Alexandra Ghiț
Welfare Work Without Welfare

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Volume 22

Alexandra Ghiț

Welfare Work Without Welfare

Women and Austerity in Interwar Bucharest

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Parts of the Introduction, Chapter 1, and Chapter 4 summarize or build on the account of government-level welfare politics during the Great Depression I provide in the chapter "Romania: Serving Fewer by Design: Austerity Welfare Politics during the Great Depression" from the volume *The Great Depression in Eastern Europe*, edited by Klaus Richter, Anca Mândru, and Jasmin Nithammer (CEU Press, 2025) and so referenced. An early, pre-PhD-thesis version of Chapter 5 appeared in the Romanian language, as "'Emoțiuni mecanice': Familia femeii muncitoare din urbanul românesc în anchetele sociale și sanitare interbelice (1924–1939)", in a 2017 volume coordinated by Anca Dohotariu.

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Contents

List of Abbreviations for archives and organizations

Archival institutions and repositories

Abbreviation	Archival institution / Repository name
CSIER	Centrul pentru Studiul Istoriei Evreilor în România [Center for the Study of the History of Jews in Romania] "Wilhelm Filderman"
DigiBuc	Biblioteca Digitală a Bucureștilor [Digital Library of Bucharest] www.digitool.bibmet.ro
ISISP – Fototeca	Fond "Institutul de Studii Istorice și Social-Politice" – Fototeca [Fond "Institute for Historical and Social Political Studies"– Fototeca], SANIC, Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANR)
SANIC	Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale București [Service of the Central National Historical Archives Bucharest], Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANR)
SMBAN	Serviciul Municipal București al Arhivelor Naționale [Bucharest Municipal Service of the National Archives], Arhivele Naționale ale României (ANR)
WASI	Women and Social Movements International Digital Archive
WSMME	Women and Social Movements in Modern Empires Digital Archive https://search.alexanderstreet.com/wasg

Organizations

Abbreviation	Organization name
ACFE	Asociația Culturală a Femeilor Evree [Cultural Association of Jewish Women]
ACFR	Asociația Creștină a Femeilor Române [Association of Christian Romanian Women]
AECPFR	Asociația pentru Emanciparea Civilă și Politică a Femeilor Române [Association for the Civil and Political Emancipation of Romanian Women]
AJF	L'Union Internationale des Amies de la Jeune Fille
ATF	Asociația Amicele Tinerelor Fete [Association Women Friends of Young Girls / Friends of Young Women]
ARA–ECF	American Relief Administration – European Children's Fund
ASTRA	Asociația Transilvană pentru Literatura și Cultura Poporului Român [Transylvanian Association for the Literature and Culture of the Romanian People]
CARS	Comitetul de Ajutorare a Regiunilor Secetoase [Committee for Aid to Drought-stricken Regions]
CEB	Comunitatea Evreilor București [Bucharest Jewish Community]
CNFR	Consiliul Național al Femeilor din România [National Council of Women from Romania]
CNR	Centrul Național de Românizare [National Center for Romanianization]

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Comintern	Communist International
COS	Charity Organization Society
CPOS	Consiliul de Patronaj al Operelor Sociale [Patronage Council of Social Works]
GFR	Gruparea Femeilor Române [Group of Romanian Women]
ICW	International Council of Women
ILO	International Labor Organization
IOVR	Oficiul Național al Invalizilor, Orfanilor și Văduvelor de Război [National Office for War Invalids, Orphans and Widows]
ISR	Institutul Social Român [Romanian Social Institute]
IWSA/IAW	International Women's Suffrage Alliance (1904–1946) / International Alliance of Women (from 1946)
LEW	International Little Entente of Women
LSI/SAI	Labor and Socialist International / Sozialistische Arbeiter-Internationale
MMSOS	Ministerul Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale [Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection]
PNL	Partidul Național Liberal [National Liberal Party]
PNȚ	Partidul Național Țărănesc [National Peasantist Party]
SONFR	Societatea Ortodoxă Națională a Femeilor din România [Orthodox National Society of Women from Romania]
SSAS	Școala Superioară de Asistență Socială [Superior School of Social Assistance]
SSF	Secția de Studii Feminine [Section for Feminine Studies] (of the ISR)
UFAR	Uniunea Femeilor Antifasciste din România [Union of Antifascist Women of Romania]
UFDR	Uniunea Democrată a Femeilor din România [Union of Democratic Women of Romania]
UFM	Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare [Union of Working Women]
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
WIZO	Women's International Zionist Organization
YWCA	World Young Women's Christian Association

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Introduction

In mid-November 1929, a social worker from Bucharest, the capital of Romania, visited the home of Marioara I. for the first time.[1] The social worker, a young woman named Natalia Raisky,[2] had been alerted to Marioara I.'s situation by the parish priest in the Tei neighborhood. The priest may have found the social worker by walking the short distance from his church to a small house on Tei's main thoroughfare. A Demonstration Center for the Assistance of the Family was being set up there by a group of social workers that included Raisky. The Center would officially open its doors several weeks later, in December 1929—with the help of a 375,000 Lei subsidy from the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection and encouragement from Princess Ileana of Romania.[3] The Center was meant to model US-inspired social work practices for trainee social workers and, ultimately, for managers of municipal institutions that provided social services for Bucharest's poorest inhabitants.

