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The Communist Movement in Rumania, 1917-1944

The course which the Communist movement took depended greatly on the actions and aims of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. In the period between the founding of the Rumanian Communist Party in 1921 and the occupation of Rumania by the Red Army in August and September 1944 the Soviet party, mainly through its proxies - the Communist International (to 1943) and the Moscow section of the Rumanian Communist Party (to 1944) - defined the ideological position of the Rumanian party on major issues, determined its organizational structure, and often even chose its leaders. In doing so, the Soviet party seldom took into account political and social conditions in Rumania, and, to judge by its strident criticism, it had little regard for the commitment and organizational competence of the Rumanian party.

Three stages in the development of the Communist movement in Rumania are discernible. The first was one of beginnings and covered the period of crisis in the Social Democratic Party from the Russian February and October revolutions in 1917 to the final rupture between Social Democrats and Communists in May 1921. During the second stage, down to 1931, the new party struggled to organize itself and to find its place both within the international Communist movement and in Rumanian public life. The third and final stage was inaugurated by the party's fifth congress in 1931, which, according to official party historiography, brought a new, "Bolshevized", and, hence, stronger and more vigorous party into being. This claim is open to question. Although the factionalism that had rent the party in the 1920s seems to have abated, the party grew weaker, not stronger, as the political right grew in strength and the persecution of Communists and the organizations supporting them intensified in the 1930s.

1. Historiography: Sources and Secondary Works

Any study of the Communist movement in Rumania must rely mainly upon materials published in Rumania after the Communist Party came to power in 1947. In the interwar period the movement received little scholarly attention because the party had been outlawed and was widely regarded as unpatriotic, because it had little influence in public affairs, and because historians, sociologists, and other researchers were preoccupied with the peasantry and had not yet become interested in the relatively new class of urban factory workers.

After 1947 the Communist movement became the object of intense study. A journal,¹ numerous monographs, and collections of sources were published, mainly under the auspices of the Institute for Party History.² Since these publications necessarily reflected the ideology and goals of the Communist Party at any given time, they often lacked objectivity and comprehensiveness. Many of these works were simply propagandistic, but the best of them are indispensable for a serious study of Communism in Rumania.

There is no comprehensive bibliography of the Rumanian Communist movement, but a good place to begin is with *Bibliografia istorică a României*.³ As for archives, the two repositories of materials on the Communist movement in Rumania are the Archive of the Central Committee of the Rumanian Communist Party and the Archive of the previously mentioned Institute for Historical and Socio-political Studies, both in Bucharest. No guide to their holdings has been published, but some idea of their variety and importance may be had by consulting collections of printed sources and secondary works such as those by Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardeleanu and by Marin C. Stănescu discussed below. The disposition of these two archives since the change of regime in December 1989 has apparently not been decided on.

Several collections of sources published by the Institute for Party History are indispensable, but they

¹ It bore the title *Analele Institutului de Istorie a Partidului de pe lângă Comitetul Central al Partidului Muncitoresc* from 1955 to 1968. Then, until it ceased publication in 1989, it was called *Anale de Istorie* and will be so cited in this article.

² It was founded in 1951 and dissolved in 1989 and was officially known as *Institutul de Studii Istorice și Social-politice de pe lângă C.C. al P.C.R.* (The Institute for Historical and Socio-political Studies attached to the Central Committee of the Rumanian Communist Party).

³ Vol. 1: 1944-1969 (București, 1970), pp. 212-244; Vol. 4: 1969-1974 (București, 1975), pp. 276-295; Vol. 5: 1974-1979 (București, 1980), pp. 265-274; Vol. 6: 1979-1984 (București, 1985), pp. 281-293.

must be used with caution because the materials included in them were carefully selected to conform to the party's ideological and policy concerns at the time of publication. They contain party manifestoes, propaganda brochures, the minutes of party congresses, the resolutions of the Central Committee, and excerpts from the party press.⁴ Collections of such sources published in the 1950s put more emphasis on the Rumanian Communist Party's links with the Soviet party and on its "internationalist" orientation than later collections, where the leitmotiv is the dynamism and independence of the Rumanian Communist Party.⁵ Other collections of sources which are not concerned specifically with the Communist Party do, nonetheless, contain numerous documents about its activities.⁶

There is no biographical dictionary of Rumanian Communists,⁷ but the Institute for Party History published a series of useful short biographies of party leaders and activists accompanied by anthologies of their writings.⁸ There is no biography of Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, but his works began to be republished after his posthumous rehabilitation in 1968.⁹

The Communist Party gave the press a high priority as a crucial instrument for spreading its message and rallying its supporters. Although the history of the Communist press has yet to be written, the Institute for Party History published several volumes of excerpts from the radical socialist, trade-union, and Communist press for the early 1920s.¹⁰ National and local newspapers and journals are represented, and the selection of articles from each publication is preceded by an introduction outlining its history and evaluating its ideological tendencies and importance. The excerpts have been carefully chosen to reflect the Communist Party's interpretation of its own history. There is also an indispensable bibliography,¹¹ which provides data about the national and local press in Rumanian, Hungarian and German. Many of the newspapers and "bulletins" cited had only brief existences and are not included in the above-mentioned anthologies. Of particular interest also is a volume of essays on literary and cultural reviews which were sympathetic to leftist or Communist causes.¹² It is a valuable introduction to the study of a nascent proletarian culture and in some measure makes up for the lack of a monograph on the subject.

⁴ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist din România* (București, 1951; 2nd rev. ed., 1953), which covers the period 1917-1944; *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist din România*, Vol. 1: 1917-1922 (2nd ed., București, 1956), Vol. 2: 1923-1928 (București, 1953), Vol. 3: 1929-1933 (București, 1953), Vol. 4: 1934-1937 (București, 1957).

⁵ *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România, 1916-1921* (București, 1966) and *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist și a mișcării muncitorești revoluționare din România, 1921-1924* (București, 1970).

⁶ *23 August 1944. Documente*, Vol. 1: 1939-1943 (București, 1984).

⁷ A modest beginning was made by Ion Popescu-Pușuri and Titu Georgescu, *Purtători de flamuri revoluționare* (București, 1971).

⁸ For the interwar period one may consult: N. Huscariu, *Alexandru Constantinescu* (București, 1970); Mihail Cruceanu and Florian Tănăsescu, *Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea* (București, 1971); Marin C. Stănescu and L. Gergely, *Elek Köblös* (București, 1978).

⁹ Of interest here are his *Texte social-politice, 1921-1938* (București, 1975) and *Studii economice și social-politice, 1925-1945* (București, 1978).

¹⁰ *Presa muncitorească și socialistă din România*, Vol. 3, part 1: September 1917-June 1919 (București, 1971) and Vol. 3, part 2: July 1919-May 1921 (București, 1973), and *Presa comunistă și a organizațiilor de masă create și conduse de P.C.R., Vol. 4: 1921-1924* (București, 1978).

¹¹ Titu Georgescu and Mircea Ioanid, *Presa P.C.R. și a organizațiilor sale de masă, 1921-1944* (București, 1963).

¹² Marin Bucur (ed.), *Reviste progresiste românești interbelice* (București, 1972).

There is no general history of the Rumanian Communist Party for the period under discussion. The closest one comes to such a work is Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*,¹³ which is based on the extensive use of party archives and in part 1 provides sometimes long excerpts from unpublished documents. The authors' point of view, particularly on relations between the Rumanian Communist Party and the Soviet Communist Party and the Comintern, reflects the national orientation which grew increasingly strong after the mid-1960s. Their account may be supplemented for the 1920s by the two very good monographs by Marin C. Stănescu,¹⁴ which draw extensively on materials in party archives. No comparable work exists for the 1930s.

2. The Founding of the Rumanian Communist Party

The origins of the Rumanian Communist Party may be traced back to the socialist movement of the latter decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ Despite striking differences in ideology and tactics between the Socialists and later Communists, the movements of both were conditioned by the same conditions at home - an underdeveloped, agrarian economy and a society still overwhelmingly peasant in outlook and aspirations.

The Socialists' acceptance of Marxism in the 1880s and 1890s as their theoretical guide and the creation of The Social Democratic Party of Workers of Rumania (*Partidul Social-Democrat al Muncitorilor din România*; PSDMR), the first nation-wide working-class party, in 1893 were crucial events in the development of their movement. In the enthusiasm of new beginnings they intended to bring about a radical transformation of Rumanian society. Yet, they chose the orthodox Marxist approach to development, as expounded by their leading theorist, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855-1920). In a series of works culminating in *Neoiobăgia* (Neoserfdom) in 1910, his critique of Rumania's economic and social development in the nineteenth century, he argued that Rumania was destined to follow the path already taken by the advanced industrial countries of Western Europe. He thus assigned to the new socialist party the task of accelerating the growth of capitalist economic relations and bourgeois-liberal political institutions as prerequisites for the transition to socialism. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of industrialization and parliamentary struggle and tended to treat the peasantry and agriculture as of strictly secondary importance.¹⁶

Despite initial high hopes, the PSDMR did not prosper. Membership remained small (only 6,700 in 1907, the high point): local organizations outside Bucharest were few and often inactive; and the party elected only one deputy to parliament in 1895 and none at all between 1899 and 1918. Nor did the party have notable success in mobilizing its main constituency - the urban workers: in 1912 membership in trade unions reached a high of 9,700, which represented but a small fraction of the total number of workers engaged in industry, commerce, and transportation. These disappointing results led to ideological uncertainty and incessant infighting and caused the dissolution of the party in 1899. It was eventually reorganized in 1910 as The Social Democratic Party (*Partidul Social Democrat*; PSD) and resumed regular political activity. Nonetheless, the party continued to be rent by factionalism. The majority of its leaders favored evolutionary social change, while a minority, the radical left wing from which the "maximalist" supporters of the Russian Revolution of 1917 would emerge, was anxious to use violence - strikes and street demonstrations - to force the government to make major political and economic concessions.

