literature of the 1970s and 1980s. To some

extent, Western scholars such as Ken Jowitt continued in the tradition of modernization theories, acknowledging the modernizing potential of the social and economic transformations effected by Communist regimes. However, Jowitt argued that comprehensive analyses of Leninist political cultures should account for the latter's actualization of traditional political formations (the thesis of "neotraditionalism"). To illustrate these historical continuities, he relied on analogies between the relations of vassalage characteristic of feudal systems and the dynamics of power within the Soviet Bloc (Jowitt 1971: 165-166) or compared the privileged status of the Romanian *nomenclatura* to that of the nobility or the boyars (Jowitt 1992: 62-64).

Post-Cold War economic, social and cultural analyses of the Communist regime advance the same criticism, measuring the regime against its own standards of modernization only to conclude that it failed dramatically to deliver its promises. Whether they address state policies of collectivization or processes of industrialization and urbanization, the authors expose "modernization" as a mere propagandistic sham of the regime.¹ They reverse the regime's claims to have successfully achieved economic modernization, technological progress, social reform and emancipation, presenting the regime's modernizing attempts as instances of violent intrusion into and premeditated destruction of the organically grown social, economic, and rural/urban fabric of pre-war Romania. Consequently, communism appears to be at odds with the historical laws of progress, interrupting Romania's experience of modernization, diverting it from its natural European course, and causing backward political, economic and social formations. Post-Cold War studies approach modernization in terms of a checklist of evolutionist processes that typically includes industrialization, economic rationalization, urbanization, greater access to education, and the development of the welfare state. They focus on the Communist regime's systemic failure – due to economic centralization and political monopoly - to realize these modernizing goals, exhibiting a tendency to equate modernity with triumphant liberal capitalism and Westernization.

My intention here is not to question the use of powerful metaphors in political studies. Nor is this an attempt to vindicate the Communist regime and argue that it was, in fact, successful in realizing its modernizing ambitions. As suggested, my goal is to propose a notion of cultural modernity that shifts the emphasis from the processes, attributes, and standards of modernization to the usually unarticulated modes of thought,

temporal and spatial apprehensions, initiatives, experiments and premises that inform modern consciousness and political projects alike.

Despite their shifting focus on political, economic or socio-cultural phenomena, the studies discussed above share an essentially normative and teleological notion of modernity that uncritically embraces Enlightenment confidence in scientific reason and technological progress, ignoring the tensions and insecurities of the modern condition. Were we to broaden our notion of modernity to accommodate its constitutive ambiguities and dark facets, Communist regimes would no longer seem such unlikely candidates. This critical notion of modernity would encompass insights about the progressive rationalization and bureaucratization of all spheres of life (Weber 1947), the emergence of technologies of surveillance and discipline (Foucault 1979), the culmination of value-free routines of social gardening and cultivation that found their ultimate expression in mass extermination and genocide (Bauman 1989, 1991), and the apprehensions of historical crisis and discontinuity that prompted renovative programs of racial reclamation in Nazi Germany (Fritzsche 1996). Exploring the ambiguities and paradoxes at the heart of the modern project led a variety of scholars to argue that modernity "is hospitable not only to anarchic individualism but also to authoritarian designs" (Fritzsche 1996: 12).

Seen in this light, Romanian Communism is decidedly modern. Much like other socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, it embraced enthusiastically the Enlightenment dream of mastery over nature, seeking to mobilize science and technology in the service of manipulating both the natural and the social environment. It is this premise that underlies the premium the regime put on fast-paced industrialization, as well as its stubborn commitment to developing heavy industry well into the 1970s and 80s. Most importantly, it was in their feverish will to fully reshape the social texture and rejuvenate the social body that Communists were most decidedly modern. As scholars have pointed out, the apprehension of crisis coupled with the urgency of implementing social reform meant to steady collapsing social structures has been an essential aspect of modern sensibility and political projects. Much like other political actors of the twentieth century, the Communists "operated in the subjunctive tense, experimenting, reordering, reconstructing" the social body (Fritzsche 1996: 6). That this relentless drive to remake the social structure was also, as many studies have shown, a cynical political calculation to dispossess and eventually wipe out undesirable class enemies in labor camps or political prisons does not weaken the modernity of the regime's vision of

a well-managed society. In weeding out those perceived to be socially and politically unfit to inhabit the new socialist world, the Communists relied on specifically modern practices of social gardening (Bauman 1991). In this sense, the immediate postwar processes of collectivization, nationalization, industrialization and urbanization, as well as the campaigns for the eradication of illiteracy and expansion of education constituted similar practices of cultivation that, in the eyes of the party, contributed to the creation of “good society,” understood as a society that can eliminate poverty and manage scarcity.