The 1929 cooperation between the neighborhood priest and the new neighborhood social workers offers a microhistorical glimpse into a broad historical process unevenly unfolding at the time across Europe: the partial reconfiguration of household social reproduction through the unequal expansion of state-supported social services and benefits.[4] This was a process that had effects on the lives of most people, not only on those of the poorest. In the broadest sense, by linking local and transnational interactions related to welfare, in this book I ana-

1 "Anexă: Copia unui cazier de asistență individualizată [Appendix: Copy of a case file for individualized assistance]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 1, no. 2 (1930). Here and elsewhere in the book, unless mentioned otherwise, the anonymization of surnames for non-public figures mentioned in archival materials as well as translations from Romanian, French and German into English are mine.

2 Née Popoviciu and cited in this book as the author of a social research article under that name. For use of both names, see "Curierul Serviciului Social [The Courier of the Social Service]," *Curentul*, July 6, 1939, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

3 Veturia Manuilă, "Organizarea Centrului de Demonstrație pentru Asistența Familiei [The Organization of the Center for the Assistance of the Family]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 1, no. 2 (1930): 54, 59. The priest from the Tei church is mentioned as a precious collaborator for the Center. In 1929, 375,000 Lei was the price of a relatively large house in Bucharest. "Mica publicitate [Classified advertising]," *Dimineața*, February 6, 1929, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

4 On new directions in research placing households and women's social reproduction work within households at the core of research on capitalist transformations, see Eileen Boris and Kirsten Swinth, "Household Matters: Engendering the Social History of Capitalism," *International Review of Social History*, 2023, 1–24.

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lyze how welfare provision changed after the First World War in the capital city of an East-Central European agrarian country. Drawing on feminist theory, gender, labor, and welfare history, I interpret this change as a generally inequitable reconfiguration of the gendered paid and unpaid work meant to foster the well-being of others. I focus on women welfare activists, and through the documents they produced, seek to understand the lives of other, more precarious, categories of women welfare workers as well. Throughout, I aim to support the claim that histories of welfare provision are histories of work and histories of work are histories of welfare provision.

"Mahalaua Teilor", the "Linden Tress" neighborhood, Tei for short, the place where this history of welfare provision begins, was an old, popular neighborhood. Nowadays considered close to the city center of Bucharest, its aspect transformed during the 1970s, in the late 1920s Tei was on the city's margins (Map 1). Reporters portrayed Tei not as the neighborhood of poor workers it was but as an area with "eight hundred houses and four hundred taverns",[5] inhabited by overworked young mothers, illegitimate children, slick petty criminals and large Roma families. After the 1929 opening, over the next decade, the Demonstration Center's social workers would turn Tei into the epicenter of data collection and research on gendered poverty and urban transformation in Bucharest. The social workers (known in Romanian as *asistente sociale*, that is "social assistants") were linked to the Superior School for Social Assistance [*Școala Superioară de Asistență Socială*, SSAS] and part of a local network of more or less socially progressive women welfare activists. In fact, the SSAS had initiated and managed the Demonstration Center.

Marioara I. had lived in the Tei neighborhood at one point. She was Romanian-speaking and of Orthodox religion. Her circumstances may have come to the attention of the priest of the Orthodox "Sfânta Treime" church in Tei while the woman resided in the area. By late 1929, Marioara I. was no longer living in Tei but in a different, similarly modest, peripheral neighborhood. In the one-room rented house, the visiting social worker met the 32-year-old consumptive single

5 "Tei: Mahalaua cu 400 de cârciumi [Tei: The neighborhood with 400 taverns]," *Ilustrațiunea română* 7, no. 38 (September 11, 1935): 14. Sometimes referred to in English as "slums," interwar Bucharest's mahalale were peripheral and poor neighborhoods. Like historical English slums, by the 1930s, the mahalale had become crowded and were characterized by bad housing. Before the First World War, they could be modest but relatively comfortable and green areas. As this magazine article suggests, even in the 1930s, Tei inhabitants could enjoy a nearby large park and relatively clean lake. On slums and their representation, see Andrew Lees, *Cities Perceived: Urban Society in European and American Thought, 1820–1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 105–106.

mother, her two toddler children and a 13-year-old niece. Orphaned, the niece had traveled from the countryside to the capital city to join her aunt's household.