Shortly after Rumania entered the First World War in August 1916 the PSD all but ceased activity, as the government, partly in response to strong anti-war sentiment among socialists, closed down local party clubs, suspended publication of party newspapers, and arrested a number of activists. The German occupation of

¹³ Vol. 2, part 1: 1918-1933 (București, 1986), pp. 153-216, 560-666, and Vol. 2, part 2: November 1933-September 1940 (București, 1988), pp. 408-471.

¹⁴ *Mișcarea muncitorească din România în anii 1921-1924* (București, 1971); *Mișcarea muncitorească din România în anii 1924-1928* (București, 1981).

¹⁵ The following may be consulted for background: Constantin Titel Petrescu, *Socialismul în România* (București, [1945]), pp. 51-274; Keith Hitchins, "Rumania", in Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (eds), *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870-1914*, Vol. 1 (Leiden, 1990), pp. 369-392.

¹⁶ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Neoiobăgia* (București, 1910), pp. 35, 41-44, 375-377, 487-489.

Bucharest in December 1916 effectively severed contacts between party organizations in Wallachia and Moldavia. Rumanian social democracy thus reached the lowest point in its fortunes since the founding of the party in 1893.

The revolution of February 1917 in Russia brought about a general revival of activity by Rumanian socialists, but even more important in the long run was the enthusiasm it aroused among radicals within the party.¹⁷ The latter organized their first important anti-war demonstration in April in Iași, at which one of their leaders, Mihail Gheorghiu Bujor (1881-1964),¹⁸ hailed the "bourgeois-democratic revolution" in Russia as the beginning of a new era for the entire European working class and urged his listeners to spare no effort to extend its benefits to Rumania. In May and June Bujor, Cristian Rakovski (1873-1941),¹⁹ a Bulgarian-born theorist of the Rumanian PSD with important links to the international socialist movement, and other radicals fled from Moldavia to Odessa, in southern Russia. From here they planned to organize a revolution in Rumania on the Russian model. They formed a Rumanian Committee of Social Democratic Action, which began immediately to campaign for peace among Rumanian workers in Odessa and soldiers on the Moldavian front. They made no secret of their intention to extend the Russian revolution "beyond the Prut River" as a precondition for social and political change.²⁰ In place of "Rumanian tsarism", they urged the creation of a republic, in which the people, now sovereign, would choose a constituent assembly to enact a sweeping program of reform.²¹

Until October 1917 Rumanian radical socialists in Russia thus accepted the idea of a bourgeois-democratic revolution in their country. They saw no possibility of a proletarian revolution because, in their view, the economic and social conditions for it had not yet matured. Although they spoke in glowing terms about the revolution in Russia, they were uncertain about what precisely was happening. They perceived only a single revolutionary movement and did not differentiate between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. Nor did they make any specific mention of Lenin and his program.

The Bolshevik seizure of power in October and intensive Bolshevik wooing of prospective foreign supporters soon persuaded the Committee of Social Democratic Action and other Rumanian socialists to change their position on armed insurrection and the imminence of a proletarian revolution in their own country.²² By the end of 1917 the radicals were proclaiming a proletarian revolution in Rumania both necessary and possible and were praising the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in Petrograd as the model they themselves intended to follow. They manifested their commitment to the Bolsheviks by denouncing the entrance of the Rumanian army into

¹⁷ Vasile Liveanu, "Influența revoluției ruse din februarie 1917 în România", *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1956), pp. 15-43.

¹⁸ See the introductory essay by Nicolae Copoiu in Mihail Gheorghiu Bujor, *Scrisori social-politice (1905-1961)* (București, 1979), pp. 7-80.

¹⁹ A comprehensive study of Rakovski's extraordinary career is Francis Conte, *Christian Rakovski (1873-1941). A Political Biography* (Boulder, 1989). Also useful is the introduction by Ion Iacoș to Cristian Racovski, *Scrisori social-politice (1900-1916)* (București, 1977), pp. 5-35.

²⁰ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist Român*, Vol. 1, pp. 13, 15-16: manifestoes of the Committee of Social Democratic Action, July 1917.

²¹ *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România, 1916-1921*, p. 59: manifesto of the Committee of Social Democratic Action, July 1917.

²² The secondary literature on the influence of the October Revolution in Rumania is abundant, but interpretations of its significance have varied over time. Publications in the 1950s and early 1960s were unrestrained in their praise of the October Revolution as a catalyst of the revolutionary movement in Rumania. Works in recent years have been more reserved. The following provide general accounts: Vasile Liveanu, *1918. Din istoria luptelor revoluționare din România* (București, 1960), pp. 159-422; Keith Hitchins, "The Russian Revolution and the Rumanian Socialist Movement, 1917-1918", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1968), pp. 268-289. A useful bibliography is Petre Constantinescu-Iași, Victor Chereșteșiu, Ludovic Jordáky, *Lucrări și publicații din România despre Marea Revoluția Socialistă din Octombrie (1917-1944)* (București, 1967).

Bessarabia in support of Rumanian nationalists as a "criminal attack" on the Russian Revolution²³ and by organizing a Rumanian Military Revolutionary Committee in Odessa on 28 December to defend the Bolshevik cause in the province. But their efforts were to no avail, since they and their supporters were few in number and lacked organization. The Rumanian army completed its occupation of Bessarabia in February 1918, and German armies resumed their offensive in the Ukraina, occupying Odessa on 13 March. The Committee of Social Democratic Action apparently ceased to function, for there is no mention of it again until July 1918, when it was merged with another Rumanian revolutionary organization.

In the first half of 1918 the Bolsheviks took the initiative in forming new Rumanian socialist organizations to serve their own purposes in Russia and Rumania.²⁴ Among them were the Autonomous High College for Russo-Rumanian Affairs in Petrograd, which was to mobilize all Rumanian revolutionaries in Russia to promote Bolshevik aims; the Rumanian "foreign group" attached to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, whose task was to arouse a proletarian class consciousness among Rumanian prisoners of war in Russia returning home; and the Rumanian Communist Revolutionary Committee, an amalgamation of the now defunct High College for Russo-Rumanian Affairs and Committee for Social Democratic Action, which was to engage in propaganda work especially among Rumanians in Bessarabia in an effort to "save" the region for the Bolsheviks. The manner in which these organizations came into being and the tasks which the Bolsheviks assigned them inaugurated the tradition of Russian and, later, Soviet party domination of the Communist movement in Rumania.

In the meantime, in Bucharest, in German-occupied Rumania, militant Social Democrats resumed activity and made the goals of the Russian Revolution their own. They formed a Committee of Action to propagate revolutionary ideas among the workers and chose as its secretary Alexandru Constantinescu (1872-1949), one of the leaders of the pre-war socialist trade-union movement. In September 1917 he and Ioan C. Frimu (1871-1919), a militant who belonged to the workers' wing of the PSD, attended the third Zimmerwald Conference in Stockholm, where they met the Bolshevik delegation and gained first-hand information about the revolutionary situation in Russia. In January 1918 the Committee made contact with the Committee of Social Democratic Action in Odessa and through it with Bolshevik propagandists who were active among Russian troops on the Moldavian front. By this time Constantinescu and his colleagues, who now called themselves "Maximalists", were demanding the overthrow of "bourgeois-landlord power" in Rumania, the immediate confiscation of all the means of production, and the division of large and small estates among the peasantry.²⁵

It was evident to many in the PSD that the militants were bent on a course totally contrary to the long-held moderate, evolutionary ideals of Rumanian social democracy propounded by Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea. An attempt in April 1918 to reconcile the right and center factions with the radical left ended in failure, as the latter demanded that the party assume its primordial role as the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat.²⁶ Nonetheless, all sides agreed to hold a party congress in order to "restore harmony". But the militants were unappeased. They organized the "Maximalist Federation of Rumania" ("Maximalist" was their term for Bolshevik) and attempted to enlist the support of the Russian party in carrying out a proletarian revolution in Rumania. They also proposed to the Rumanian Revolutionary Communist Committee in Moscow that together they take control of the PSD and mold it into a disciplined instrument of revolution.²⁷ These aims fitted in perfectly with the plans of the Russian Bolsheviks to promote revolution abroad, and they thus speeded up their own plans to mobilize Rumanian revolutionaries.

The Bolsheviks organized a conference of Rumanian revolutionary groups in Russia and Rumania in Moscow in October 1918 in order to bring cohesion and discipline to their movement by obliging them to adopt Lenin's theses on the structure and tasks of a party of professional revolutionaries. Inherent in the Bolsheviks'

²³ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist Român*, Vol. 1, pp. 33-37.

²⁴ Robert Deutsch, "Din activitatea și lupta grupurilor revoluționarilor români din Rusia pentru apărarea puterii sovietice", in *Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană*, Vol. 2 (București, 1962), pp. 433-461.