Social Engineering Ambitions in Late Socialism

The social engineering projects inaugurated by Ceaușescu’s reforms emerged out of a peculiar tension between the party’s increased confidence in the country’s political stability and its anxiety over moral decay and social crisis. Unfolding in a significantly changed domestic and international landscape, Ceaușescu’s demographic, reproductive and educational reforms did not exhibit the revolutionary urgency and violence of the Stalinist period. Not only had the Communist regime become more securely entrenched by the mid-1960s, but the strategic distancing from Soviet stewardship and touting of national values earned the regime significant political capital. In the immediate years of Ceaușescu’s accession to power, the new leadership compared itself favorably with other socialist regimes, invoking its impressive political stability in contrast to the unrest in the German Democratic Republic in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, and the (then) recent invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.² It was in this climate of guarded confidence that the party congratulated itself for having successfully accomplished the major task of the socialist revolution: that of turning a reactionary capitalist society into a politically stable proletarian nation. Ceaușescu’s regime capitalized on the processes of social reconciliation and national reclamation initiated by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, claiming a broad social base of support that included previously suspect categories such as reactionary peasants or intellectuals.³ While the technological transformation of agriculture had allegedly modernized the peasantry, “a strong infusion of working class and peasant youth into the ranks of the intelligentsia” had supposedly revolutionized that traditionally idealist and nihilist class.⁴

The working class credentials of the new society, which had expanded the ranks of its bureaucracy and technocracy just as much as those of its workforce, would remain as questionable as its loyalty to the regime throughout the Communist period. However, as the debates regarding policy reforms indicate, the new party leadership felt genuinely more confident about the loyalty of those segments of society which had been shaped under its auspices since the late 1940s, were joining the party in increasing numbers, and whose professional careers and opportunities for upward social mobility implicated them in the reproduction of the regime. There is also little doubt that, by the mid-1960s, the regime had been successful in sanctioning an entirely new social hierarchy built around notions of productivity, worth, and value. Although political violence remained a characteristic of the regime into its late decades, Ceaușescu's early reforms were not premised on the radical remaking of society by eliminating ideological enemies. On the contrary, they exuded managerial confidence in the party's ability to mobilize the newly fashioned proletarian nation and turn it into a rationally managed society of plenty that could satisfy the needs of all its members.

How did children and youth, the vanguard of socialist society, feature in the party's forward looking vision of social management and transformation? The rhetorical centrality of childhood in the self-legitimizing discourse of the party might obscure the extent to which children represented a priority for the regime. In order to get a better sense of how the concern with children's livelihood, education, and socialist socialization was subordinated to larger issues of social management, we need to examine more closely the major social reforms that shaped childhood experiences during late socialism. The role of children in socialist society was legislated by the regime's demographic and reproductive policies, as well as its lesser known reforms of the educational system and of the Soviet-inspired children's organization, the Pioneers. Whether they defined it as the province of the family or of the state, these reforms subordinated childhood to the calculated need for labor force and human capital in a command economy.

Since the good society of plenty envisioned by Communists was to be scientifically designed and rationally managed, the regime appointed instances of scientific authority such as ministries, commissions, or research institutes to elaborate the social studies that would inform the articulation of social and economic reforms in the upper echelons of the party. Thus, the Executive Committee debates regarding changes to

reproductive and divorce legislation in 1966 relied on demographic and medical studies commissioned from the Ministry of Health and Social Provisions in order to put forth a set of measures that would improve the general health and growth of the population.⁵ Both the research studies and the political debates reflect the pervasive language of scientific and rational management. They employed percentage numbers and statistics that not only indicated population trends, but also effectively constructed parents and children in terms of labor force. Family dynamics were exclusively considered in terms of the state's ability to harness the productive and reproductive energies of the nuclear family. Similarly, measures affecting actual families, women, and children were primarily evaluated in terms of cost efficiency. In keeping with the party's self-presentation as a nurturing regime, the commissioned study suggested that the best solution to the demographic crisis would be a set of welfare incentives such as increases in birth allowances and child benefit, or in the number of crèches and kindergartens, the extension of maternity leave, and pension benefits for mothers. Invoking the financial burden that welfare provisions would impose on the state, the party leadership rejected these propositions systematically, opting instead for cost-effective coercive measures such as banning and criminalizing abortions, tightening divorce legislation, resorting to public shaming and professional penalties to further discourage divorce, and taxing childless citizens.