The social worker found the members of the household, especially Marioara I., to be in a very precarious situation indeed. The woman owed money to the doctor, the landlord and the greengrocer. Of great concern to Marioara I. were lapses in lease payments towards the local Singer subsidiary, covering the price of two sewing machines which were essential for the family's income. On the Singer machines, at home, Marioara I. and her niece sewed leather parts used by shoemakers in larger workshops to produce boots. The woman had learned the craft from her common-law husband, with whom she had worked side by side. The abusive man had left the family, establishing a new household at a known address in the same neighborhood. He refused to support his children. The social worker noted in her casework file [*cazier*] that when not too ill to accept orders, Marioara I. could earn 150 to 500 Lei weekly. Yet the woman would have needed at least 3,000 Lei each month to cover all the expenses of her modest household—that is, an income matching the typical monthly wages of a skilled male worker in the crisis year 1930.[6] Marioara I.'s failing health meant that in the previous year she had seldom earned enough for the family to even scrape by.

Although her situation was dire, Marioara I. was not entirely without help. Raisky, the social worker, noted that Marioara I.'s older sister, Georgeta G., married to a "good young man", lived in the same neighborhood and helped as often as possible. Georgeta had moved to Bucharest around 1918, from a village next to the town of Curtea de Argeș (or possibly from the town itself), 150 kilometers away from Bucharest. She brought Marioara to the capital city some years thereafter. The sisters came from a peasant family with many children and little land. They had a strong bond with each other. By contrast, their ties to the rest of their relatives, who "stayed in the countryside", were weak. Besides Georgeta, neighbors, mostly other poor women in similar situations, aided Marioara I. as well, as part of a practice of mutual support. For instance, in conversations with the social worker, they vouched for Marioara's hard-working character and love for her children.

Some institutions and private charities had been of some help already before Raisky's first visit. In the casework file about Marioara I., the social worker noted that before her first visit, the family had received money to pay for food and medicine from several organizations. Small amounts were donated by the Association of the Romanian Clergy and free medical assistance for the children was provided

6 Veturia Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor în sectorul I al Municipiului București [Principles in the organization of help for the unemployed in Sector I of the City of Bucharest]," *Buletinul muncii, cooperației și a sigurărilor sociale* 12, no. 10–12 (December 1932): 444.

through the "Principele Mircea" (Prince Mircea) association. Bucharest City Hall, through one of its handful of neighborhood clinics, was helping Marioara I. with a monthly aid of 200 Lei towards her children's food. (In 1930, 200 Lei bought twenty to twenty-two loaves of bread.)[7]

Marioara I. had drawn on her social insurance as well but to little avail. The social worker noted that the woman was a "full rights" member of one of the old labor corporations in the city. (As chapter 1 explains, since 1912, these guilds played a role in the rudimentary insurance system that would exist in the Kingdom of Romania until 1933.)[8] In practice, "full rights" meant that Marioara I. occasionally received 100 to 200 Lei from the president of the corporation, because she was considered a "luckless laborer" (an operational category within that organization). In other words, even if she had done paid work consistently, even if she had contributed to some form of insurance, Marioara I. was only eligible for emergency relief pieced together from several sources.

After the first encounter in November 1929, over the course of the following five months, the social worker visited Marioara I. at least once a week, aiming to assist her on the path of medical and financial recovery and personal autonomy, according to "individualized assistance" methods and principles derived from state-of-the-art American social work practices.[9] This assistance consisted in the social worker helping Marioara I. use an array of local-level welfare-related institutions and initiatives dotted across the city. Moreover, Raisky intermediated with public institutions and businesses, and networked with several women-run charities on Marioara's behalf. The social worker facilitated discounted medicine and free medical treatments and obtained guarantees from the Singer firm that the sewing machines would not be confiscated. She spoke to the president of Marioara I's workers' corporation, secured more small sums from several public institutions and private associations, and provided help in-kind (food, clothing, blankets, firewood, occasional help with housework).

The account of welfare provision above comes from a rare kind of document in the relatively fragile "archive of social reform" concerning urban interwar

7 See Appendix 4.

8 Victor Rizescu, "Începuturile statului bunăstării pe filiera românească: Scurtă retrospectivă a etapelor unei reconceptualizări [The beginnings of the welfare state in the Romanian lineage: Brief retrospective of the stages of a reconceptualization]," *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review* 18, no. 1 (2018): 35–56.

9 Veturia Manuilă, "Asistența individualizată și tehnica ei [Individualized assistance and its technique]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 1, no. 2 (1930): 9–13.