²⁵ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist Român*, Vol. 1, p. 27: manifesto of "a group of maximalist socialists", December 1917.

²⁶ Liveanu, 1918, pp. 263, 265.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

strategy was their intention to bring the Rumanian revolutionary movement fully under their control. They thus proceeded to engineer the fusion of all Rumanian revolutionary groups in Russia into a single organization known as the Rumanian section of the Russian Communist Party. The new body lost no time in carrying out its assigned tasks. It sent out a directive to the militants in Rumania exhorting them to create a new party of committed revolutionaries who would cease all cooperation with "reformers" and "opportunists" and would make an alliance of the proletariat and poor peasantry and the seizure of power their overriding concern.²⁸

In Bucharest Alexandru Constantinescu and the Maximalists, who now openly called themselves Communists, stepped up their propaganda activities and recruitment of new members. They were unstinting in their praise of the Bolshevik Revolution and urged the Rumanian working class to follow the example of the Russian proletariat in building a new society where man would no longer exploit man and the welfare of all would be the guiding principle.²⁹ Yet, they were reluctant to break with the PSD as long as hope remained of winning over a majority of its leaders for their revolutionary course. At a meeting in Bucharest in December 1918, shortly after the withdrawal of German occupation forces, the various factions reached a fragile compromise. In their "Declaration of Principles", they acknowledged events in Russia by rejecting Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea's thesis that revolution in Rumania was dependent upon developments in Western capitalist countries and by proclaiming the Russian Revolution the initiator of world revolution. Although they thus accepted revolution as imminent and thought that the dictatorship of the proletariat was one form it might take, they offered no specific plan to accomplish these goals and made no mention of a revolutionary alliance between the peasantry and the proletariat. Instead, they listed a number of desirable economic and political reforms and recommended legal means to achieve them.³⁰ The Declaration thus did nothing to heal the breach between moderates and radicals.

Once again events in Russia proved decisive. The founding of the Third, or Communist, International in Moscow in March 1919 brought the divisions within the Rumanian Social Democratic Party to a climax. The Maximalists pressed for the immediate affiliation of the party with the Comintern, action which they thought would reinforce their campaign to overthrow the Rumanian government. They were now led by Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1879-1937), the son of Constantin, who, apparently influenced by Trotsky, championed world revolution, and by Boris Ștepanov (1883-1969), a Bulgarian, who was to be the leader of the October 1920 general strike and secretary general of the Rumanian Communist Party in the late 1930s. A number of young intellectuals also joined the ranks of the Maximalists. Among them was Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu (1900-1954), a lawyer and sociologist, who was to become a leading Marxist interpreter of Rumania's social and economic development,³¹ Marcel Pauker (1896-1937), who held a doctorate in political science and as an official in the Comintern was responsible for Rumanian party affairs in the 1920s and early 1930s, and his wife Ana Rabinovici (1893-1960), who was active in the Rumanian bureau in Moscow for much of the interwar period.³² The attempts of the Maximalists at direct action culminated in the calling of a general strike in October 1920.³³ It failed completely to create a revolutionary situation and provoked harsh government repression.

The first round of negotiations over the affiliations of the PSD with the Comintern took place between

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

²⁹ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist Român*, Vol. 1, pp. 67-89: a brochure entitled, "Un an de la revoluția rusă", which was published in November 1918 by "The Communist Workers of Rumania".

³⁰ *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România, 1916-1921*, pp. 123-128.

³¹ Pompiliu Teodor (ed.), *Din gândirea materialist-istorică românească (1921-1944)* (București, 1972), pp. 115-145. Immediately after the Second World War Pătrășcanu was a member of the Political Bureau of the Rumanian Communist Party and Minister of Justice until 1948, when he was arrested and later executed.

³² Marcel Pauker was a victim of Stalin's great purges. Ana Pauker returned to Rumania in the wake of the Red Army in September 1944 and was a member of the Political Bureau of the Rumanian Communist Party and Minister of Foreign Affairs until she was purged in 1952. There is no scholarly biography of either.

³³ Nicolae Goldberger (ed.), *Greva generală din România, 1920* (București, 1970), pp. 151-357.

October and December 1920.³⁴ The six-man Rumanian delegation included Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, David Fabian (1895-1937), the editor of the party organ, *Socialismul* (Socialism), and Gheorghe Cristescu (1882-1973), later on, secretary general of the Rumanian Communist Party. They stopped first in Kharkov to discuss the terms of affiliation with Cristian Rakovski, who now headed the Ukrainian provisional government and was a prominent official of the Comintern. In Moscow they met Grigori Zinoviev and Nikolai Bukharin, members of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, who criticized the Rumanian party's inconsistent tactics and demanded the exclusion of unreliable individuals from the party, the acceptance of a new party central committee which the Comintern leaders themselves would nominate, and subordination to the Balkan Communist Federation, a branch of the Comintern intended to assure its control over the nascent Communist parties of Southeastern Europe. The majority of the Rumanian delegates accepted all the conditions specified for affiliation with the Comintern and, as events were to show, thereby inextricably bound the future Rumanian Communist Party to Moscow. But they did not speak for the entire PSD.

A bitter struggle now broke out within the party over affiliation with the Comintern and the transformation of the Social Democratic into a Communist Party. These issues were paramount at the long-awaited party congress, which took place in Bucharest on May 8-12, 1921.³⁵ The crucial vote on both affiliation with the Comintern and the creation of a Communist Party, which was taken on the evening of May 11, resulted in a large majority - 428 to 111 - in favor of the resolution. But before the delegates could proceed to adopt the program and statutes of the new *Partid Socialist-Comunist*, as it was initially called, the police broke into the meeting hall and arrested a large number of delegates on the grounds that they were plotting to overthrow the government. Thus, what came to be known as the first congress of the Rumanian Communist Party ended in confusion. The new party had no program or statutes and no central committee. But shortly after the breakup of the congress, probably on May 13, a number of Communists who had eluded the police dispatched a formal letter of adhesion to the Comintern in Moscow.³⁶

3. Rumania between the World Wars

The fortunes of the new Communist Party were to a great extent dependent upon the nature of Rumanian society as it had emerged from the war. The territory of Greater Rumania had almost doubled through the acquisition of new provinces, but the dominant agricultural character of the economy and society had not significantly changed, despite the accession of Transylvania and the Banat, where industrialization and urbanization were more advanced than in the Old Kingdom (Rumania before 1918). For the country as a whole about 82% of the population (20 million in 1939) continued to depend upon agriculture as their primary source of income. Conditions on the land slowly improved, but the agrarian problem defied a comprehensive solution. The great landed estates of the pre-war era had disappeared, because of extensive land reform, and millions of hectares had been distributed to peasants, but the process of differentiation within the peasantry continued unabated. Large numbers of smallholders had too little land to support their families, while many others sank into the class of agricultural laborers who had no land at all and numbered nearly 500,000 in 1930. About 18% of the population lived in cities and towns, but many of the latter were more rural than urban. Bucharest, the capital, was by far the largest city with about 870,000 inhabitants in 1939 (next came Chişinău with about 120,000 inhabitants). Bucharest was also the industrial and financial center of the country, and it was from here that the small, but powerful, upper bourgeoisie exercised its economic and political dominance of the country. At the other end of the social scale the urban working class grew steadily as the pace of industrialization accelerated. For the majority of workers conditions of labor were poor and salaries were low and often did not cover even the

³⁴ Clara Cuşnir-Mihailovici, Florea Dragne, Gheorghe Unc, *Mişcarea muncitorească din România, 1916-1921. Făurirea Partidului Comunist Român* (2nd rev. ed., Bucureşti, 1982), pp. 293-299.

³⁵ For narrative accounts see: Vasile Liveanu, "Date privind pregătirea şi desfăşurarea Congresului I al Partidului Comunist din România", in *Studii şi materiale de istorie contemporană*, Vol. 2 (Bucureşti, 1962), pp. 163-197, and Cuşnir-Mihailovici et al., *Mişcarea muncitorească din România, 1916-1921*, pp. 330-357. A record of the debates in the congress, as published in *Socialismul*, is to be found in *Documente din istoria mişcării muncitoreşti din România, 1916-1921*, pp. 680-733.

³⁶ *Documente din istoria mişcării muncitoreşti din România, 1916-1921*, pp. 733-734.

necessities of life.

Rumania was a constitutional monarchy based upon a Western-style parliamentary system of government. Although universal male suffrage had been enacted after the war and there was nearly complete freedom of press, the political system in practice fell short of the model. The party in power at election time could almost always assure itself of victory by mobilising a large and obedient bureaucracy to hold the opposition in check, and the executive was by far the dominant branch of government. The world economic depression, which struck Rumania with particular force in the early 1930s, was a severe blow to the proponents of genuine democratic government. The extreme right gathered strength. In 1938 King Carol II put an end to the post-war experiment in democracy with the establishment of a royal dictatorship, which was followed by a fascist and then a military dictatorship between 1940-1944.