Most importantly, economic calculations were inextricably tied in with the leadership's anxiety over the moral health of the nation. In their assessment of the demographic crisis, members of the Executive Committee obsessively invoked the image of a decadent society and argued that the liberalization of abortions in 1957 had weakened socialist ethics and responsibility, encouraging prostitution and debauchery among socialist youth.⁶ The highly gendered association of the practice of abortion with women's sexual gratification and social dissolution ultimately disqualified welfare incentives in favor of coercive measures. While welfare incentives were felt to further encourage the climate of moral laxity suggesting that the party should "buy children" from parents with allocations and benefits, coercive measures were supposed to actively mobilize the nation around the party.⁷ In this context, members of the Executive Committee advanced the argument that children were the parents' (re)productive duty to the socialist nation rather than the (costly) responsibility of the state.⁸

While reproductive policies constructed children in terms of labor force and parental responsibility, the reform of education in the mid-

1960s took these economic calculations a step further, approaching children and youth in terms of human capital and reclaiming them as the province of state intervention.⁹ The changes in the structure and content of socialist education revolved around the importance of human capital in a technologically advanced society, i.e. the body of skills, competences and knowledge that would increase the economic value of the workforce. The promotion of the sciences, among which mathematics, physics and chemistry ranked highest, indicates the fact that the regime was not merely interested in the availability of workers, but sought to train qualified or skilled workers. Although it considered the importance of broadening education in the humanities and training experts in modern languages such as English, French and German, the debates organized by the Executive Committee with representatives from the Ministry of Education focused on the economic necessity of providing youth with a solid scientific education besides the technical and industrial training acquired in vocational high schools.

Finally, the reform of the Pioneer Organization, further addressed in the last part of this study, was meant to address more efficiently the task of mobilizing the ideological commitment and loyalty of the young, without which the availability of their labor force and human capital could not be guaranteed. Much like the reform of education, that of the Pioneer Organization reclaimed children as objects of expert and state intervention. Challenging the radical Soviet conception of children as activists and revolutionary models for adults to emulate, the party leadership argued that children could not be expected to show political initiative and leadership in the absence of adult guidance and professional expertise.

Social Practice and Performance

In contrast to the waning revolutionary enthusiasm for social transformation in other late socialist regimes, the political confidence and increasing concern with the moral and physical health of the socialist nation gave Romanian Communists a new lease on the project of remaking society and creating the new socialist man. In dealing with these state efforts at managing and perfecting society, domestic scholarship has produced rather ambivalent accounts. Although few scholars would argue that the “new socialist man” heralded by the regime was truly born, most work on the assumption that the socialist regime achieved the desired

social homogenization and political infantilization of its citizens, that the regime was successful in “re-educating Romanians” and in leveling personal ambitions and desires as well as behaviors and mentalities. The rather small body of literature dealing explicitly with the ideology of socialist childhood and the institutional framework of children’s organizations or socialist education reproduces the same theory. Whether they examine the rituals of admission into the pioneer organization and the collective activities promoted by the organization, the propagandistic content and intent of children’s literature such as primary school textbooks and historical novels (Manolescu, Mitchievici 2005), or the disciplining educational strategies that produced generations of allegedly infantile citizens (Majuru 2006), these studies cast children as passive recipients of masterfully controlled and largely successful campaigns of ideological indoctrination and homogenization.¹⁰

My study finds more inspiration in the works of American anthropologists, Katherine Verdery and Gail Kligman, whose ethnographies of the socialist state exposed the regime’s weakness and fragile legitimacy. Conceptualized in Gramscian terms, the weakness derives from the fact that socialist regimes had to resort to coercion in order to mobilize their populations rather than soften coercion with consent and achieve an internalization of ideological imperatives. Consequently, such studies focus on responses to state pressures and intrusions, uncovering forms of covert resistance in the tradition of James Scott’s “weapons of the weak.” The models of identity that Verdery’s and Kligman’s studies generate are those of duplicity, dissimulation, and complicity, all informed by the dichotomy between an authentic self relegated to the private sphere and a compliant public persona. While these conceptions of subjectivity are successful in explaining certain historical actors such as urban intellectuals (Verdery 1991) or certain spheres of life under Communism such as the responses to intrusive state intervention in the reproductive life of the family (Kligman 1998), they prove too static as a model for my research. The static character of the model derives from the implication that the private self is somehow transcendent with respect to social action and interaction, maintaining its “integrity” or “authenticity” in spite of or against the regime.

