



The Romanian Philosophical Historiography during the Proletcult Period

Gabriela Esch

West University of Timișoara, Romania

Abstract

My work starts from the assumption that there is a proletcultist philosophy. What follows next are only a few chapters and it represents only the first steps in proving the truth of this supposition. The first part of this study aims to reconceptualise and reinterpret the proletcult¹ period in Romania. The second section highlights aspects linked to the impact of the Proletcult in the Russian society. Furthermore, it includes a redefinition of proletcultism itself. The events which unfolded in society during the proletcult period are reflected in the culture and philosophy of the proletariat. The proletcultism, in philosophy, is a liquidation program of the philosophy, of termination of any effort of thinking. Jdanov's work, a soviet citizen, is a work with a programmatic character. The Romanians followed in the proletcult period the soviet models. "Jdanovism" is the analysis of Andrey Alexandrovich Jdanov's work "On G. F. Alexandrov's The History of Western Philosophy." This paper includes a number of prescriptions that form the model for discussing proletcultist philosophy.

Keywords

Proletcult; proletcultism; proletarian culture; socialist realism; proletcultist philosophy.

¹ The term "proletcult" refers to the cultural movement, while "proletkult" refers to the organization.

Introduction

This paper begins with the assumption that there are several typical traits of Romanian proletcultism. If proletcultism is represented by proletarian culture without a party, and Socialist Realism² is proletarian with a party, then the specificity of proletcultism in Romania resides in the fact that it is closer to Socialist Realism than to proletcultism. Proletcultism influenced not only literature, but also philosophy. In philosophy, proletcultism (i.e. Social Realism) is manifested as a cultural movement defined by the contamination of philosophy with simplified Marxist-Leninist values, and the dilution of these concepts to the level of images. These aspects are mirrored in the way philosophy is written, in the use of certain phrases and even the employment of plebeian dialogue. The proletcultist philosophy was written according to Zhdanovist prescriptions in such a way that during the proletcultist period (1948-1966), a number of Marxist philosophies can be identified, including Zhdanovist Marxism.

I. Proletcultism in Romania

The irradiation of proletcultism throughout the duration of the Communist Regime was illustrated in the work of numerous literary critics, writers, literary historians, art historians, sociologists, psychologists and so forth. For example, critic and literary historian Ion Simut (born on August 26, 1953, Bihor County) considers communist culture to be a re-editing of proletcultism.³ In 1971, when he adopted the model of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Nicolae Ceausescu asked from the writers the same thing that Dej, Jdanov, Mao, Stalin, Lenin and the first proletcultists did, namely to create a culture with and for the working class. The difference between the period from 1948 to 1960 and the period from 1970 to 1980 is that in the beginning, the idea of proletcultism was overwhelming. The result of this was that three types of literature emerged: a literature of propaganda, an escapist literature and a clandestine culture. The literature of propaganda most likely refers to the mediocre poetry of Alexandru Toma, the poems of Mihai Beniuc, Dan Desliu, Anatol Baconsky, and to the works of Mihail Sadoveanu and so on. Evasionist literature seems to allude to Dumitru Tepeneag or possibly Leonid Dimov, with his baroque lyric, imagistic depth and unusual lexical invention;⁴ we can also include Virgil Mazilescu and Gelu Naum, the representatives of surrealism. The clandestine culture may refer to Traian Chelariu whose works, for the most part, were never printed until after the philosopher's death. Another consideration is the censorship which lasted until the revolution of December 1989. This concept was introduced in 1949, when a decree of the Council of Ministers established the General Headquarters of the State Printings.

Nicolae Manolescu notices that, paradoxically, this institution operated even after Nicolae Ceausescu dissolved it in 1977. Manolescu was perturbed by the fact that since this specialized institution of censorship operated only during communism, only the regime knows the state of complete censure.⁵ "Communist censorship was a veritable industry of control, subjugation and manipulation of people's ideas."⁶ This ideological battle was a battle of rejection. Already by 1948, the communists drew up a catalogue of 522 pages with approximately 8000 forbidden titles⁷. Each text is liable to rejection. In addition, the shadow of doubt hovers above content and expressions. Therefore, if the freedom of creation was controlled more severely and brutally until 1970, the state

² In Romanian, there is a linguistic problem, but I am referring here to the socialist realism in general.

³ Simuț, Ion, *Comentarii critice: Proletcultism sau realism socialist? (II)* [Reviewer's commentaries: Proletcultism or socialist realism? (II)], în *România literară* [Literary Romania] issue 31, August 8, 2008 (Bucharest), 13.

⁴ *Mic dicționar Enciclopedic* [Small Encyclopaedic Dictionary] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică/ Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2005), 36.

⁵ Manolescu, Nicolae, *Realismul socialist. Literatura „nouă”* [The socialist realism. The "new" literature], în *Vatra* (Târgu Mureș: issue August 9, 2004), 85.

⁶ Ibidem. "Cenzura comunistă a fost o veritabilă industrie de control, aservire și manipulare a ideilor oamenilor."