The economic and social structure of interwar Rumania set formidable obstacles in the way of a collectivist, internationalist movement represented by the Rumanian Communist Party. The aspirations of the peasants at all levels for land of their own, their devotion to religion, even if only formal in many cases, and their respect for tradition made recruitment in the countryside difficult for the Communist Party. Moreover, the mental climate of the village persuaded many party leaders that the peasant was conservative by nature and unlikely to be moved by their vision of the new proletarian order, and thus they neglected the village, even the agricultural proletariat, which represented a potentially strong constituency. The modest level of industrialization and urbanization kept the factory working class, the party's preferred constituency, relatively small in number. Here, too, the influence of the village persisted, for the main source of urban labor was the countryside, where class consciousness was little developed. The Communist Party also had to combat a deep sense of patriotism in both the city and the village. It had been strengthened by the union of Transylvania, Bessarabia, and Bukovina with the Old Kingdom in 1918 and it cut across class lines, causing Communist appeals to international proletarian solidarity to fall on deaf ears.

4. *The Organizational Structure of the Rumanian Communist Party*

After the dispersal of the congress in May 1921 the organization of the new Socialist-Communist Party proceeded slowly. A provisional executive committee, composed mainly of intellectuals from Bucharest, including Marcel Pauker and Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, was formed in December 1921. Its primary tasks were to arrange the holding of a new party congress and to conduct party business in the interim. The speed with which the Comintern and the Balkan Communist Federation recognized the committee suggests the existence already of close links between Bucharest and Moscow.

What came to be known later as the second congress of the Rumanian Communist Party was finally held, in secret, in Ploiești, north of Bucharest, on October 3-4, 1922.³⁷ The thirty-four delegates agreed on the organizational structure of the party and the rules of membership. The statute, term "provisional", but substantially in force until the end of the Second World War, endowed the party with its official name, The Communist Party of Rumania (*Partidul Comunist din România*; PCR), and defined it as a section of the Communist International, whose "theses and decisions" were to be binding on all members and committees of the new party. Further evidence of subordination to the Comintern was the provision allowing the latter's Executive Committee and congresses to annul any decision of a party congress or conference. After setting forth the party's position on the agrarian problem, trade-union organization, and minorities, the congress chose a Central Committee, with Gheorghe Cristescu as secretary general, to manage party affairs until the next congress.

The party was barely tolerated by the government, and in 1924 it was formally outlawed on the grounds that it was guilty of incitement to rebellion and civil war. For two decades, from 1924 until August 1944, the PCR was forced to carry on its activities underground or indirectly through front organizations. It was subject to continuous harassment by government authorities, and many of its members were arrested and imprisoned. Notable among the public trials of Communists was the one held in Bucharest from April to June 1925.³⁸ To avoid almost certain imprisonment 16 of the 51 defendants, among them Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Marcel

³⁷ For a narrative account see Stănescu, *Mișcarea muncitorească din România în anii 1921-1924*, pp. 154-173. The minutes of the congress, first published in *Socialismul*, may be found in *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist și a mișcării muncitorești revoluționare din România, 1921-1924*, pp. 304-363.

³⁸ Stănescu, *Mișcarea muncitorească din România în anii 1924-1928*, pp. 45-48.

Pauker, and David Fabian, left the country, some for the Soviet Union. Of the remaining defendants, twelve were acquitted, including Gheorghe Cristescu, while others were sentenced to from three months to ten years in prison. Similar trials were held in the latter 1920s in many provincial cities. The trials of 76 defendants before a military tribunal in Cluj in the fall of 1928, at which 37 defendants were found guilty and received stiff prison terms and fines, attracted widespread attention.³⁹ The party's front organisations were subjected to a regular campaign of intimidation, which culminated in 1934 in the government's banning of many of them. During the late 1930s and the Second World War the position of the PCR became desperate. When the royal dictatorship, which came to power in 1938, dissolved all political parties and affiliated organizations Communist leaders halted the activities of groups associated with their party in order to avoid massive repressive measures. During the dictatorship headed by General Ion Antonescu from 1940 to 1944 the majority of Communist leaders were in prison, and by the end of the period the general membership had shrunk to about 1,000.

Government persecution sharply curtailed the activities of the party. In 1924 the Central Committee decided to operate as an illegal organization. In the view of Marcel Pauker, David Fabian, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, and Boris Ștefanov, it was the only effective way for the party to prepare the country for the proletarian revolution. Gheorghe Cristescu, on the other hand, thought the prospects for revolution dim, and he urged his colleagues to maintain a legal party organization if they expected to attract a mass following and create suitable conditions for revolution.⁴⁰

Illegality was the course chosen. As a result, the party found it difficult to recruit new members, organize cells in factories and other institutions, and create and maintain a nation-wide network of local branches. Membership thus remained small. Precise figures are unavailable, but the party seems to have had about 2,000 members in 1922 (before the May 1921 congress the still united PSD is estimated to have had between 45,000 and 100,000). The number of Communist Party members rose to a high of 5,000 in 1936 and then fell to about 1,000 as of August 1944.⁴¹ Minorities constituted a relatively large percentage of the party's membership. They were drawn to it particularly by its internationalist character. Jews, mainly the younger generation, who favored assimilation, were convinced that they could find a place for themselves in Rumanian society only if the existing economic and social structure were drastically changed. Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Marcel and Ana Pauker, and David Fabian belonged to this group. Hungarians in Transylvania and Bulgarians in Dobrudja, on the other hand, sought to protect their national identity by gaining the right of self-determination. Elek Köblös (1887-1938), a worker who was secretary general of the party in the mid-1920s, represented the former, Boris Ștefanov and Dmitri Kroshnev, who rose to prominence in the party in the 1930s, the latter. All these minority leaders regarded the Communist Party as the best hope of undermining the "unjust" political and social foundations of Greater Rumania.⁴²

Government persecution reinforced the authoritarian, undemocratic tendencies present in the party from its beginnings. Congresses had to be held in secret and outside Rumania - the third in Vienna (1924), the fourth in Kharkov (1928), and the fifth and final pre-World War II congress in Moscow (1931) - and participation was limited to a few leaders and selected activists. The underground character of the party increased its dependence on the Soviet Communist Party, which through the Comintern arrogated to itself the right to choose party leaders and determine their politics.

Two special centers of influence within the party emerged in the late 1920s. One was formed by the extensive network of Communist leaders and activists in prisons, notably in Doftana and Tîrgu-Jiu. Here, because they had the status of political detainees, they were able to carry on propaganda activities, formulate policy, and

³⁹ Petru Bunta, "'Marele proces comunist' din 1928, de la Cluj", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj*, Vol. 15 (1972), pp. 405-425.

⁴⁰ Marin C. Stănescu, "Probleme ale teoriei și practicii revoluționare dezbătute de Plenara C.C. al P.C.R. din iulie 1925", *Anale de Istorie*, Vol. 18, No. 5 (1972), pp. 37-50.

⁴¹ Robert R. King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Stanford, 1980), pp. 17-18.

⁴² There is no substantive discussion of these issues in Rumanian Communist historiography.

communicate with supporters outside prison through a variety of legal front organizations.⁴³ Notable among them were *Ajutorul Roșu* (Red Assistance), founded in 1924 to provide imprisoned Communists with legal and material support,⁴⁴ and *Apărarea Patriotică* (Patriotic Defense), which was established in 1940 for the same purpose and as a popular front organization extended aid to other opponents of the Antonescu dictatorship.⁴⁵ The other center of influence was the political bureau of the PCR abroad, which was established in Vienna in 1927 with the blessing of the Comintern.⁴⁶ It was headed for a time by Elek Köblös and David Fabian, neither of whom could safely return to Rumania. Little has been written about the "external bureau", but it was often at odds with the party leadership in Rumania and appears to have been the forerunner of the Rumanian Communist section in Moscow in the 1930s, which was, in effect, simply a branch of the Soviet Communist Party.⁴⁷

5. The Role of the Comintern

The Communist International exercised a decisive influence over every aspect of PCR affairs, from organization and personnel to major decisions on political tactics and economic policy. The promotion of the best interest of the Soviet Union was the guiding principle behind the Comintern's relations with the PCR. Hence, the latter was often obliged to adopt policies in domestic affairs and foreign relations that were contrary to the beliefs and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the population and thus compounded the hostility they felt toward the party. To be sure, the PCR was represented at congresses of the Comintern and participated in the work of some of its committees, but those members who carried the most weight usually belonged to Rumanian party organizations in the Soviet Union.⁴⁸

Comintern interference in the organization of the PCR was strikingly evident at the fourth party congress, which was held in Kharkov, in the Ukraine, on 28 June - 7 July 1928.⁴⁹ The Comintern convoked the congress and selected its participants without consulting party officials in Bucharest. The representatives of the Comintern, in the first instance, Bohumír Šmeral, a member of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, who was the effective chairman of the congress, saw to it that the discussions and resolutions followed the line set down by the Comintern. The latter manifested its lack of esteem for the leadership of the Rumanian party by withholding a full vote from all but one of the eight present or former members of its Central Committee. When, nonetheless, a few delegates ventured to debate the merits of a Comintern-sponsored resolution to exclude all previous members from the new Central Committee, Šmeral accused them of obstructing the work of the congress and warned that unless they desisted he would telegraph the Comintern in Moscow "for instructions". The debate ceased forthwith, and other proposals brought before the delegates concerning such

⁴³ Olimpiu Matichescu, "Forme de organizare și rezistență ale comuniștilor și antifasciștilor din lagăre și închisori", *Anale de Istorie*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1976), pp. 81-93, and "Lupta Partidului Comunist Român pentru apărarea militanților revoluționari din închisori, pentru regim politic", *Revista de Istorie*, Vol. 31, No. 6 (1978), pp. 961-978.