By comparison, my research on childhood would benefit more from a performative model that can account for the process of identity formation through social learning and interaction. In proposing the concepts of social and discursive practices as an alternative, my project draws on social

and cultural histories that pioneered a new approach in the American historiography of Soviet Russia in the past two decades. Sheila Fitzpatrick's studies of everyday life and strategies of self-reinvention along acceptable class lines in post-revolutionary Russia (Fitzpatrick 2005) inspired my choice to locate socialist subjectivity at the intersection of ideological scripts and individual performance, exploring this process of formation in a series of state-promoted social practices. Fitzpatrick's work is heavily indebted to Erving Goffman's microsociology of social interaction, whose major contribution was to show that social role-playing is not fraudulent but universal. As Goffman stresses, there is no clear line between "cynical" performances—those in which "the individual has no belief in his own act and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of his audience"—and "sincere" ones, in which the actors "believe in the impression fostered by their own performance" (1997: 95-108). Consequently, for Goffman and Fitzpatrick, role-playing is not an artificial act of putting on a public mask; it is a social process that is constitutive of identity.

The notion of discursive practices comes from Stephen Kotkin's study of a Soviet industrial town, Magnetic Mountain, which he explored as a microcosm of Stalinist industrialization in the 1930s (Kotkin 1995). Drawing heavily on Foucault and Bourdieu, the author proposed a new approach to official Soviet ideology, being less interested in ideology as a given, fixed, and monologic textual corpus and more in how Soviet ideology was actualized in everyday discursive practices by workers in the industrial town of Magnitogorsk. To denote this process of learning and appropriating the obligatory language for self-identification, Kotkin coined the term "speaking Bolshevik" (1995: 198-237). He acknowledged that the state wrote the rules of this game of social identification, centering it on notions of productivity, worker discipline and aptitudes, social origin and political loyalty, and that it did so with the express intention of achieving unquestioned control. However, he argued that, in the process of implementation, rules were sometimes challenged and often circumvented. What mattered in the end was that workers played this game of social identity that demanded mastery of a certain vocabulary whether out of fear, self-interest, genuine belief, or a mixture of any or all of these.

Pioneer Expeditions: Translating Ideological Intention into Practice

The last section of this article will elaborate the concepts of social and discursive practices by using the organization of pioneer expeditions in Romania throughout the 1970s and 1980s as a lens through which to examine the forms of self-identification and self-presentation generated by state-authored ideological scripts. The analysis will be prefaced by an examination of the institutional reform of the Pioneer Organization and the impact that the overlap between the party and state bureaucracy had on the process of implementing political decisions.

Organized annually, from 1969 through 1989, as a nationwide competition under the title “Expedițiile Cutezătorii”, pioneer expeditions can be best understood in the larger context of the party initiative to restructure the Romanian Pioneers. Originally created in 1949, the Pioneers was a Soviet-inspired children’s organization whose aim was to complement schools in the formation of an ideologically committed young generation by engaging children in collective activities during their free time. In theory, it was meant to ensure that the state maintained its control over children’s free-time, in much the same way as it managed their formal education.

The 1966 reform of the Pioneers centered on three aspects.¹¹ First, the Communist Youth Union, the Pioneers’ patron organization, was criticized for its failure to mobilize children successfully, given its young members’ lack of experience, maturity, and specialist training in working with children. As a consequence, the Pioneer Organization was granted institutional autonomy with respect to the Youth Union and efforts were made to professionalize the organization, by marrying it institutionally to the Ministry of Education, training teaching staff in primary and middle schools as pioneer instructors, and assigning them the responsibility of organizing pioneer rituals and activities. Third on the agenda for reform was the open denunciation of the Soviet model, coupled with a critical assessment of the faithful replication of the model in neighboring countries of the Soviet Bloc and an attempt to infuse pioneer activities with national specificity. There was even discussion of perhaps reviving the interwar Romanian version of the Boy Scouts (*Cercetășia*) as an alleged national tradition in managing children’s organizations, despite its openly acknowledged “bourgeois” character.