⁷ Eugen Negrici, *Literatura română sub comunism: 1948-1964* [The Romanian literature in communism] (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, 2010), 54.

censors exercised their control more discretely afterwards. Caius Dobrescu (born on January 22, 1966, in Brasov) discovered the profound continuity between the spontaneous creation of the masses from the time of Ceausescu and proletcultism.⁸ He developed the idea that the cultural ideology diffused by Nicolae Ceausescu was established as a type of civil variant of his security doctrine. “Centred on the idea of a ‘war of the entire people’ – this doctrine, AN. – remains the only example of recrudescence of the ways of thinking driven by the movement of the proletarian writers from all of Eastern Europe after Stalin.”⁹ Regarding the initial appearance of proletcultism, the proletarian was envisioned and described as the “bun sălbatec” (“good brute”), uncorrupted by the decadent civilization of the bourgeoisie and a depositary of the true image for the future. The dynamics and the fervour of this mindset distinguish the age of proletcultism. Another (perhaps indirect) argument sustains that the irradiation of proletcultism is represented by its profound psychosocial impact. In time, the habit of duality degenerates into automatism. The typology of the writers and philosophers of that time reflects the polemic nature. The innumerability of identities (both exposed and concealed) is mirrored in contemporary philosophical and artistic works. The substrata and levels of the writings are blended together. Mariana Boca (January 15, 1965, Radauti) sees a complication of interiority as well as the exposition of the conscience.¹⁰ The duality and the multiple identities complicate the interior self, introducing it for the first time to the avatars of the exile, to the internal exile, which highlights the difference between the true and the false personality.¹¹ The moral and psychological conflicts undermine resistance to the communism. “The double game and the cultural environment poisoned by persuasive deceit bare the consciousness and make it vulnerable before the psychological phenomenon of self-persuasion.”¹² The internal exile is a deliberative space. Among the four categories of writers, philosophers and scientists of the proletcultist period, the ones particularly living the internal exile assert their convictions in the framework of the new conditions. The extravagant embodiments of this hostage mentality debase the consciousness towards persuasion and transform the deliberative towards regressive space. The value of a philosophical and artistic work is now determined after a newly-minted hierarchy. The centre of this new universe of values revolves around ideological expectations. Thus, the proletarian revolution is followed by a cultural revolution which annihilates the previous culture and creates a new one in the service of the working class and the peasantry, in other words in the service of communist ideology.¹³ Art of this type must reflect the realizations of the workers and of the peasants and the socialist means of production, promote heroes of socialist labour inclusively, resulting in an artistic and working experience of the proletariat which was completely different from the similar experiences of the bourgeoisie. The artists, the scientists and the philosophers had to descend from their ivory tower and enter the factories, the agricultural production cooperatives and the shipyards. Moreover, in 1971 the same thing was asked of literature, namely to achieve a culture with idols and themes from the sphere of the working class.¹⁴

Ion Simuț captures the character of proletcultism in the communist period and represents the concept primarily in three ways: proletcultism, socialist realism and mass communist culture¹⁵.

⁸ Dobrescu, Caius, *Despre originile temei „culturii proletare”* [About the origins of the “proletarian culture” theme], in *Vatra* (Târgu Mureș: issue August 9, 2004), 108.

⁹ Ibidem. “Centrată pe ideea “războiului întregului popor” – această doctrină, n.n. – rămâne singurul exemplu de recrudescență a convingerilor vehiculate de mișcarea scriitorilor proletari din întreaga Europă de Est post-stalinistă.”

¹⁰ That was a period when you had to play both-sides to get printed and the levels and the substrata of the writings are referring exactly at the psychological and ideatic substratum.

¹¹ Boca, Mariana, *În căutarea noimei* [Searching for the sense], in *Vatra*, Târgu Mureș: issue August 9, 2004, 158.

¹² Ibidem. “Jocul dublu și mediul cultural intoxicat de minciuna persuasivă expun conștiința și o fac vulnerabilă în fața fenomenului psihologic al autopersuasiunii.”

¹³ Radu Sommer, *Dicționar de estetică generală* [General aesthetics dictionary] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972), 282.

¹⁴ Simuț, Ion, *Comentarii critice: Proletcultism sau realism socialist? (II)* [Reviewer’s commentaries: Proletcultism or socialist realism? (II)], in *România literară* [Literary Romania] issue 31, August 8, 2008 Bucharest, 13.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