Romania.[10] It relies on information from a social work casework file with thirty-six entries published as an appendix to a 1930 issue of a journal called *Asistența socială*, the bulletin of the new Superior School for Social Assistance (*Școala Superioară de Asistență Socială*, SSAS) in Bucharest.[11] The casework file (re)constructs a story of careful, sustained assistance for a struggling family that in practice would have been exceedingly rare in Bucharest.

In the three decades since the fall of the Ceaușescu regime and its 1980s austerity politics, intellectuals and the broader public have painted the interwar period in Romania in rather bright colors, presumably as antidote to the grayness of state socialism and post-socialism. Accounts of a thriving or at least "picturesque" multiethnic Bucharest of the 1920s and 1930s continue to construct "an old–new mythology" about a gilded interwar past, in a seemingly prosperous but increasingly unequal EU-member country.[12] However, the frequent representation of Bucharest as a "Little Paris" has little to do with the interwar Bucharest of muddy suburbs and exploited workers described by state socialist historians.[13] New re-

10 On archives of social reform as documents which ought to rivet historians' attention, not least because of their embedded flawed social utopianism, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

11 After some vacillation about the veracity of this appendix, I have decided to consider the set of documents included at the end of the *Asistența socială* journal's second issue as faithful copies of a *cazier*. More arguments and evidence were in favor of this evaluation rather than in favor of a more skeptical one, such as seeing the set as "embellished copies" of actual work documents (as I tended to, initially) or as entirely invented artefacts. The publishers titled the appendix "copy of"; other articles in the journal included specific examples and excerpts from social workers' case files; the doctors, medical, state and philanthropic institutions mentioned in the case file existed and were active at the addresses indicated; Marioara I.'s situation was serious, but as other SSAS studies in the Tei neighborhood show, not singular; concern for anonymity and ethics were not central to social work practice and research at the time. Still, this source's veracity was established through conjecture rather than based on corroborating documentary sources. The remaining uncertainty about the truthfulness of this uniquely valuable source should be kept in mind by readers.

12 Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa: Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500–2010) [Romania and Europe. The accumulation of economic differences]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2010), 214.

13 Teodor Necșa, "Date privind situația clasei muncitoare în perioada crizei economice 1929–1933 [Data on the situation of the working class during the economic crisis 1929–1933]," *Studii–Revista de istorie* 9, no. 1 (1956): 107–23; Viorica Moisuc, "Unele date noi cu privire la situația maselor populare în perioada 1938–1940 [Some new data regarding the situation of the popular masses in the period 1938–1940]," *Studii–Revista de istorie* 17, no. 6 (1964): 1325–1340; Nicolae N. Constantinescu, ed., *Situaţia clasei muncitoare din România, 1914–1944 [The Situation of the working class in Romania, 1914–1944]* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1966).

search in economic history supports interpretations in these older, highly critical, accounts.[14] The conclusions of such recent research call for a renewal of inquiry into the labor and social history of Bucharest, and of East-Central European cities like it, from different starting points than those of the Cold War.

In this book, I set up such new starting points in the fields of women's labor, activism and welfare history. I seek to answer questions raised by such "archives of social reform" as Marioara I.'s case file, to understand how women's social reproduction work has historically impacted social transformation in a poorly funded state-building context. How did gender shape the work of managing in times of economic hardship? What did urban welfare policies mean, in practice, in Bucharest, especially for women? What kind of work did women do? How were public discussions about such work gendered? How was gendered welfare provision linked to historical transformations in women's status, including feminists' claims for political rights at the time? Most importantly, how does women's unpaid and badly paid work, and broadly shared assumptions about such work, shape societal responses to need and want? In pursuing such questions in local context, through this book I aim to contribute to gendering and more strongly connecting key themes in the global history of labor and welfare. I interpret and document the interwar period in East-Central European Romania as a peak moment for local urban welfare initiatives built alongside or through low funding for public social services, with most well-being–related needs actually met through several kinds of "austerity welfare work" performed by women.

I conceive of welfare policymaking and social research as well as of domestic service and homemaking as forms of *austerity welfare work*. I argue that in the context of interwar Bucharest and the austerity economics that underfunded or cut public spending for welfare programs, forms of unpaid or badly paid social reproduction work became essential to keep things running, for governance by state and private actors. Throughout the book, I link the work of municipal councilwomen, volunteers of welfare organizations, social workers trained to do research, servants and household workers who combined paid work with unpaid care work, into a history of how a modicum of well-being was ensured; in other words a history of welfare provision, in a city with few shareable resources.

14 Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 205–274; Cornel Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare. Economia politică a capitalismului românesc [Dependency and development. The Political economy of Romanian capitalism]* (Bucharest: Tact, 2014), 33–35.