The reform of the youth and children's organizations reflected a development characteristic of late socialism: the expansive tendency of the party bureaucracy.¹² The separation of the Pioneer Organization from the Youth Union generated new institutional space for lower rank party activists, who were needed to staff the recently founded councils of the Pioneer Organization and their respective commissions for sciences and technology, arts and culture, sports and tourism, press and propaganda, and their methodological centers. As a consequence of the proliferation of the party bureaucracy during late socialism, the border between party and state bureaucracy became increasingly blurred. In the decades following this reform, the Pioneer Organization and the Ministry of Education would continue to negotiate their respective domains of authority in the education of children under the arbitrating guidance of the Central Committee.¹³

This institutional competition for authority and access to state resources made room for increased professional mobility and opportunities at individual levels. In order to staff its nationwide network of councils, the Pioneer Organization recruited over six hundred local activists from the ranks of school teachers and inspectors.¹⁴ The institutional creation of a position of adjunct to the school principal, to be filled by a teacher responsible for pioneer activities, led to the promotion of individual teachers in schools around the country. For the most part, regular school teachers who neither joined the Pioneer Organization as party activists nor were promoted to the position of adjunct bore the brunt of this reform. While their salaries remained unchanged, their job obligations increased to include the organization of pioneer activities besides their regular educational requirements. Yet, even in these cases, the reform made room for mobility since school teachers could, and often did, use the channels provided by the Pioneer Organization to mobilize time and resources for extracurricular activities with their students. Many teachers were recognized by the local or national press, or by the county council of the Pioneer Organization, for their successful mobilization of school children in collective activities, and could then capitalize on this recognition to secure career perks or promotions.¹⁵

The debates conducted in the upper echelons of the party, as well as the studies, reports, and official speeches that emerged out of these debates, sanctioned new institutional arrangements and gave general provisions meant to guide the activities of the Pioneer Organization, amounting to an ideological script. However, the task of designing activities to translate this ideological script into practice fell on a diversity of actors, ranging in

institutional authority and access to state resources from party activists in the newly created National Council of the Pioneer Organization, to the editorial staff of pioneer journals, the pioneer instructors running sports and tourism clubs in Pioneer Palaces, and finally, regular teachers in schools around the country.

Pioneer expeditions constituted only one of the many activities meant to implement state-authored guidelines for organized children's vacations and after-school activities. The competition was advertised starting with 1969 by the pioneer journal *Cutezători*.¹⁶ Evaluated by a national jury of specialists, the great majority of expeditions aimed at developing a spirit of camaraderie while educating children about national history, turning them into ethnographers of peasant life and folk art, and sensitizing them to the beauty of the motherland through a host of ecological, geological, botanical or entomological expeditions focused on nature observation, protection and conservation. Most importantly, these experiences were to be recorded in a daily expedition journal that would note the route covered, the relevance of the places visited, the discoveries made, and aspects of life in the collective. On return from the expedition, the diary would be submitted to the jury alongside a photo album and relevant research collections of ethnographic artifacts, historical material, or, as the case might be, rocks, plants, and insects. My research relied primarily on a set of twenty expedition diaries and photo albums and a number of interviews with former expedition members from Bucharest, Buzău, Baia-Mare, and villages in the counties of Sălaj and Satu-Mare.

If one explores these diaries for the routes and goals of the expeditions they document, it becomes apparent that they favored ethnographic and historical themes. Even when the primary goal of the expedition was natural observation, the expedition was spiced up with museum visits and group photos at national heroes' monuments. Typically, ethnographic expeditions explored highly symbolic areas such as Țara Maramureșului, Țara Lăpușului, Țara Moților, Ținutul Pădurenilor or Țara Hațegului and aimed at documenting village life and activities with collections of folk costumes and art. Most historical expeditions relied heavily on expert guidance and the consumption of ready-made historical narratives as forms of learning, including visits at to museums, monuments, birthplaces of famous historical, artistic, and literary personalities, or supposed battlefield sites. There were, however, expeditions that combined historical and ethnographic interests, employing an investigative and performative method of doing history, encouraging children not only to reproduce, but also to produce history.