Through his opinions, Simut argues against the viewpoint expressed by Ana Selejan (born on October 19, 1946, Salaj county) in *Literatura în totalitarism. 1949-1951* [Literature in totalitarianism. 1949-1951]. The dissociations made by the latter are indications of the hypercorrectness mania.¹⁶ Proletcultism and socialist realism are separated by two main differences: unlike socialist realism, proletcultism proclaims complete separation from the previous literary traditions. Secondly, proletcultism is anti-party, while socialist realism is pro-party. However, Ion Simut emphasizes that socialist realism also advocates for separation from the literary tradition, even if only partially. The previous literary tradition is never accepted entirely in either paradigm unless it has passed through the filter of realism. On the other hand, there is no qualitative difference between the two of them; both have thematic adaptations based on the proletariat and the deformations of the aesthetical idiom are the same¹⁷. In emphasizing the differences between socialist realism and other methods of artistic creation, Ana Selejan resorts to a system of diametric oppositions. In this framework, socialist realism is a universally valid method of creation rather than a literary (and thus perishable) national current; it is based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology as opposed to idealism, metaphysics or mysticism; it expresses a certain social class, not a certain intimacy; it answers to a collective command and not to an individual necessity; it is political, not apolitical; it thematises the building of the socialism, the life and the realizations of the new man while ignoring the evil, the spleen, the death; the art with a tendency¹⁸ is important, not formalism; it is a culture for the masses in which aims for accessibility rather than hermeticism; it also opposes cosmopolitanism.¹⁹ Reducing these concepts to a system of oppositions contributes in a large part to clarifying the problem. Ion Simut also believes that Ana Selejan is doing the right thing in reducing it to a system of oppositions. Nevertheless, the author of *Comentarii critice: Proletcultism sau realism socialist? (II)* [Critical Remarks: Proletcultism or socialist realism? (II)] sees it structured and organized differently. Instead of proletcultism and socialist realism, Simut proposes the term “opportunistic literature.” According to this viewpoint, socialist realism involves proletcultism and both are contained in the field of opportunistic literature. Both are versions of art’s subjugation under dictatorship. Ion Simut’s definition derives from an attempt to group the variety of answers to ideological expectancies. The fact is that if during the period from 1948 to 1950 the term “proletcultism” was used, subsequently from 1951 until 1964 the Stalinist notion of socialist realism was used. In the USSR, there was the concept of Stalinism while in Romania it was known as the era of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.

A special relevance for the reconfiguration of the proletcultist period invites a comparison between proletcultism and socialist realism from the USSR and proletcultism and socialist realism from Romania. A conventional description of proletcultism is as follows: “a cultural current (appearing in the USSR after the October Revolution) which aesthetical principles consist in the rejection of the entire cultural inheritance of the past and the creation of a genuine proletarian culture.”²⁰ Another version considers it a political-ideological concept in the linguistic, cultural, literary and scientific domain which developed in Soviet Russia after the coup d’état of the Bolshevik party in October 1917²¹. The term “proletcult” is a portmanteau deriving from “proletarnaia kultura” (“proletarian culture”).²² Nicolae Manolescu insists on the term Proletkult as an organization destined to conduct its

¹⁶ Simuț, Ion, *Comentarii critice: Proletcultism sau realism socialist? (II)* [Reviewer’s commentaries: Proletcultism or socialist realism? (II)], în *România literară* [Literary Romania] issue 31, August 8, 2008 Bucharest, 13.

¹⁷ Both are a development of the proletarian class’ creativity in the cultural area.

¹⁸ The militant art towards other arts.

¹⁹ Selejan, Ana, apud Simuț, Ion, *Comentarii critice: Proletcultism sau realism socialist? (II)* [Reviewer’s commentaries: Proletcultism or socialist realism? (II)], în *România literară* [Literary Romania] issue 30, August 1, 2008 (Bucharest), 13.

²⁰ *Mic dicționar enciclopedic*, 1138. “un curent cultural (apărut în URSS după Revoluția din Octombrie) ale cărui principii estetice constau în respingerea întregii moșteniri culturale a trecutului și crearea unei culturi pur proletare.”

²¹ Irina Petraș, *Teoria literaturii* [The theory of literature] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Biblioteca Apostrof, 2002), 57.

²² Ibidem.

own special culture.²³ The mission of the proletcult is to develop the creativeness of the working class in cultural areas.²⁴ Geo Dumitrescu underlines that in 1951 a bitter battle was fought against proletcultism, in other words against the transformation of reality and of living people in dead schemes.²⁵ However, as early as the Writers' Congress of 1934, Andrei Jdanov incriminated proletcultism for its anarchic, unaffiliated and formalist spirit.²⁶ The ideological battle depicted the triumph of one idea over another one, namely the victory of socialist realism over proletcultism. Therefore, from 1934 onward the only permitted form of literature was socialist realism. Socialist realism obscured part of the schema and the rigid, aggressive and offensive theses of early proletcultism. The architecture of socialist realism, mainly characterized by monumental imposing constructions, is also called socialist classicism. In music, a work of socialist-realistic nature is Shostakovich's Symphony entitled *Leningrad*.