⁴⁴ Olimpiu Matichescu, "Ajutorul Roșu", in *Organizații de masă legale și ilegale create, conduse sau influențate de P.C.R.* (henceforth, *Organizații de masă*), Vol. 1 (București, 1970), pp. 125-242.

⁴⁵ Olimpiu Matichescu, *Apărarea Patriotică* (București, 1971), pp. 7-138.

⁴⁶ Stănescu, *Mișcarea muncitorească din România în anii 1924-1928*, pp. 115-116.

⁴⁷ An account of the activities of Rumanian Communists in the Soviet Union during the interwar period and the Second World War has yet to be written.

⁴⁸ Little has been written specifically about the relations between the Comintern and the PCR. Besides the general works by Mușat and Ardeleanu and Stănescu, see Marin C. Stănescu and Nicolae Popescu, "Partidul Comunist Român și congresele Internaționalei a III-a", *Anale de Istorie*, Vol. 21, No. 5 (1975), pp. 48-68.

⁴⁹ Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, Vol. 2, part 1, pp. 593-610.

crucial matters as the national question in Rumania, evoked only perfunctory comments before being approved. The final important act of the congress was the election of a new party Central Committee, whose members could not take office without the approval of the Comintern. The new body was composed of persons who were little known in Rumania and had had only a modest role in party activities. For example, the new secretary general was Vitali Holostenko, who had participated in the labor movement in Rumania in 1920 and 1921, but had left the country for good in 1922. At the time of the fourth congress he was a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine and an activist of the Comintern.

Despite its dominance of Rumanian party affairs, the Comintern was profoundly disappointed with its client and kept up a constant barrage of criticism. On the peasant question, for example, at the fifth congress of the Comintern in 1924 Vasil Kolarov, the Bulgarian Communist leader and the head of the Balkan Communist Federation, sharply attacked the PCR for its failure to grasp the revolutionary potential of the peasantry and to undertake sustained propaganda activities in the village. In 1926 the Comintern took both the right and the left "deviationists" in the party to task, the former because they had overestimated the level of capitalist development in Rumania and thought that revolution was at hand. The effect of such public rebukes was to sow confusion and discord within the PCR and to render a coherent approach to agrarian problems impossible. Yet, the Comintern itself was often inconsistent because it had continually to adjust its theoretical stance to meet the changing practical interests of the Soviet Communist Party. Thus, at the same time it was chastising the Rumanian Communist Party for a lack of revolutionary zeal by flirting with the Rumanian Peasant Party, it was attempting to unite Rumanian Peasants and other peasant parties in Southeastern Europe into a powerful federation of workers' and peasants' states.⁵⁰

The Comintern also had a decisive voice in the formulation of the Rumanian party's nationality policy. Here again the interests of the Soviet Union were paramount. Two main principles guided the Comintern. The first had to do with Bessarabia, which the fledgling Bolshevik state had lost to Rumania in 1918. At the fifth congress of the Comintern in 1924, a short time after the breakdown of negotiations between the Rumanian and Soviet governments over the future of the province, Dmitri Manuilsky, a leading member of the Comintern's Executive Committee, offered up a new definition of irredentism to cover over the case of Bessarabia. He called his idea "revolutionary irredentism", and it came into play when a workers' and peasants' state (the Soviet Union) had claims against a bourgeois state (Rumania). Such a situation, he concluded, which required a Communist party at all costs to support the workers' and peasants' state.⁵¹ Here, then, was the justification, if any was needed, for the Comintern's demand that the PCR work for the "return" of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union. The other principle which the Comintern forced upon the Rumanian party concerned the ethnic minorities in Rumania, in the first instance, the Hungarians of Transylvania. It demanded that the minorities be granted the right of self-determination, including secession from Rumania,⁵² reasoning that such a policy would heighten tension between the minorities and the Rumanian state and would thus contribute significantly to the destabilization of the latter and hasten the advent of revolution. This was a heavy burden for the PCR to bear at a time of enhanced national feeling following the creation of Greater Rumania in 1918.

The Comintern undertook a drastic reorganization of the PCR in the late 1920s. Undoubtedly reflecting Stalin's concerns now that he was in charge of the Soviet party, it intended to put an end to the debilitating factionalism which had rent the Rumanian party since its founding by forcing upon it a structure and discipline in conformity with the Stalinist model. As usual, the Comintern found it necessary to accommodate theory to immediate Soviet objectives. In a significant change of attitude it adopted the thesis that Rumania, though still largely agricultural, had, nonetheless, acquired a bourgeoisie and had fallen under the domination of international capital. In accordance with such reasoning, it now treated Rumania as an "advanced post" for the attack being planned by Western imperialists on the Soviet Union and summoned the PCR to use all its resources to discourage Rumania's participation in the enterprise.

To make the Rumanian party what it had so far failed to become - an efficient instrument of Soviet policy - the Comintern convoked the fifth congress of the PCR in Moscow in December 1931. It selected the

⁵⁰ George D. Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant in East Europe, 1919-1930* (New York and London, 1966), pp. 252-253.

⁵¹ *Protokoll. Fünfter Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale*, Vol. 2 (Hamburg and Berlin, 1924), p. 627.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 628.

delegates, who, as usual, accepted the Comintern's agenda.⁵³ They scorned both the "rightists", who accepted Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theory of neoserfdom and thus persisted in believing that the coming revolution in Rumania would be bourgeois-democratic, and the "leftists", who were certain that the proletarian revolution was at hand. Instead, they adopted Leninist theory. They agreed that the revolution would be bourgeois-democratic, but insisted that it would be carried out not by the bourgeoisie but by an alliance of the working class and the poor peasantry.⁵⁴ The Comintern again chose the new Central Committee and appointed a non-Rumanian, Aleksander Danieluk, a member of the Polish Communist Party and a Comintern activist, as secretary general. Recent Rumanian Communist historiography has judged this congress a watershed in the ideological and organizational development of the party.⁵⁵ Certain authors have been more categorical, praising the decisions of the congress as the beginnings of a true Communist Party in Rumania.⁵⁶ These claims notwithstanding, the Soviet Communist Party continued to dominate the Rumanian party through the Comintern and the Rumanian Communist bureau in Moscow.

The Comintern used auxiliary bodies to monitor the efficiency and loyalty of the Rumanian party. The most important was the Balkan Communist Federation,⁵⁷ which was founded in 1920 on the initiative of the Bulgarian Communist Party and had as its official objective the freeing of the Balkan peoples from Western imperialism through the proletarian revolution. Yet, right from its beginnings there was never any doubt that the Federation had been designed to serve the interests of Soviet Russia. The Soviet Communist Party conceived of the Federation as simply a conveyor belt between the Comintern and the Balkan Communist parties. It had no intention of sponsoring a true Balkan bloc of Communist parties, which might challenge its authority, and thus it stipulated that they be represented only as individual entities at Comintern congresses. The Comintern treated the Rumanian party from this perspective, at least in the 1920s. It judged Rumania's society and economy to be essentially Balkan, and thus argued that a successful revolution there could be carried out only on a pan-Balkan scale and within the framework of a Federated Soviet Socialist Republic of Southeastern European states.⁵⁸ The Rumanian party accepted these theses at its second congress in 1922 and, thus, acquiesced in a policy contrary to the age-old national aspirations of the majority of Rumanians. In any case, the effective life of the Balkan Communist Federation was short. Despite its elaborate organizational apparatus, the Comintern made little use of its services, preferring, instead, to deal directly with individual Communist parties.

Although Rumanian Communists yielded publicly to the Comintern at party congresses and similar gatherings and incorporated Comintern directives in party programs, sometimes verbatim, they were by no means of one mind in applying instructions from Moscow to critical social and economic issues. In the 1920s the Comintern and the Soviet Communist Party met such recalcitrance with reprimands and personnel changes. In the 1930s, after Stalin's accession to power, opposition to Moscow's will became life-threatening, and many prominent Rumanian Communists in the Soviet Union who were suspected of disloyalty perished in the great purges of 1937 and 1938. Among them were Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, David Fabian, Elek Köblös, and Marcel Pauker.

6. Critical Issues for the PCR

Agriculture, paradoxically, was perhaps the major domestic problem confronting the PCR. The predominance

⁵³ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist din România* (București, 1951), pp. 107-109, 111-113.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁵⁵ Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, Vol. 2, part 1, p. 641.

⁵⁶ Nicolae Popescu, "Congresul al V-lea - etapă importantă în dezvoltarea Partidului Comunist Român", *Anale de Istorie*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (1971), pp. 55-69.

⁵⁷ A comprehensive discussion of the activities of the Balkan Communist Federation may be found in Joseph Rothschild, *The Communist Party of Bulgaria* (New York, 1959), pp. 223-258.