Some pioneer teams participated actively in archeological digs at sites in Sarmizegetusa, Costești, and Moigrad-Porolissum under the guidance of famous archeologists such as Ioan Piso, Hadrian Daicoviciu and Ioan Glodariu. Others combined the historical interest in Dacian civilization with studies in ethnographic areas supposed to preserve traces of Dacian descent (such as Sălaj, Ținutul Pădurenilor or Țara Hațegului), (re)producing the thesis of Dacian origin and continuity.

The historical themes informing these expeditions drew on a repertoire of canonized national discourses of the period ranging from protochronism, autochtonism, and the obsession with Dacian culture surfacing in theories of ethnogenesis and national continuity and unity, to the general rehashing of the pantheon of national heroes that included Dacian kings, medieval rulers, and figures of class warfare and national unity. The question of national ideology under socialism in the Romanian case has been addressed by various scholars, most notably by Katherine Verdery, who explored it as a site of contention and legitimization for public intellectuals (1991) and Lucian Boia, who focused on professional historians and historiography (2001). By comparison, the readiness with which teachers and children engaged with these official historical narratives is indicative of the popularization and even popular consumption and production of history, all the more so since neither the children nor the majority of teachers participating in expeditions were what we call “professional historians.” Occasionally, the adult leader of the group happened to be a teacher of history, but oftentimes, they were teachers of physical education, geography, Romanian literature, foreign languages, and even drawing and music. Besides their pervasiveness in public discourse, these ethnographic and historical themes were likely reinforced by the historians, ethnologists, and geographers who figured prominently on the national jury of the competition: geographers such as Marcian Bleahu and Ion Pișota, ethnologists such as Gheorghe Focșa (director of the Village Museum, former student of Gusti and a member of his monographic teams) and Ion Vlăduțiu (research director at the Institute for Ethnography and Folklore), historians of the regime such as Dumitru Almaș as well as archeologists such as Constantin Preda.¹⁷

Despite the evident effort to unlearn the Soviet model by investing pioneer activities with national specificity, a set of distinctively Soviet conceptions of childhood and life in the collective survived in the very form that these activities took. The camp, which became a favorite form of organizing pioneer activities, was, in fact, *the* fundamental site for

Pioneer ritual and symbolic meaning in the consecrated Soviet model (Reid 2002). Its centrality derived from its perceived potential to actualize Soviet theories of child-rearing in well-organized and self-governing collectives, and from radical conceptions of children as activists, leaders, and real revolutionaries. By comparison to modern Western conceptions of childhood that imagine children as innocent, vulnerable and thus, in need of adult protection, Bolshevik leaders and Soviet educators envisioned children as small adults and as models of revolutionary enthusiasm and youthful readiness for adults to emulate. Camps and expeditions were invested with a significant transformative potential in actualizing these theories because they involved a journey, the children's physical removal from their quotidian environment.

The expeditions organized by Romanian pioneers aimed at accomplishing somewhat similar goals, building strong community bonds by removing children of ages ten to fourteen from family environments and disciplining their bodies and wills through exposure to nature and rigorous regimes. The rules of the competition set the duration of the expedition at minimum ten days during the summer vacation and indicated that expedition routes were supposed to be at an altitude of at least five hundred meters and were to be covered by foot. In addition, teams were expected to camp in tents, use mountain cabins for accommodation exclusively under extreme weather conditions, and operate as self-managing collectives (the concept of "auto-gospodarire"): setting up tents and cleaning camping areas on departure, cooking, or providing medical assistance.

Official regulations also stimulated a set of practices meant to strengthen the cohesion of the collective and the sense of belonging. These included choosing the team name, creating a badge to represent it, wearing team T-shirts, or practicing self-government by electing the team captain and the team members. Regulations encouraged a sense of individual responsibility and initiative to be mobilized in the service of the collective by assigning children specific roles to play during the expedition. Thus, children fulfilled expert roles as diverse as diary writer, photographer, ethnographer, historian, geologist, botanist, weather forecaster, or medical expert.

Since one of the most important roles assigned to children was that of diary writer, scholars can rely on a set of expedition diaries to give insights into the discursive practices of socialist patriotism. As mentioned before, teams were instructed to record their experiences "accurately but expressively" in a daily log that took the form of a collective diary or

travelogue. Since official regulations were limited to these vague indications, there was no clear script for this genre. In practice, expedition diaries drew on a series of existing discourses popularized through children's literature and school practice, resulting in a combination of registers and narrative forms. These include morality tales in the satirical style of Mircea Sântimbreanu's prose, descriptions of nature in the recognizable style of school compositions, or attempts to frame the expedition as an adventure. Most importantly, diaries are dominated by a narrative voice trained to present the self as an integral part of a larger collective, which is most often represented by the members of the expedition, but also by the historical ancestors evoked by the places visited, by peasants (represented as repositories of national traditions), and contemporaries associated with the achievements of the socialist regime.