In Romania, proletcultism (particularly the proletcultist poetry) is a monstrous excrescence of history on the vigorous body of literary, cultural and scientific values. Put in the service of the working class, it interrupted the natural evolution of Romanian literature. Different authors, some more talented than others, adhered to proletcultism. Thus an immense space was created for the manifestation of imposture, non-values and absence of talent. Simut shows that, in Romania, proletcultism came into fashion during the period 1948-1950 and the socialist realism adopted from 1951 onwards is a proletcultism cosmeticized by circumstance. In Romania, the term proletcultism has an adapted, reshuffled, mellowed meaning of proletarian, pro-party, patriotic culture, representing the ideology of a victorious working class in the revolution against the bourgeoisie. It was emancipated under the name of socialist realism. The multitude of definitions given to proletcultism reflects the diversity of points of view concerning it. Simut²⁷ asserts the synonymy between proletcultism and socialist realism. Caius Dobrescu also suggests that the terms can be interchangeable. He shows that the term "proletcultism" can be used to globally designate the cultural politics applied by local communist leaders during the time of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej.²⁸ For Alexandru Vlad, the amalgam between the erotic tension and the tension of the class struggle in proletcultist literature disclosed the concept as a *sui generis* type of existentialism²⁹. Moreover, Geo Dumitrescu notices that, as a matter of fact, the struggle against and the liquidation of proletcultism is connected to fighting for literary excellence³⁰. In the study entitled *Despre originile temei "culturii proletare"* [About the origins of the "proletarian culture" theme], Dobrescu makes reference (using the term of proletcultism) to communist literary politics that were imported Romania under Soviet occupation.³¹ Sometimes, proletcultism is used as a label to express aversion to communism's caveman-like character. Alexandru Cistelean (born on December 2, 1951, Cluj County) remarks that the pejorative aspect of the term is used increasingly. In this author's opinion, proletcultist literature is apt to compete with *Academia*

²³ Manolescu, Nicolae, *Realismul socialist. Literatura „nouă”* [The socialist realism. The "new" literature], in *Vatra*, Târgu Mureș: issue August 9, 2004, 83.

²⁴ Simuț, Ion, *Comentarii critice: Proletcultism sau realism socialist? (II)* [Reviewer's commentaries: Proletcultism or socialist realism? (II)], în *România literară* [Literary Romania] issue 31, August 8, 2008 Bucharest, 13

²⁵ Dumitrescu, Geo, *Înapoi la proletcultism. Cu documentele pe masă* [Back to proletcultism. Documents on the table], in *Vatra*, Târgu Mureș: October 9, 2004, 15.

²⁶ Simuț, Ion, *Comentarii critice: Proletcultism sau realism socialist? (II)*, 13.

²⁷ Ibidem: "În fond, realismul socialist e un proletcultism cosmetizat de circumstanță, însă nu esențialmente schimbat." ["Substantially, the socialist realism is a circumstantial cosmetized proletcultism, but not essentially changed"].

²⁸ Dobrescu, Caius, *Despre originile temei „culturii proletare”* [About the origins of the "proletarian culture" theme], in *Vatra*, Târgu Mureș: issue August 9, 2004, 97.

²⁹ Vlad, Alexandru, *Proletcultismul inocenților* [The proletcultism of the innocents], in *Vatra* Târgu Mureș: issue August 9, 2004, 62.

³⁰ Dumitrescu, Geo, *Înapoi la proletcultism. Cu documentele pe masă* [Back to proletcultism. Documents on the table], în *Vatra*, Târgu Mureș: October 9, 2004, 29.

³¹ Dobrescu, Caius, *Despre originile temei „culturii proletare”* [About the origins of the "proletarian culture" theme], în *Vatra*, Târgu Mureș: issue August 9, 2004, 107.

Cațavencu.³²

Socialist realism is defined and outlined through proletcultism, while proletcultism is clarified through the intercession of socialist realism in turn. Thus, socialist realism can be defined, in short, as a reformed version of proletcultism. Proletcultism is a proletarian culture without the party and socialist realism is proletarian culture with the party; passing from one culture to the other is merely a formality. Proletcultism is “freed” through the socialist realism if we take into consideration that through proletcultism the politics of a class, namely of the proletarians, is expressed if in a limited manner. Nicolae Manolescu alludes to the relations between proletcultism and socialist realism in his work *Realismul socialist. Literatura “nouă”* [*The Socialist Realism. The “new” literature*]. Herein, he emphasizes that since socialist realism spread in a Jdanovist way in Romania, this speaks ad infinitum about “partiality, popularity, accessibility, typicality, veridicity, humanism, social goal, positive heroes and a new world, at the same time accomplishing a drastic sorting of literary species, which retains the hymn, the ode, the social novel, the epic or stream, the realistic and historical drama, meaning the ones able to carry the unique and non-negotiable ideological message.”³³ The same author also recalls Mihai Zamfir's viewpoint which enumerates three features of socialist-realist speech. The philosophy of socialist realism is fundamentally logocratic, antinomialist and Cratylean, giving meaning to the ideology by classifying the terms in a Manichean manner. Dobrescu places all these considerations in offering vision of socialist realism as a depleted, degraded, but nonetheless recognizable variant of a direction pursuing proletarian culture.³⁴ This method of creation, as Dumitrescu has also noticed, signifies the perception of a new interior reality, but one cannot see the new if one does not understand the dialectics of this social development.³⁵ Such a conception involves the viewpoint according to which the types of sophisticated, unclear visions come from un-knowing the existence. In actuality, the version of reality resulting from the requirement of being a realist abolishes reality itself and substitutes it with its own counterfeited image. Such a reality was perceived through a counterfeited image throughout the entire duration of the communist regime. Proletcultism and socialist realism are nothing more than phases of a cultural revolution, which also included mass communism. The propaganda activity was more intense during the first two periods; censorship was also more aggressive during this time period.