⁵⁸ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist și a mișcării muncitorești revoluționare din România, 1921-1924*, pp. 334, 336.

of agriculture in the Rumanian economy raised serious questions about the country's future path of development, specifically, the imminence of the bourgeois-democratic and proletarian revolutions⁵⁹ and the role of the peasantry in them. Rumanian Communists had little success in attracting a following in the villages, and the revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and poor peasantry never materialized. The reasons are clear: they failed to enunciate a clear and consistent agrarian policy, and they engaged in only sporadic organizational work in rural areas. Thus, they could have little hope of overcoming the widespread peasant suspicion of Communism as destructive of private property and religion. The Comintern was of no help because it obliged Rumanian Communists to adopt programs which alienated large segments of the peasantry.⁶⁰

Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theory of neoserfdom exercised an extraordinary hold over Rumanian Communists in the 1920s. He argued in *Neoiobăgia* in 1910 that Rumanian socialists must focus their efforts on removing all obstacles in the countryside to the development of capitalism and, in particular, must support the small independent peasant producer as a builder of capitalism in agriculture, all necessary steps in preparing the way for the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Marcel Pauker, taking his cue from Dobrogeanu-Gherea, argued at the fourth congress of the Comintern in 1922 that the Rumanian Communist Party could exist as a party and as a revolutionary movement only if it understood how to approach the rural population in a proper way. He insisted, for example, that it distinguish the peasant smallholder, who, he thought, could be won over by promises that the revolution would not touch his land, from the poor, landless peasant, who would, he had no doubt, immediately embrace the revolution in return for land from expropriated estates.⁶¹ The essence of Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theory is also evident in the Rumanian party's first agrarian program, which was drawn up by his son, Alexandru, in 1924.⁶²

Throughout the 1920s the Rumanian party attempted to put Dobrogeanu-Gherea's ideas into practice. At its third congress in 1924 it instructed its members to undertake an intensive organizing campaign in the villages.⁶³ The "right wing" of the party pursued an alliance with the Peasant Party and, after 1926, with its successor, the National Peasant Party, as a means of hastening the outbreak of the bourgeois-democratic revolution. Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theory also had its proponents within the Rumanian Communist Bureau in Moscow. Solomon Timov (1898-?) wrote a lengthy critique of the agrarian problem in Rumania in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in which he differed with Dobrogeanu-Gherea's analysis.⁶⁴ Yet, at the same time in other works he approved of the latter's emphasis on the need to eliminate all obstacles to the progress of capitalism in Rumania and therefore welcomed the advent of the Rumanian National Party to power in 1928,

⁵⁹ See, for example: S. Cutișteanu, "Elucidarea problemei caracterului revoluției, imperativ a activității ideologice și politice a P.C.R. în anii 1921-1931", *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1971), pp. 487-500.

⁶⁰ Rumanian Communist historiography has exaggerated the extent and effectiveness of party propaganda and organizational activities in the villages. This tendency is evident in the following works, which, nonetheless, provide valuable information about Communist tactics: Marin C. Stănescu, "Din activitatea P.C.R. privind problema țărănească în anii 1922-1928", *Anale de Istorie*, Vol. 11, No. 6 (1965), pp. 150-164; Alexandru Gh. Savu, "Despre activitatea P.C.R. la sate și dezvoltarea luptei maselor țărănești în anii 1929-1933", in *Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană*, Vol. 2 (București, 1962), pp. 239-297; Titu Georgescu and Gheorghe I. Ioniță, "Activitatea P.C.R. pentru atragerea maselor țărănești la lupta împotriva exploatării burghezo-moșierești și a pericolului fascist în anii 1934-februarie 1938", *Anale de Istorie*, Vol. 9, No. 5 (1963), pp. 43-64; *Alianța clasei muncitoare cu țărănimea muncitoare în România* (București, 1969), pp. 143-243.

⁶¹ *Bulletin of the IV Congress of the Communist International* (Moscow), No. 21, 2 December 1922, pp. 18-20.

⁶² Solomon S. Timov, *Agrarnyi vopros i krest' ianskoe dvizhenie v Rumynii. Anti-neoiobagia (Kritika neokrepostnicheskoi teorii K. Dobrodzhanu-Geria)* (Moscow, 1928), p. 268.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 274-278.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 45-92.

because of its support for industrialization and foreign investment.⁶⁵

In the late 1920s and early 1930s the Comintern harshly criticized the Rumanian party's reliance on Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theory of development, because of its essentially non-revolutionary character. A strengthening of capitalism through support of bourgeois and peasant parties now ran counter to the Soviet Union's assessment of Rumania as a base for a "Western imperialist attack". Thus, Comintern leaders admonished, only revolutionary struggle which aimed at undermining existing political and social structures was a permissible tactic in Rumania. All these matters aroused bitter controversy within the Rumanian party. They were not settled, at least formally, until 1931, when the fifth party congress promised to comply fully with the Comintern's directives.⁶⁶ Although the party undertook various initiatives in the countryside aimed mainly at the poor peasantry, by the end of the 1930s it had little to show for its efforts.

The nationality problems had not been a serious issue for Rumanian socialists before the First World War, since the Old Kingdom had a relatively small and dispersed minority population (roughly 8%, according to the census of 1899). But after the war the accession of large non-Rumanian populations, especially of compact masses of Hungarians in Transylvania (29% of the population in historical Transylvania, 10.4% in the Banat, and 23.1% in Crişana and Maramureş, according to the census of 1930), obliged the Rumanian party to formulate a nationality policy. The Comintern's resolution in 1920 became the touchstone for the party throughout the interwar period. The Comintern's admonition as a means of undermining bourgeois regimes and promoting revolution by promising self-determination, including the right of secession,⁶⁷ was formally adopted at the Rumanian party's third congress in 1924.⁶⁸ It reaffirmed this policy at its fourth and fifth congresses and, in conformity with Comintern instructions, condemned the Rumanian state as "imperialist" and "colonialist".⁶⁹

One fateful consequence of such a policy was to weaken the Rumanian Communist Party's authority in two provinces with large non-Rumanian populations - Bessarabia and Dobrudja. In the former a number of underground organizations, patronized by the Comintern, carried on activities designed to reunite the province with the Soviet Union.⁷⁰ In Dobrudja the Bulgarian Dobrudja Revolutionary Organization, after 1925 a Communist organization, was in principle subordinate to the Rumanian Communist Party, but in fact maintained direct links to the Bulgarian Communist Party in Sofia and the Comintern. Until its dissolution in 1940 it sought to detach the entire province from Rumania and establish it as an independent state belonging to a Comintern-sponsored Federated Balkan Republic. The Rumanian party acquiesced in its activities, but, in fact, seems to have given it no support.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant*, pp. 260-261.

⁶⁶ Muşat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, Vol. 2, part 1, pp. 631-633, 637.

⁶⁷ *Protokoly kongressov Kommunisticheskogo Internatsionala. Vtoroi Kongress Kominternna (Iiul'-avgust 1920 g.)* (Moscow, 1934), pp. 490-496.

⁶⁸ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist din România* (Bucureşti, 1951), pp. 50-51.

⁶⁹ Muşat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, Vol. 2, part 1, pp. 606-608, 637-638, citing materials from party archives.

⁷⁰ *Istoriia Moldavskoi SSR*, Vol. 2 (Kishinev, 1968), pp. 247-259, 265-273, 279-303, 317-334. Recent Soviet historiography emphasizes the links between Soviet and Bessarabian party organizations and all but ignores the role of the Rumanian Communist Party in the province. See, for example, *Ocherki istorii Kommunisticheskoi Partii Moldavii* (3rd rev. ed., Kishinev, 1981), pp. 205-247. Rumanian historiography offers little of substance on the whole question of relations between the central party organs in Bucharest and the Bessarabian provincial organization, an indicator of the latter's considerable autonomy.

⁷¹ Muşat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, Vol. 2, part 1, p. 627, footnote 201; Rothschild, *The Bulgarian Communist Party*, p. 202; Nissan Oren, *Bulgarian Communism. The Road to Power, 1934-1944* (New York and London, 1971), pp. 138-143. Bulgarian historiography has had much more than Rumanian to say on the matter. See, for example, the detailed account of the activities of the Dobrudja Revolutionary Organization in Ivan Georgiev, *Dobrudzha v borbata za svoboda, 1913-1940* (Sofia, 1962), pp. 63-437, and an up-to-date survey in *Kratka istoriia na Dobrodzha* (Varna, 1986), pp. 204-216.

There are indications that in the late 1930s the CPR was ready to modify its stand on the nationality question. Although in the 1920s it had supported the Comintern's goal of dismembering Greater Rumania, now it changed its policy to suit the convenience of the Soviet Union. The latter, alarmed by the growing power of Nazi Germany, stressed the need for close cooperation among all anti-fascist forces and encouraged the creation of popular fronts in Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, as late as May 1940 the Comintern continued to admonish the PCR to apply the doctrine of self-determination and secession to those provinces "conquered" by "imperialist" Rumania in 1918.⁷² It had in mind, first of all, Bessarabia, and the Rumanian party dutifully incorporated the admonition into its own propaganda material. The result was to alienate potential allies for its popular front among liberals and peasant leaders who were critical of existing economic and social conditions and demanded reform, but who steadfastly defended the Rumanian national state.

The activities and pronouncements of the PCR in the 1930s were tied even more closely than in the previous decade to the foreign policy objectives of the Soviet Union. The most striking evidence was the party's attempt to organize a popular front against Nazi Germany and the extreme right at home.⁷³ Although recent Rumanian historiography attributes the party's actions to patriotism, that is, the defense of Rumania's independence and territorial integrity, Rumanian Communists, in fact, continued to follow the often contradictory directives of the Comintern, which, as usual, was serving as a proxy for the Soviet Communist Party. Thus, they continued to urge the breakup of "imperialist" Rumania and bitterly attacked such prospective partners in the anti-fascist coalition as the Social Democratic Party, their chief rival for the support of urban workers, and the National Peasant Party, which effectively shut the Communist out of most rural areas in the Old Kingdom.