Welfare work: Unpaid and underpaid work to maintain others

By "welfare work" I mean the social reproduction work of "maintaining people on a daily basis and intergenerationally", shaped not only by markets but also by state policies.[15] As Jane Lewis points out, welfare provision is a "gendered mixed economy".[16] Historically, women have performed the bulk of the activities associated with "maintaining people", especially in the form of housework and care work for family members and within households. Caring for children, elderly relatives and partners, doing housework, managing family resources are all aspects of welfare work. At the same time, welfare work (also termed "welfare provision") can mean the work of making support available through welfare programs or activities organized the state or by voluntary organizations. Thus, occasional aid in cash or in food, helping someone else with securing a pension or free healthcare, constructing policy that affects people who benefit from welfare, as well as the labor of surviving in general, are all aspects of welfare work. Importantly, "welfare work" can be commodified, as Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas point out in speaking of "intimacy work".[17] In their definition, "intimacy work" is employment that fosters other people's well-being, in part by creating a sense of closeness to the person at the receiving end of such labor. Domestic work has been, historically, a key site of paid welfare work and a type of precarious intimacy labor.

In this monograph, "welfare work" encompasses most forms of welfare activism, most forms of unpaid work and the kinds of paid labor that are primarily meant to foster others' well-being. The welfare activism included in welfare work is defined similarly broadly, as advocacy and policymaking on social issues, as social knowledge production (reporting, collecting data) and as social work (casework). In the period of focus here, such activism was mainly done by educated or well-connected women who could not easily pursue careers in domains other than those associated with the historical practice of women's charity work. Welfare work includes unpaid care work for family members, as well as the badly paid care work of

15 Evelyn Glenn Nakano, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor," *Signs* 18, no. 1 (October 1992): 1–43 qtd. in Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "Introduction," in *Intimate Labors: Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care*, eds. Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 7.

16 Jane Lewis, "Gender and Welfare in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Gender, Health and Welfare*, eds. Anne Digby and John Stewart (London: Taylor & Francis, 1998), 208–211.

17 Boris and Salazar Parreñas, "Introduction."

servants in the homes of others. "Austerity welfare work" is the most suitable term I found to make visible shared preoccupations and interactions among women from interwar Bucharest who were otherwise separated by class, ideology, ethnicity, and political allegiances.

The practices and relationships of welfare work are not spared the impact of social hierarchies and alienating experiences. Welfare work can mean overwork and exploitation for those focusing their energy on maintaining others. It is easily made invisible: welfare work for the sake of family members can be seen as a mere act of love and not as tiring labor.[18] The strain of such labor is greater if not recognized and alleviated by communities or institutions. In interwar Bucharest, social work could bring support for individuals and families struggling with poverty, but it could also be exclusionary, favoring only the "virtuous poor". Quite possibly, Marioara I., Romanian-speaking, Orthodox, (most likely) non-Roma, a mother who could no longer work due to a serious illness, received close attention (but also saw her case file published in a journal as an example) because she fit SSAS constructions of the "virtuous poor". Social work could even be repressive through surveillance and punishment. For women welfare activists, welfare activism linked to public institutions could bring recognition and the power to shape policy long term. But it could also mean the power to legitimize low spending and eventually, during the Second World War, the power to enforce racist policies.

The concept of "welfare work" allows for an account of welfare not merely as a set of institutions, rules and practices facilitating redistribution, but as an assemblage of collectively constructed ways of dealing with need and vulnerability. This broad definition is especially important for understanding settings where state intervention to alleviate a crisis is absent or minimal. The concept brings to the forefront the significance of gender and gendered divisions of work for social reproduction and can encompass at once paid and unpaid work. It can make visible love and self-sacrifice, as well as surveillance, exclusion and repression of those who may not fit specific constructs of need and vulnerability. It can keep within the same narrative: the process of policymaking through institutions, activism, research, and care work in one's own home or in the homes of others for pay.

18 Emma Dowling, "Love's Labour's Cost: The Political Economy of Intimacy," Verso Books, February 13, 2016, http://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2499-love-s-labour-s-cost-the-political-economy-of-intimacy.

Austerity and overexploitation: On the political economy of interwar Romania

Throughout the 1918 to 1937 period analyzed in depth here, the Kingdom of Romania was an export-dependent agrarian economy, disadvantageously integrated in the world economy—an industrially "backward" country when teleologically compared to the Western European "core" of industrially developed countries.[19] It had more than doubled in size and population after major territorial gains at the Paris Peace Conference. Yet like many countries in East-Central Europe, including neighboring Hungary and Bulgaria (political rivals and export-market competitors),[20] in the 1920s, Romania borrowed heavily for reconstruction and to combat famine.[21] A desired industrialization process in this overwhelmingly agrarian country was paid for with revenues obtained from wheat and oil exports, and from unequitable taxation policies that burdened peasant households.[22]