In the USSR, it is especially the fight³⁶ that maintains the fissure between proletcultism and socialist realism. For the most part, Romanians absorbed the resurrected version of proletcultism. The Jdanovist variant of proletcultism designates a proletarian, “heroic” and pro-party culture.

In philosophy, as in literature, proletcultism began in 1948 and it ended in 1966. Thus, the publication of *Anale româno-sovietice. Seria filosofie* [Romanian-Soviet Annals. Philosophy Series], originates from as far back as 1947 before its interruption in 1963. A year after its inception (i.e. in 1948) the work of Andrei Aleksandrovici Jdanov titled *În jurul lucrării lui G.F. Alexandrov: „Istoria filosofiei occidentale”* [Around G. F. Alexandrov's “History of Western Philosophy”] was translated and published by the publishing house of the Romanian Labour Party (Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român). An active contributor in the consecration and dispersal of socialist realism, Ion Vitner published his article entitled *Filosofia științifică a Prof. Francisc J. Rainer* [Prof. Francisc J. Rainer's Scientific philosophy] in *Studii: revistă de științe – filosofie – arte, I* [Studies: review of science - philosophy - arts, I]. Leonte Rautu is another one of the proletarian ideologists who tried to shape the destinies of Romanian culture during the communist era. In 1948, he published *Triumful ideilor lui Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin* [The triumph of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin's ideas], and in 1949, in

³² Cistelean, Al., *Înapoi la proletcultism* [Back to proletcultism], in *Vatra Târgu Mureș*: October 9, 2004, 8.

³³ Manolescu, Nicolae, *Realismul socialist. Literatura „nouă”*, 86: “partinitate, caracter popular, accesibilitate, tipic, veridicitate, umanism, țel social, erou pozitiv și lume nouă, făcând totodată o triere severă a speciilor literare din care reține imnul, oda, romanul social, epopee sau fluviu, drama realistă și istorică, adică pe acelea care trec drept singurele capabile să poarte mesajul ideologic unic și nenegociabil.”

³⁴ Dobrescu, Caius, *Despre originile temei „culturii proletare”* [About the origins of the “proletarian culture” theme], în *Vatra* (Târgu Mureș: issue August 9, 2004), 108.

³⁵ Dumitrescu, Geo, *Înapoi la proletcultism. Cu documentele pe masă*, 27.

³⁶ The battle between the ideas, meaning the criticism lunched by Stalin against the proletcultism due to his lack of engagement.

Bazele marxism-leninismului, I [The foundations of Marxism-Leninism, I], he published his article *Obiectul și însemnătatea științei marxist-leniniste* [Object and significance of the Marxist-Leninist science]. The journal of philosophy (from 1954 to 1963 entitled *Cercetări filozofice* [Philosophic researches]), was doubled³⁷ many years in a row by the journal *Probleme de filozofie. Traducere în limba română pentru uz intern a revistei sovietice Voprosî Filosofii* [Philosophy problems. Translation in Romanian for inside use of the Soviet journal Voprosî Filosofii] which appeared at the initiative of the Romanian-Soviet Institute of Studies within the Academy of the Romanian People's Republic. Both were established as a mirror of the ideological struggle from that period. Both contained a dual perspective about the world and society composed of the good and bad, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The complete disagreement between the two forces lasted until 1966-1967. In 1966, the first attempts were made to get in touch with tradition. Thence, Lucian Blaga published *Trei scrisori asupra fenomenologiei* [Three letters about phenomenology] in *Cercetări filozofice* [Philosophy researches] in 1966, in the *Novelties* section. Starting in 1967, Constantin Noica's work also began to be regularly printed. That same year, *Rostirea filosofică românească* [Romanian philosophical speech] was published in *Revista de filosofie* [Review of philosophy], in the *Annotations* section; a later issue that year printed the article entitled *Semnificația categoriilor în cultura europeană. Categoriile lui Platon* [The meaning of categories in the European culture. The categories of Plato].

II. Proletcultism and Proletkult

At first approximation, proletcultism can be defined as a cultural movement that, in both philosophy and literature, consists of the gradual impregnation of Marxist-Leninist values as an answer to the requirements enforced by the ideology of the working class, in other words a dilution of concepts to the level of images. The specificity of these images resides in the fact that distinctions become more apparent with the passing of time.