Rumanian Communist leaders decided in 1933 to undertake a sustained campaign against the rising extreme right tide in Rumania. They created a front organization, The National Anti-fascist Committee (*Comitetul Național Antifascist*), whose primary task was to rally support for the cause from all the broadly democratic elements of Rumanian society, including Social Democrats and "progressive" National Peasants.⁷⁴ The role of the Comintern seems to have been crucial, for the leadership of the whole undertaking was put in the hands of two persons who were beholden to the Soviet Communist Party: Ana Pauker, who returned from Moscow in 1934, and Dmitri Kroshnev, a Bulgarian and a member of the Dobruđa Revolutionary Organization and in 1935 the editor of the Rumanian party's illegal newspaper, *Scinteia* (The Spark). Neither was noted as a conciliator. Although the party sponsored a number of front organizations and won endorsements for its campaign from a few prominent intellectuals, it failed to gain control of the anti-fascist movement. In July 1936 the Central Committee admitted failure and as reasons read off a litany of shortcomings, which suggest how little progress the party had made in honing its political skills since 1921: failure to establish close, permanent links with the masses of workers and the agricultural proletariat and "non-partisan" elements generally; neglect of the elected representatives of these classes in town and village councils, cooperatives, and other institutions; an inability to adjust to new "objective conditions" and thus to modify the party's long-standing hostile attitude toward the National Peasant Party and its treatment of the trade unions as simply an arena for struggle against reformers and Social Democrats; and the persistence of the "spirit of command" in dealing with party and non-party institutions and groups coupled with a lack of understanding of the specific role of each in the common struggle.⁷⁵ Although the anti-fascist coalition achieved modest success in a few elections in 1936 and 1937,⁷⁶

⁷² Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, Vol. 2, part 2, pp. 470-471.

⁷³ The literature on the subject is abundant. Gheorghe I. Ioniță, *P.C.R. și masele populare (1934-1938)* (București, 1971) is standard fare, exaggerating the role of the Rumanian Communist Party and its influence among workers and intellectuals. On the party's use of the press see Vasile M. Budrigă, "Din activitatea anti-fascistă a Partidului Comunist Român în anii 1935-1937", *Revista de Istorie*, Vol. 35, No. 11 (1982), pp. 1173-1190. A useful survey is Ognjana Hrisimova, "Le Parti Communiste Roumain et la lutte des forces démocratiques en Roumanie contre la réaction et le fascisme pendant les années 30 du XXe siècle", *Études Balkaniques*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (1985), pp. 3-21.

⁷⁴ Titu Georgescu, "Comitetul Național Antifascist", in *Organizații de masă*, Vol. 1, pp. 392-410.

⁷⁵ Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, Vol. 2, part 2, p. 431, citing material from the party archives.

its inability to attract a large nation-wide following was manifest in the parliamentary elections of 1937, in which it suffered a crushing defeat. It received less than 1% of the votes.

The PCR continued to follow the lead of the Soviet party in the latter 1930s as the international situation worsened. The signing of the German-Soviet non-aggression pact on August 23, 1939 may have disconcerted individual party members, but the leaders praised the document as a major contribution to peace and as a clever undoing of the efforts of "Anglo-French imperialists" to provoke a "slaughter" between Germany and the Soviet Union as a means of furthering their designs for world domination.⁷⁷ Subordination to the Soviet Communist Party also explains the reaction of the Rumanian party to the losses of territory sustained by Rumania in the summer of 1940. It denounced the so-called Diktat of Vienna of August 30 by which Hitler awarded northern Transylvania to Hungary, but it offered no criticism of the Soviet Union's seizure of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in June. Instead, it rejoiced that the workers and peasants of these territories had been liberated.⁷⁸ The party, of course, condemned the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941 and Rumania's participation in the German war effort.⁷⁹ The party resumed its efforts to form an anti-fascist coalition, but by this time the majority of its leaders were in prison and its membership had fallen drastically. Despite modest acts of resistance to the Antonescu military dictatorship,⁸⁰ it remained an ineffective political force until after the arrival of the Red Army and Soviet occupation authorities in August and September 1944.

7. Front Organizations

After its banning in 1924 the Rumanian Communist Party tried to carry on its activities through a variety of legal organizations. In politics its main instrument was The Workers' and Peasants' Bloc (*Blocul Muncitoresc-Țărănesc*; BMT), which it founded in 1925. The primary task of the BMT was to rally support for economic and social reform among individuals and groups who were committed to democratic ideals and might thus be persuaded to second the PCR in other, related activities.⁸¹ But since the PCR was not prepared to make significant concessions on fundamental issues of doctrine and tactics, the BMT had no success in attracting the support of the National Peasant and Social Democratic parties, except for a few individuals and small splinter groups. The leaders of these parties shunned an alliance with a party they regarded as insignificant and an instrument of a foreign power.

⁷⁶ Gheorghe I. Ioniță, "Succesele forțelor democratice din România în alegerile comunale și județene din anii 1936-1937", *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1965), pp. 785-805. It is not clear how much of the vote was supplied by the Communist Party and how much came from its partners.

⁷⁷ *Scînteia*, 8 September 1939 and *Lupta de clasă* (The Class Struggle), the party's illegal theoretical journal, December 1939, cited in Mușat and Ardeleanu, *România după Marea Unire*, Vol. 2, part 2, p. 469.

⁷⁸ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist din România* (București, 1951), p. 308: a manifesto drawn up on 8 August 1940.

⁷⁹ Maria Covaci, "Lupta forțelor patriotice populare din România, în frunte cu P.C.R., împotriva fascismului și solidarizarea cu lupta Uniunii Sovietice contra Germaniei naziste (1940-1944)", in *Tradiții de solidaritate internaționalistă româno-sovietice* (București, 1972), pp. 298-310.

⁸⁰ Olimpiu Matichescu, "Activitatea desfășurată de P.C.R. cu prilejul zilei de 1 Mai pentru organizarea luptei oamenilor muncii împotriva dictaturii militare-fasciste și a războiului hitlerist (1941-1944)", *Revista Arhivelor*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1964), pp. 133-165; Traian Udrea, "Acțiuni ale Partidului Comunist Român pentru făurirea Frontului Patriotic Antifascist (1941-1944)", *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1971), pp. 537-561; Dominiu I. Pădureanu, "Aspecte privind activitatea desfășurată de Comitetul regional Dobrogea al P.C.R. pe linia sabotării mașinii de război hitleriste în perioada 1940-1944", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie* (Iași), Vol. 18 (1981), pp. 429-438.

⁸¹ Florea Dragne, "Blocul muncitoresc-țărănesc", in *Organizații de masă*, Vol. 1, pp. 258-310; Andrei Cardoș, "Crearea Blocului Muncitoresc-Țărănesc", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie* (Iași), Vol. 15 (1978), pp. 379-394.

The existence of the BMT and the modest challenge it presented to Communist orthodoxy provoked bitter controversy within the PCR. The Comintern weighed in with strong accusations against the party in 1926 for its cooperation with bourgeois parties, which, it claimed, would prevent the adherence of a Rumanian Soviet Republic to a Balkan Workers' and Peasants' Federation and thereby delay the achievement of the "Rumanian revolution".⁸² As the struggle intensified the supporters of the Comintern succeeded in expelling Gheorghe Cristescu from the party, because he had, they claimed, denied the leading role of the proletariat in the revolution by collaborating with bourgeois politicians.

The effectiveness of the BMT may be gaged by the results of parliamentary elections. In 1926, 1927, and 1928 it polled less than 2% of the vote and gained no seats in parliament. But in 1931, at the height of the great economic depression, it obtained 73,711 votes (2.5%) and elected five deputies to parliament (their election was subsequently annulled, and they never took their seats). In 1932 the BMT won only 9,941 votes (.32%), and in the following year an ordinance dissolving workers' organizations associated with the Communist Party brought its activities to an end.

After 1933 the PCR carried on its political activity through various front or allied parties. Among the more important ones were The Ploughmen's Front (*Frontul Plugarilor*), founded in 1933 in Transylvania, which had as its primary concern the welfare of the poorer peasantry, from among whom it drew the bulk of its members.⁸³ It cooperated with the PCR in the latter's attempt to form a coalition of anti-fascist groups and parties in the mid-1930s. But it remained a provincial organization, and in each of the two parliamentary elections in which it participated (1933 and 1937) it obtained less than .3% of the vote and no seats. Similar to the Front in its economic and social aims, but drawing its strength mainly from the Hungarian peasants and workers of Transylvania, was The Union of Ungarian Workers (*Magyar Dolgozók Szövetsége*; MADOSZ), which was founded in Tîrgu-Mureş, in Transylvania, in 1934.⁸⁴ It worked closely with the PCR and the Ploughmen's Front, but remained a small, regional party. The Democratic Bloc (*Blocul Democratic*), formed in 1935, and its successor, The Democratic Union (*Uniunea Democratică*), formed in 1937, attempted to draw leftist forces into a broad democratic coalition headed by the Communist Party,⁸⁵ but neither attracted a significant following.