After the First World War, several (but by no means all) influential economists in Romania, like those in other countries in the region, argued that industrialization needed to be prioritized as a development strategy in predominantly agrarian East-Central Europe.[23] By the 1920s, global prices for manufactured goods tended to increase while the prices of agricultural commodities declined. For agrarian countries, these "price scissors" created balance-of-payments problems and placed the region's small-plot-owning peasantry in the position of not being able to afford basic manufactured goods, not to mention the game-changing machinery transforming agriculture in the Americas.[24] With more or less foresight and method, most Romanian governments of the interwar period thus promoted industrialization. Implicitly, urbanization was welcomed. Cities could absorb what was portrayed as a surplus of labor force in rural areas.[25] A greater

19 Derek H. Aldcroft, *Europe's Third World: The European Periphery in the Interwar Years* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 3.

20 Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars* (Seattle, WA and London: University of Washington Press, 1974), 10–11.

21 On post-First World War American famine-relief lending conditioned by oil field concessions and Romanian leading politicians' resistance to the proposition, coming from Hoover, see Doina Anca Crețu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania: In Quest of an Ideal* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2024), 46–49.

22 Aldcroft, *Europe's Third World*, 66, 90.

23 Joseph R. Love, *Crafting the Third World: Theorizing Underdevelopment in Rumania and Brazil* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 61, 79.

24 Love, 79, 116.

25 Love, 65–66.

proportion of "ethnic Romanians" in "Greater Romania"'s multiethnic cities was seen as desirable by political thinkers of various ideological stripes.[26]

Yet accelerated urbanization and industrialization did not, in fact, solve the problems of overwhelmingly rural and agrarian Romania at the time. No doubt, cities in Romania, especially Bucharest, attracted workers running from rural poverty. Yet as I show at various points in this book, migration to cities and proletarianization there did little to improve the situation in the countryside. In fact, the countryside was the fallback solution when there was unemployment in the industry or the service sector in cities.

In an article on primitive accumulation in the history of Romania in a long-term perspective, Alina Sandra Cucu concludes that the extraction of resources and flexible labor from "the rural Other" subsidized the creation of value that enabled capital accumulation in the nineteenth century and the interwar period, as well as postwar socialist industrialization.[27] In a related but different vein, shaped by the work of women's labor historians and social reproduction feminists,[28] in this book I trace mechanisms of labor extraction to urban settings where women and men who were economically displaced from the countryside migrated and where they encountered a social policy setup that had little to offer them. I place the kinds of precarious, unpaid and badly paid work historically performed by women at the core of my account.

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26 On pro-urban stances among Romanian nationalists, see Ștefan C. Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to 'Romanianization', 1940–1944* (London: Springer, 2015), 8–9. On ethno-nationalism in interwar Romania, see Vladimir Solonari, *Purificarea naţiunii: Dislocări forţate de populaţie şi epurări etnice în România lui Ion Antonescu, 1940–1944 [Purifying the Nation: Population Exchange and Ethnic Cleansing in Ion Antonescu's Romania, 1940–1944]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2015), 35; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle*, 1918–1930 (Cornell University Press, 2000).

27 Alina Sandra Cucu, "Socialist Accumulation and Its 'Primitives' in Romania," *International Review of Social History* 67, no. 2 (2022): 274.

28 Socialist and feminist thinkers in a Marxist vein have deepened the discussion on overexploitation and primitive accumulation, by underscoring how the subjugation of most women's work and capacity to bear children were, historically, integral to the operation of these primitive accumulation processes. Key works for this approach are Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Zed Books, 1998), and Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004). Heterodox feminist political economy makes similar points concerning the significant contribution of women's unpaid work for well-being. See for example, Alessandra Mezzadri, Susan Newman and Sara Stevano, "Feminist Global Political Economies of Work and Social Reproduction," *Review of International Political Economy* 29, no. 6 (2022): 1783–1803. These arguments are now slowly being taken up, in specific variants, into mainstream economics, most visibly in the recognition given in 2023 through the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel to the work of economist Claudia Goldin.