In a study concerning the proletcultism in Russia, Lynn Mally (currently a teacher of history and history of culture at the University of California) also emphasizes that the proletcultists were not only interested in creating proletarian artistic forms, but also in the creation of proletarian morals and ethics.³⁸ Therefore, proletarian philosophy had to make its debut through two areas of philosophy. The culture of the future had to put into words an ideology of the working class that should amalgamate the conception about the proletarian world and life; it should also address the proletarian philosophy in its retort. Indeed, the categories and the principles, the theses which expressed the existence, not only in general terms, but also the existence of the worker in society are impregnated with violence, struggling in a sort of inner exaltation and warning against plots and masked duplicities. The constituent elements of the historic context are suggestive enough to that end. The revolutionary actions of 1905-1907 in Russia, doubled by the defeats suffered in the Japanese-Russian war (1904-1905), the strikes in the big industrial centres, the peasant uprisings from the Volga region, the sailors' revolt from the battleship *Potemkin*, are all defeats which should be reflected in the proletarian culture sooner or later, giving it a sense of failure, mining it with inner outbursts. Through the name of "Bloody Sunday" given to the event that occurred on 9/22 January in Sankt-Petersburg, historiographers show a similar perception. The victory obtained by Antanta in World War I shifted Russian society from an agonistic perspective towards the aureoles of triumphalism. With time, the concept of class struggle entered prominence furthermore. This was based on the Soviets' activity. Appearing due to the circumstances of the 1905 Revolution, the Soviets of workers' deputies³⁹ have an agitated history. The Russian revolution of February 1917, started with workers from the Putilov factory in Petrograd going on strike (under the slogan "Bread", "No to the war" and "No to absolutism") underlines their role even more profoundly. They were enforced gradually as organs of the proletarian and peasantry dictatorship. The dictatorship of the bourgeoisie empowered by the temporary Government opposed

³⁷ These magazines were not necessary both of them, because they treated the same subject.

³⁸ Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), XIX.

³⁹ The governmental institutions of the ex-USSR.

the proletarian and peasantry dictatorship that was exercised through the Soviets of workers and military deputies. In the beginning, both the revolutionary socialists and also the Mensheviks were part of the Executive Committee of Soviets. In this early phase, both the Government and the Soviets advocated for divergent positions and interests. The history of the Soviets experienced a process of clarification and stabilization, but not without tension, internal and external struggles. With *Tezele din aprilie* [April Theses], Lenin formulated the plan to transform the democratic–bourgeois revolution into a socialist revolution. In the end, power was taken by the provisory cabinet of Kerenski.⁴⁰ From 1921 until 1925, the liberal politics of NEP were directing the period of reconstructing the national economy. Even the new political economy was set up through the economic policy of the past. The reconstruction of the national economy was depicted as full of dilemmas and tensions. Moreover, on December 30, 1922, the sovietised version of Russia was created: the USSR.

Bogdanov launched the project meant to integrate the process of knowing Marx aiming to develop a more sophisticated understanding of his ideology. The philosophy of the working class, first of all, had to overcome the vulgar materialism through a kind of “fineness” of spirit, i.e. through artifice. This emerged either from an inferiority complex towards the bourgeois philosophy or out of a cultural complex.⁴¹

Therefore, proletarian culture in general (particularly its philosophy) especially stirred up the society, polarizing it. The philosophy’s mission was to unite the proletarian élan. The philosophy had to reflect the proletarian ideals in order to keep them rooted. This mobilized the proletariat.

Initially, the Proletcult was an organization that held lectures about the history of art.⁴² The coalition of clubs devoted to the needs of the working class was later extended to a national movement with much more ambitious goals.⁴³

As far back as 1909-1911, the leftists⁴⁴ opened two schools: one in Capri and another in Bologna. They were formed of a small number of proletarians who appreciated the leftist point of view. The teachers were Gorky, Bogdanov, Lunacharski and Pokrovski.⁴⁵ Disturbed by the pro-party character of this, Bogdanov was convinced that, practically speaking, proletarian culture should be universal and include all social classes. Through the term “proletarian” he means all people that are performing a job in a certain domain of activity or maybe even the elite from each of these areas, i.e. the performers. The programs were thus open to the more sophisticated representatives of the working class. With the passage of time, an education network appeared in the form of the evening schools and the Sunday schools. The number of bookshops and theatres for working people steadily increased. Gradually, the new culture was institutionalized.

The mechanism of reciprocal influence between theory and practice underlines the features of concepts which formed the philosophy of the working class. The concepts reveal a pronounced dynamism, seemingly forged in a *sui-generis* religiousness. Such a philosophy was created through revalorization, reclassification and through a continuity of creation. The proletarian philosophy’s way of forming also involves the mechanism of reciprocal influence between theory and practice. The notions of this theory are impregnated with “inflections of fire.” The same dualities and disagreements also define the proletcultist philosophy in Romania, a philosophy following the Soviet model.

III. The Jdanovism

Proletcultism is, therefore, proletarian culture without party while socialist realism is proletarian culture with party. The passage from one to the other is nothing more than a formality. Just as there is

⁴⁰ *Mic dicționar Enciclopedic*, 1201.

⁴¹ According to G. Bachelard, the cultural complexes are the irrational attitudes that control the labour of thinking, which reunites natural dreams and acquired traditions.

⁴² Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletcult Movement in Revolutionary Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), XVI.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, XVIII.