The Communist Party relied heavily on what, theoretically, constituted its chief reservoir of support - the proletariat. Claiming to be the only true representative of the proletariat, it gave priority to the organization of the urban workers in Communist-led unions and sought to place itself at the head of the entire labor movement.⁸⁶ In all these endeavors it was largely unsuccessful. The number of organized workers remained relatively small during the interwar period - in 1938 there were only about 80,000 out of a total workforce of roughly 1,200,000 engaged in industry, mining, commerce, and transportation. The Communists' main competitors were the Social Democrats, whom they continually denounced as "traitors of the working class", but whose unions commanded the allegiance of the majority of organized workers. A critical turning-point for the Communists and for the organized labor movement in general was the split between Communists and Socialists at the congress of labor unions held at Cluj in 1923. The Socialists won the crucial votes, and the Communists proceeded to form their own General Council of Unitary Syndicates (*Consiliu General al Sindicatelor Unitare*) in Bucharest later that year. Although the banning of the party in 1924 impeded organizational activity, party leaders, proclaiming the industrial proletariat the "base" of the party, urged their followers to intensify their

⁸² Stănescu, *Mișcarea muncitorească din România în anii 1924-1928*, pp. 104-105.

⁸³ Gheorghe I. Ioniță and Gheorghe Tuțui, *Frontul Plugarilor* (București, 1970), pp. 13-131. An earlier history, published before the Communists came to power and containing numerous excerpts from contemporary sources is Gheorghe Micle, *Răscoala pământului* (București, [1945]), pp. 17-351.

⁸⁴ Ladislau Banyai, "Uniunea oamenilor muncii maghiari din România (M.A.D.O.S.Z.)", in *Organizații de masă*, Vol. 2 (București, 1981), pp. 36-79.

⁸⁵ Gheorghe I. Ioniță, "Blocul Democratic", and Ion Iacoș, "Uniunea Democratică", in *Organizații de masă*, Vol. 2, pp. 13-35, 158-175.

⁸⁶ A general survey of the trade-union movement between 1921 and 1944, which emphasizes (and overestimates) the role of the Communist Party is Florea Dragne, *et al.*, *Mișcarea sindicală din România*, Vol. 1 (București, 1981), pp. 317-574.

activities in the trade unions.⁸⁷ But the majority of workers proved resistant to Communist revolutionary slogans and apocalyptic aims.

The party accomplished little, as the repeated attacks by Comintern officials on the party's "inactivity" among the workers and self-criticism by party leaders themselves reveal.⁸⁸ Most galling to Comintern officials was the small part played by Rumanian Communists in the increased strike activity during the economic crisis of 1929-1933. They accused the Rumanian comrades of having isolated themselves from the working masses and of allowing "spontaneity" to guide the actions of workers.⁸⁹ Nonetheless, the PCR had one notable success, which helped to dispel its reputation for ineffectiveness. This was the strike at the railroad workshops in the Grivița section of Bucharest in February 1933. One of its chief organizers was the Communist secretary of the railroad workers' central committee, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who after 1944 became the head of the PCR.⁹⁰ The bloodshed that resulted from clashes between the workers and troops and the numerous trials, including that of Gheorghiu-Dej, who was imprisoned until 1944, gave the party much publicity and favorably impressed its critics in the international Communist movement, but none of this improved its position in political life or the labor movement at home. In the latter 1930s a weakened Communist Party tried to create a "united workers' front" as part of its anti-fascist mobilization campaign,⁹¹ but the PSD rejected its overtures for a permanent fusion of all labor organizations.

The Rumanian Communist Party created separate organizations for young people and women. The Union of Communist Youth (*Uniunea Tineretului Comunist*; UTC), which was founded in 1922, was at first a legal mass organization designed to appeal broadly to democratic students and young workers. To obscure its association with the Communist Party it initially called itself The Union of Socialist Youth (*Uniunea Tineretului Socialist*). But in 1924, as government persecution of the Communist Party intensified, it geared its activities more closely to the aims of the party, adopted the name, UTC, and became formally affiliated with the Communist Youth International, which was sponsored by the Soviet Communist Party.⁹² Undoubtedly, such action was taken at the behest of the Comintern, which was intent upon transforming the Rumanian party and its associated bodies into a disciplined, committed revolutionary organization. The UTC was especially active in Bucharest and other larger urban centers and worked with the Communist-led trade unions, the BMT, and non-Communist student groups. In the early 1930s its most pressing task was to mobilize students and other young people for the anti-fascist popular front. In Bucharest and other cities in 1936 it managed to organize demonstrations with the youth groups of other parties opposed to fascism, but the latter were not inclined to enter into a formal alliance with the UTC. In 1936 the Comintern, again asserting its authority over Rumanian Communist affairs, ordered the dissolution of the UTC on the grounds that it had acted in too "sectarian" a manner at a time when the correct tactic required the formation of broad mass organizations to combat fascism. As usual, the Rumanian party made these directives its own policy. To some extent another youth organization,

⁸⁷ *Documente din istoria Partidului Comunist din România*, Vol. 2, pp. 309-311.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 410-413, 419-421; *The Communist International between the Fifth and Sixth World Congresses, 1924-8* (London, 1928), p. 252. For a brighter view of things see N. Nicolaescu, "Crearea sindicatelor unitare și locul lor în mișcarea muncitorească revoluționară din România în anii 1923-1929", *Studii. Revistă de Istorie*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (1973), pp. 1235-1250.

⁸⁹ King, *History of the Romanian Communist Party*, pp. 21-22.

⁹⁰ The literature on the Grivița strike and other strikes of the period is extensive and gives the Communist Party most of the credit for organizing and leading them. A standard account is *1933. Luptele revoluționare ale muncitorilor ceferiști și petroliști* (București, 1971).

⁹¹ Ion Iacoș, "Concepția P.C.R. cu privire la sindicate și la unitatea mișcării sindicale în România (1921-1940)", *Revista de Istorie*, Vol. 37, No. 12 (1984), pp. 1196-1211.

⁹² The most comprehensive account of the early years of the UTC is Constantin Petculescu, *Crearea Uniunii Tineretului Comunist* (București, 1972). Various aspects of the UTC's activities are covered in the collective work: *Tineretul Comunist în acțiune. Contribuții la istoria Uniunii Tineretului Comunist din România* (București, 1972), pp. 37-368.

The Democratic Student Front (*Frontul Studențesc Democrat*), took up where the UTC had left off.⁹³ Established in 1935 by a coalition of Communist, National Peasant, and independent students at the University of Bucharest, but directed by Communists, it was the type of mass organization favored by the party and the Comintern as a counterweight to extreme right student associations. Branches were established in several other major universities, and a number of intellectuals supported it, but membership remained small and accomplishments were few. It was dissolved in 1938 with the advent of the royal dictatorship. The UTC was revived in 1939 in order to provide a weakened party with badly needed support. It shared with the party a precarious existence during the Second World War.

Since women made up a significant part of the workforce in certain industries, textiles, for example, the Communist Party repeatedly asserted the importance of their participation in its revolutionary struggles.⁹⁴ It undertook to organize women workers as early as the second party congress in 1922 by establishing The Central Commission of Propaganda among Women (*Comisia Centrală de Propagandă printre Femei*). Its primary task was to bring women fully into the labor movement, and it included among its members Gheorghe Cristescu, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, and Ana Pauker. After its banning in 1924, because of its association with the Communist Party, its work was carried on by The Women's Circle (*Cercul Femeilor*), which was attached to the Communists' General Council of Unitary Syndicates. By the end of the decade, despite repeated promises, the party had done little to provide working women with the means of achieving their own emancipation. They were not even represented on the General Council of Unitary Syndicates.⁹⁵ Although the party formed a number of women's organizations in the 1930s, notably, The Society for the Protection of Women and Children (*Societatea pentru Protecția Femeii și a Copilului*),⁹⁶ whose main task was to provide medical assistance and education, it was no more successful than in the 1920s in endowing the working women's movement with a viable organization and its own leadership. As in many other spheres of activity, the illegal status of the party hampered its work, but its failures here, too, must be attributed in part to a lack of organization and initiative and its widespread impopularity.

This sketch of the Rumanian Communist movement in the interwar period will have suggested many questions requiring thorough, impartial investigation. Balanced accounts of the movement's place in Rumanian politics and society may be expected as archives are made available to researchers in the wake of the change of regime initiated in December 1989. In the meantime, for reasons suggested in the foregoing pages, one can only conclude that the Rumanian Communist Party between 1921 and 1944 exercised little influence on the course of Rumanian political and social life.

⁹³ The fullest account is Florea Dragne and Constantin Petculescu, *Frontul Studențesc Democrat* (București, 1977).

⁹⁴ Several articles provide a useful survey of the working women's movement. On the 1920s see: Olimpiu Matichescu and Lya Benjamin, "Cercul femeilor muncitoare", in *Organizații de masă*, Vol. 1, pp. 51-74. See also: Elisabeta Ioniță, "Prima organizație comunistă de femei din România", *Revista Arhivelor*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (1982), pp. 352-361, and "Mișcarea revoluționară și democratică de femei din România în perioada 1918-1944", *Anale de Istorie*, Vol. 32, No. 6 (1986), pp. 65-78.

⁹⁵ Matichescu and Benjamin, "Cercul", pp. 72-73.

⁹⁶ B. Dușescu, "Societatea pentru protecția femeii și a copilului - organizație de masă creată și îndrumată de P.C.R. (1935-1936)", *Anale de Istorie*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1964), pp. 106-120.