Feminist scholars have pointed out that in times of need and crisis women work more, especially to sustain families.[29] In Romania, as in many other agrarian countries, peasants tended to overexploit the unpaid work of family members. In 1918 peasant men were enfranchised and in 1921, through a much-awaited agrarian reform, some 1.4 million peasants became owners of dwarf holdings, that is of plots under five hectares (so-called "minifundia").[30] In the 1920s, both German social democrat Karl Kautsky (discussing small farmers' self-exploitation, including through underconsumption), and especially Soviet unorthodox-communist Alexander V. Chayanov (discussing farmers' overexploitation of their own families' work),[31] suggested that this tendency towards overwork among small-holding farmers could be ascribed to patriarchal peasant men, overwhelmingly the heads of rural households, not seeing the labor of family members as an implicit cost in their farming activity.[32] After the First World War, legal setups which allowed for the continuation of coerced labor and the growing problem of household debt impoverished peasant households. However, in a country of small landowners such as Romania, the difficulties of a life spent farming were compounded by (male) heads of households' tendency to overexploit the labor of family members or of non-relatives integrated into households. In other words, patriarchal authority in peasant households, strengthened to a certain extent by male-centered land redistribution and enfranchisement, likely contributed to the self-destructive but seemingly endless resilience, and thus continued exploitability, of peasant communities in Romania noted by Cucu.[33] Even so, by the mid-1930s, many peasants in Romania were seeking non-farm employment in growing numbers, "because their minifundia were incapable of sustaining their families anywhere near the level of income of domestic servants in Bucharest".[34] As we will see, domestic work was overwhelmingly women's work and could be as overexploitative as work in the fields.

29 Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Mariarosa Dalla Costa, *Family, Welfare, and the State* (New York: Common Notions, 2015); Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012).

30 Keith Hitchins, *Romania, 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 341–342, 351. Up to 3 million more men were entitled to land but had not been distributed any by the mid-1930s.

31 Love, *Crafting the Third World*, 63.

32 On Chayanov's echoes in current research on (gendered) global food regimes, see Diana Mincyte, "Rethinking Food Regime as Gender Regime: Agrarian Change and the Politics of Social Reproduction," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 51, no. 1 (2024): 23–24, especially.

33 Cucu, "Socialist Accumulation and Its 'Primitives,'" 261.

34 Love, *Crafting the Third World*, 65.

Across the twentieth century, welfare activists named and sought to provide solutions for the over-burdening of women, especially of those women who did waged work and continued to have to do housework and care work at the same time. Starting in the interwar period but especially after the Second World War, women's activism in the fields of welfare and labor shaped social policy arrangements towards an alleviation of the burden of social reproduction. Cash aid for mothers and publicly provided social services such as childcare were among the key policy aims of activists across Europe.[35] In the process, the social policies women activists helped shape became tied up in the double, seemingly paradoxical, process of reproducing exploitative economic arrangements while ensuring a modicum of well-being characteristic of postwar welfare states.[36] However, the family (more specifically, women as family workers) remained an important pillar of social reproduction.[37] This is because, as Silvia Federici points out, in times of economic crisis and welfare spending retrenchment, the weight of social reproduction work reverts to families, that is, historically, overwhelmingly, to women's care and provisioning work.[38] Women's social reproduction work was integral to the political economy of modern states not only in connection to the high-spending and then reduced postwar welfare states in Western Europe (the implicit case studies of most theoretical work on the topic) but also, and perhaps especially, in connection to the less wealthy contexts of weakly-industrialized states (as in most East-Central Europe) during the first major wave of policymaking related to state-supported welfare provision, occurring before the Second World War.

The period between the two World Wars has often been linked to the expansion of the state and state-backed interventionism. For Charles Maier, the interwar period was defined, across Europe, by the maintenance of social order, especially against a communist threat, through centralized and bureaucratized bargaining between competing interest groups, in a new configuration he called a "corporatist political economy".[39] For Stephen Kotkin, the "interwar conjuncture" (characterizing not only capitalist states but also the Soviet Union) merged the rise of mass politics, new labor management techniques, faster communication,

35 See contributions in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane, *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s–1950s* (New York: Routledge, 1991), and Selin Çağatay et al., eds., *Through the Prism of Gender and Work: Women's Labour Struggles in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond, 19th to 20th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

36 Ian Gough, *The Political Economy of the Welfare State* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 11, 45.

37 Gøsta Esping Andersen, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 21–26.

38 Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*, 86–87.

39 Charles S. Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade after World War I*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 9–10.

continued tensions between imperial and national politics with, significantly, the "turn toward social welfare as worldview and mode of governing".[40]

More recent research in economic history acts as a partial corrective to the notion that the interwar period was one of significant growth in state power. The interwar may have been a period of state expansion over many domains, but it was just as much one of (self)restraint, a golden age of "austerity" as economic doctrine.[41] Marc Blyth argues that classical liberal thinkers' austere sensibility (wary of debt, fond of frugality) translated by the 1920s into policymakers' widely-shared belief that "purging the system [through bankruptcies] and cutting spending" would bring recovery from crisis.[42] By contrast, high public spending solutions to recover from the global economic crisis were tried in Europe from the mid-1930s onwards, mostly reluctantly. For much of the period between the two World Wars, austerity was the dominant solution in case of economic troubles, in part because of commitment to safeguarding an international monetary system reliant on the gold standard.[43]