There is evidence that expedition diaries were often the result of a collaborative effort and had undergone a censoring process before submission.¹⁸ The most common editing authority was that of the organizing teacher, but it was not uncommon for parents or other teachers to join in the effort to give diaries a politically correct discursive form and to fix spelling, grammar, or vocabulary mistakes. This aspect is important because, as historical or social actors, children have been traditionally spoken for. The difficulty of recuperating children's voices and experiences has plagued histories of childhood to the point that the most imaginative scholars have turned to children's drawings as more immediate forms of self-expression and, thus, as potentially less biased historical sources.¹⁹ An alternative would be not to approach such sources as either true or false expressions of an inner self. Rather than discard them as "biased sources" or attempt the impossible feat of disentangling the child's voice from that of the adult, my intention is to use diaries as evidence for the collaborative process of teaching children how to "speak Bolshevik."

In this sense, what is important is the process of being socialized in the discourse of socialist patriotism, being taught to speak in a certain narrative voice and center one's self-presentation on certain notions of civic duty and responsibility, national loyalty, scientific curiosity, or spirit of camaraderie. Interviews indicate that adults usually worked with the child's text, correcting, adding, and giving finishing touches, but, strictly speaking, it does not matter if the child herself/himself composed the text. In the last instance, even the act of transcribing final diary versions in one's own handwriting and signing them, could constitute a lesson in the imperative of filtering one's experience through a certain type of discourse.

Conclusions

I will conclude with a brief examination of the analytical advantage of exploring socialist regimes through the lens of modernity theories and concepts of social practice and performance. I would argue that this conceptual framework can better explicate the relationship between state and society that informs most scholarship on socialist regimes, allowing scholars to chart the sites of interaction between various state and institutional actors and explore the dynamics of power that traverse such fields of play. While there is little doubt that the actors my study captured at the micro-historical level had little power to impact larger political processes and decisions, one can argue, in a similar vein, that the highest levels of state power were far too removed from the sites of practice and performance to fully control them.

In order to bridge the gap between the level of ideological intention and that of social practice, I suggested that we need to attend to the actors charged with the implementation of political decisions and the institutional channels they had to navigate. The socialization of children during late socialism cannot be abstracted from the process of bureaucratization - the simultaneous expansion of the party bureaucracy and its assimilation with the state bureaucracy - that effectively diffused the political power perceived to be concentrated at the top. As indicated, this development generated significant professional mobility, engaging actors with diverse agendas, stakes, levels of institutional authority, and access to state resources in the process of implementing ideological imperatives. The highest ranking actors in this hierarchy were party activists in the Pioneer Organization, who were directly responsible to the Central Committee for the implementation of political decisions, but enjoyed the authority to allocate material resources and facilitate professional promotions in the process of recruiting teachers. Institutionally integrated in the press section of the Pioneer Organization, the editorial staff of pioneer journals were similarly invested in the production of popular children's magazines that proved successful in mobilizing pioneers for large scale activities such as national expeditions. Wide readership secured them both professional respectability and some of the financial and international travel facilities accruing to party activists. By comparison, regular school teachers saw the organization of pioneer activities as a way to meet professional obligations or earn professional promotion and satisfaction. The parents and children mobilized for these activities were least invested in the faithful

implementation of ideological intention, being primarily interested in the educational and entertainment potential of the proposed venture.

Although there was an obvious asymmetry of power that systematically tipped the balance in favor of the state, historical actors such as school teachers, children, and parents, who were furthest removed from the levels of political power and decision, did have room for maneuver in engaging with ideological scripts. To the extent that it explicates the dynamics of engagement with state-authored scripts, the strategy of zooming in on actual social practices and performances such as pioneer expeditions has larger implications for the study of late socialism. It enables scholars to explore how teachers improvised on the ideological script of socialist patriotism in the process of selecting the historical sites or ethnographic routes of their expeditions. It throws light on the teachers' ability to adapt official scripts to specific contexts, translating the rather dry official guidelines into convincing arguments likely to activate informal networks of fellow teachers, friends and relatives and mobilize the human and material resources necessary for the successful completion of an expedition. It can further give insights into the diverse meanings and understandings with which expedition participants invested their experiences, uncovering meanings which were neither in opposition to state promoted interpretations nor in full consonance with them. Finally, theories of social performativity can illuminate the attitudes and behaviors elicited by the practice of playing expert roles on the expedition and the forms of sociability engendered by active participation in team life.