⁴⁴ At a certain point, Bolsheviks were divided into two factions: the Leninist faction and the Bolshevik left (i.e. the leftists).

⁴⁵ Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The Proletcult Movement in Revolutionary Russia*, 6.

proletcultism or literary socialist realism, one can speak in a similar manner about philosophical proletcultism. When the philosophy is enforced, to the exclusion of all alternatives, it then becomes ideology. Proletcultism or the philosophical socialist realism reflects (more or less) the diamat, the ideology of the working class. Philosophical proletcultism tries to give answers to the expectations of the diamat. However, the institutionalization of a sole philosophy results in the exclusion of all others. In *Meseria de istoric al filosofiei* [The business of philosophy historian], Vasile Tonoiu reminds us that there is, on one hand, the academic teacher who teaches the history of philosophy and, on the other hand, the authors of philosophical histories as a type of original philosophical writing. In other words, there are philosophy manuals and courses (i.e. philosophy history) and original philosophical writings. The proletcultist philosopher is part of the first category of academic teachers. He/she is the academic instructor that makes speeches *ex cathedra*. This philosopher is an incarnation of the proletarian party's authority that he is also a part of. Therefore, the classification suggested by V. Tonoiu also evokes a certain tonality, implying the sense of an imposition. To this end, the proletcultist philosopher turns to doxography. The doxographer presents the opinions of the philosophers in a systematic manner. He presents the philosophers' biographies and their works; he classifies them by period and chronology. In *The historiography of philosophy: Four genres*, Richard Rorty places this approach among the repudiated types of philosophy. Any history of philosophy is a blend of three genres: the rational reconstruction, the historical reconstruction and the history of the spirit. According to these divisions, the proletcultist philosophies are established more as a doxography than as a synthesis of the other three genres. The doxographic genre is disavowed precisely because of its fundamental suppositions. Rorty describes issues of doxographies through prejudices about problems. According to him, the philosophers of all times and places have asked themselves the same questions⁴⁶. Each history of philosophy formed this way tells a new "story" about intellectual progress, analysing older texts in the light of recent discoveries.⁴⁷ The specifics of proletcultist doxographies resides in that they include analyses of texts from the viewpoint of the struggle between materialism and idealism. The proletcultist philosophy represents a distinct type and form of Marxist-Leninist ideology.

The model for the elaboration of the proletcultist or socialist-realist philosophy is represented by the work of Andrei Aleksandrovici Jdanov entitled *În jurul lucrării lui G.F. Alexandrov: „Istoria filosofiei occidentale”* [Around G. F. Alexandrov's "History of Western Philosophy"]. Herein, Jdanov laments the situation of the Institute of Philosophy within the Academy of Sciences⁴⁸. It lacks a unity of character.⁴⁹ The reason resides in that the Institute of Philosophy does not reunite or integrate scientists from the periphery. In Jdanov's view, the philosophers from the periphery represent an enormous force; they give the organization its combative spirit and Bolshevik rhythm, leading research activities in the USSR. The worker's theme is once again central here in terms of distinguishing between philosophical work from the centre and the philosophical work from the periphery. Other times, Jdanov advocates for decreasing the distance between the professional philosopher and other intellectuals. From this perspective, Marxism is defined precisely by the fact that it is a victory over the older philosophy that was the prerogative of only a select few and aristocratic in spirit. The great creators of systems are disavowed. They enforced to the living knowledge conclusions that were not dictated by real life, but rather by the needs of the system. The new system of values considers the attempts to discover a new line in philosophy or to invent a new current of thought to be preposterous. Equally absurd are other philosophical conceptions such as agnosticism, theological neo-Kantianism or some "attempts to smuggle God into the contemporary sciences of nature and into all kinds of things that are designed to patch the idealistic merchandise"⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Richard Rorty, "The historiography of philosophy: four genres," in *Philosophy in history*, ed. by Richard Rorty, J.B. Schneewind, Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 63.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ From Soviet Union.

⁴⁹ A.A. Jdanov, *În jurul lucrării lui G.F. Alexandrov: "Istoria filosofiei occidentale"* [On the work of G.F. Alexandrov: the history of western philosophy] (Bucharest: Editura Partidului Comunist Român, 1948), 40.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 26. "încercări de a-l strecura pe Dumnezeu prin contrabandă în științele contemporane ale naturii și tot felul de alte marafeturi care au ca scop să peticească marfa idealist."

and their insistence on one unified history of philosophy.

Alexandrov's philosophy was criticized for straying "off the line" enforced by the party. In the elaboration of this philosophy, he should have taken into consideration that even if it is self-determined, philosophical thinking is nonetheless dependent on the material conditions of living in society. In the presentation of some systems,⁵¹ Alexandrov sets himself apart from the concrete historical situation as well as from the class roots of each philosophy, exhibiting philosophical inconsistency. The philosopher overlooks the fact that the same idea can be reactionary or progressive depending on context and thus argues the idealistic conception that ideas are above history. Contrary to expectations, Alexandrov's philosophy was established through a continuous oscillation between materialism and idealism. The negation of diamat's theses emerged even from the viewpoint according to which the dialectic method was prepared through the victories of the natural sciences already from the second half of the eighteenth century. Engels's thesis, the only one accepted, is another. In other words, this method was prepared through three big discoveries from the nineteenth century: through the discovery of cellular building of the organism, through the theory of preserving and transforming the energy and through Charles Darwin's theory of evolution.

Jdanov sees Alexandrov's philosophy in the prospective of distance from the ideal, i.e. from the expectations. The discussions on the philosophical front awaken the image of an organized detachment of militant philosophers, armed to perfection with Marxist theory, leading a large offensive against the bourgeois ideology and arming the working people of the socialist society knowing the necessity of the road they are taking and with confidence in the ultimate victory of the communist cause. In opposition to this, the apolitical philosopher is the soldier in quarterage. In quarterage, the weapons of the soldier rust while the commanders boast about past victories and have useless chats. Excluded from the philosophical front, Alexandrov is actually "the soldier"⁵² from the quarterage. Alexandrov's works are part of the philosophical works rejected as inadequate by decisions of the Central Committee regarding ideological matters. In this sense, Jdanov notices: "As you can remember, certain decisions of the CC. regarding ideological matters were aimed against the absence of ideological content and the apoliticism in literature and art, against isolation from the current themes and estrangement from the past, against worshipping all things foreign and for the combative spirit of the Bolshevik party in literature and art. It is known that several of the ones working on our ideological front drew the proper conclusions from the decisions of the CC. and obtained considerable success in this sense."⁵³

The expectations for the elaboration of a good manual of philosophy or history of philosophy are divided by expectations of content and expectations of form. Among the expectations of form, Jdanov enumerates: the object of the history of philosophy must be defined with precision; the manual must be specific, i.e. based on contemporary realizations of dialectic and historical materialism; the exhibit of the history of philosophy must not be scholastic, but efficient and creative, directly correlated with present problems; the quoted material has to be certified and conclusive; and the style has to be clear, precise and convincing. Regarding the content of a philosophical work, there are some favourite themes: the explication of the world, the way the law of fight⁵⁴ and unity of opposites works, and contradictions from the socialist society. The themes in discussion contrast with the themes of the bourgeois philosophy, as for example: treason, burglary or homosexuality. The thematic indices mirror the progress or, on the contrary, the regress. Jdanov underlines the difference between socialist society and the capitalist one through a series of antagonisms. The development from the inside out is done differently in the capitalist state compared to the socialist one. The criticism and self-criticism in the

⁵¹ Philosophical systems.

⁵² Alexandrov is not a real soldier, but a philosopher, that's why I used the inverted commas.

⁵³ Ibidem, 44. "După cum vă amintiți, anumite hotărâri ale CC. privitoare la chestiunile ideologice au fost îndreptate împotriva lipsei conținutului ideologic și a apolitismului în literatură și artă, împotriva izolării de temele actuale și a îndepărtării în domeniul trecutului, împotriva închinării la tot ce este străin și pentru spiritul de partid combativ bolșevic în literatură și artă. Se știe că mai mulți din cei ce lucrează pe frontul nostru ideologic au tras concluziile cuvenite din hotărârile CC. și au obținut succese considerabile în acest sens."

⁵⁴ This works through duality of the unique on the sides, contrary features, which include and exclude each other; they characterize any determined process and constitute the internal flow for its change and development.

socialist state is the equivalent to cataclysms from the capitalist state. The presence of the scientists in philosophy contrasts with the presence in philosophy of common criminals. For Andrei Jdanov, this is a sign of the end: “The presence of fishes and common criminals in philosophy means indeed that it got to the brim of perdition and decomposition”⁵⁵. The end and the lack of creativeness from capitalism maintains a tension from the beginning with the creativity from socialism.

From the Jdanovist point of view, the content of a good work of history of philosophy is founded on the ground of the fight with the representatives of current ideals. It is a development and a consolidation of the materialistic current. Such a manual carries an accentuated critical and self-critical function. The elaboration of a scientific history of philosophy presumes the rendition of a certain dynamic. The object is revealed through a state of tension. Generated by the opposition between two basic orientations, this condition sometimes takes paroxysmal impersonations. When talking about fishes, burglary, treason, common criminals etc, Jdanovism tries to express such impersonations. With this in mind, the point of origin is represented by the definition given by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin to the science of philosophy. According to the Marxist–Leninist perspective, the scientific history of philosophy is the history of the creation, of the apparition and of the evolution of the materialistic scientific conception about the world and its laws.

Conclusions

The proletarian culture of Romania was forged according to similar models from the USSR. Proletcultist philosophy was built especially as a reply to the demands launched during that period by Andrey Alexandrovich Zhdanov (whose paper, *On G.F. Alexandrov's History of Western European Philosophy*, has been translated and circulated as a brochure in a significant number of copies), Ion Vitner (who sketched elements of a “good” philosophy in Prof. Francisc J. Rainer's *Scientific Philosophy*), and Leonte Răutu.

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⁵⁵ Ibidem, 51.