NOTES

- 1 See for example *Bogdan Tănăsescu, Colectivizarea între propagandă și realitate* (Bucharest: Editura Globus, 1994), *Dumitru Șandru, Reforma agrară din 1945 în România* (București: Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2000), Mariana Celac, "O analiză comparată a limbajului totalitar în arhitectură", in *Miturile comunismului românesc* (Bucharest: Nemira, 1998), David Turnock, "The Communist Era of State Monopoly: Central Planning with a Descent to Sultanism", In *Aspects of Independent Romania's Economic History with Particular Reference to Transition for EU Accession* (Ashgate, 2007). For cultural analyses, see the series of articles on political festivals and historiographic trends in Lucian Boia (ed.), *Miturile comunismului românesc* (Bucharest: Nemira, 1998). The volume includes welcome contributions that problematize the Communist regime's brand of modernity, such as Daniel Barbu's article, "Destinul colectiv, servitutea involuntară, nefericirea totalitară: trei mituri ale comunismului românesc." For a broader account of the conception of scientificity underlying Communist projects, see Lucian Boia, *Mitologia științifică a comunismului* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999).
- 2 See the speeches delivered in the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the RCP following the Soviet-led intervention in Czechoslovakia: Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC), Secția Cancelarie: 178/1968, ff. 29-137.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 ANIC, Secția Cancelarie: 101/1966 and 102/1966.
- 6 ANIC, Secția Cancelarie: 102/1966, ff. 2-26.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 ANIC, Secția Cancelarie: 150/1967, ff. 11-47; Secția Propaganda: 3/1966, ff. 111-119; 40/1966, ff. 65-261.
- 10 There are similar studies on other socialist regimes. For early Soviet Russia, see Catriona Kelly, "Shaping the 'Future Race': Regulating the Daily Life of Children in Early Soviet Russia", in *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). On Eastern Europe, see Kati Jutteau, *L'enfance embrigadée dans la Hongrie communiste: le mouvement des pionniers* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007) or Ildiko Erdei, "'The Happy Child' as an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia's Pioneer Organization", in *Ideologies and National Identities. The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004).

- ¹¹ ANIC, Secția Cancelarie: 44/1966, ff. 5-21, 29-40; 49/1966; 74/1966, ff. 21-37; 124/1966; Secția Propaganda: 9/1965, ff. 33-37, 57-58; 3/1966, ff. 31-47.
- ¹² For a broader account of the role of the party and state bureaucracies in post-Stalinist regimes, see Claude Lefort, "Totalitarianism without Stalin", In *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986).
- ¹³ See the correspondence between the National Council of the Pioneer Organization, the Ministry of Education, and the Central Committee (CC) of the RCP: CNOP Archive: "Correspondence with the CC of the RCP:" 7/1968 and "Correspondence with the Ministry of Education:" 10, 11/1968 and 23/1971.
- ¹⁴ See the report entitled *Informare cu privire la principalele probleme dezbătute în plenara Consiliului Național al Organizației Pionierilor* sent to the Central Committee by the president of the CNOP, Traian Pop, regarding the Council's activity in the CNOP Archive: 7/1967 "Correspondence with the CC of the RCP," ff. 31-38.
- ¹⁵ Interviews conducted with teachers involved in organizing large-scale pioneer activities throughout the country indicate that career promotions included "titularizare" (the process of securing a full-time teaching position) or transfers from village and towns schools to Pioneer Palaces or schools in major cities otherwise inaccessible to college graduates.
- ¹⁶ See the ads in the May 15, 1969 and June 7, 1973 issues of *Cutezători*.
- ¹⁷ For a full list of the members of the jury, see the May 17, 1973 issue of *Cutezători*.
- ¹⁸ The evidence comes mainly from interviews, but also from visible "correcting" interventions in the text of the expedition diary.
- ¹⁹ See for example Nicholas Stargardt's reliance on children's drawings as sources for his history of the Second World War in *Witnesses of War: Children's Lives under the Nazis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005).

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