In this book, I grant due importance to reluctance and inability to spend on welfare for most of the period before the Second World War. Romania's politicians were largely faithful architects of the austerity blueprint, with most of them sharing the sensibility of nineteenth-century liberal thinkers when it came to social issues. The Romanian National Liberal Party (PNL) that dominated the interwar period was famously in favor of protectionism, not *laissez-faire*.[44] Yet, as noted by Victoria Brown, it was classically liberal in its austere approach to need and want.[45] This Liberal ideological tendency towards austerity in social matters in Romania was compounded by the policy choices of the period's main opposition party, the National Peasantist Party (PNȚ). While in government, just as the Great Depression began, the PNȚ embraced an "open door" free trade policy. In exchange for loans, the Peasantist-dominated government was forced by its main creditor, the Banque de France—champion of the austerity doctrine at the time in

40 Stephen Kotkin, "Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjuncture," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2, no. 1 (2008): 113.

41 Mark Blyth, *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 121.

42 Blyth, 121, 104–121.

43 Blyth, 126, 180.

44 Victoria Brown, "The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State: The Case of Romanian Liberalism," in *Romania Between East and West. Historical Essays in Memory of Constantin Giurescu*, ed. Stephen Fischer-Galati, Radu R. Florescu, and George B. Ursul (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 281, 286.

45 Brown, "The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory."

Europe[46]—to commit to a program of spending cuts.[47] Arguably, the economic nationalism with which Romanian governments experimented after 1932 translated into a major expansion of social policy only after 1938, once King Carol II resorted to a personal dictatorship linked to a corporatist "royal parliament" he could convoke as wanted.[48]

Significantly, these ideological and geopolitical developments unfolded in a country in which old "poverty politics" practices, that categorized those in need especially in moral terms, were entrenched in welfare provision, especially in public assistance (also referred to here as "social assistance"). In addition, throughout the period discussed here, economic upheaval made the paid and unpaid work of women from most social categories more strenuous, with the situation becoming acute in the 1930s. At the start of the Great Depression, in cities, more women than before the First World War worked in factories, small workshops or shops.[49] These growing numbers of women working "outside the home" joined a much larger number of women working "from home", generating income from various kinds of "casual work", or "in homes", working in other people's homes as servants. Most working women earned less than men but still had heavy familial responsibilities, especially once unemployment increased in the late 1920s, when systematic relief for unemployed men did not materialize and men contributed less to the upkeep of families.[50] In this monograph, I reconstruct and analyze forms of women's work focused on the maintenance of others in urban context, at the point of encounter with an economic and political situation where need was great and aid from the state minimal and sporadic, due to a politics of low social service spending and limited administrative capacity.

46 Blyth, *Austerity*, 202.

47 Alexandra Ghiț, "Romania: Serving Fewer by Design: Austerity Welfare Politics during the Great Depression," in *The Great Depression in Eastern Europe*, ed. Klaus Richter, Anca Mândru, and Jasmin Nithammer (Budapest and Vienna: CEU Press, 2025).

48 On the features of economic nationalism after 1932, see Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 256–257; on the "development dictatorship" attempted by King Carol II, see the brief discussion in Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 18, 39.

49 Ana Gluvacov, *Afirmarea femeii în viața societății: dimensiuni și semnificații în România [Woman's affirmation in the life of the society: Dimensions and meanings in Romania]* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975), 86.

50 Calypso Botez, "Réponse au questionnaire du BIT sur les conditions de travail des femmes (1937)," in *Din istoria feminismului românesc 1929–1948*, ed. Ștefania Mihăilescu, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Polirom, 2006), 297–302.

Social reform and "visions of welfare" in interwar Bucharest

In the chapters that follow I provide a historical account of women's contributions to welfare in Bucharest between the two World Wars. I focus on, but occasionally go beyond, the period between 1920 and 1937, during which Romania's "original [interwar] democracy",[51] with its many irregularities and restrictions on political freedoms, was strongly shaped by competing visions on social issues and welfare ("vision of welfare", in Linda Gordon's term)[52] adjusted to a liberal bourgeois setting or critical of such a system. I do not focus on the welfare visions of the royal and military dictatorships that dominated the 1938 to 1944 period, shaped as they were by antisemitic laws, the war economy, the specific civilian and military needs created by mobilization for combat, and the exceptional measures taken in the name of wartime welfare provision. I mention the impact of European fascism on the Romanian context before 1938, without focusing on members of extreme right-wing movements as welfare providers. While active in urban and rural settings from the mid-1930s, the heyday of the extreme right-wing influence was from late 1937 to January 1941.[53]

This spotlight on 1920 to 1937 enables an analysis of the interwar period as marked by key developments that preceded the rise of right-wing politics, such as feminist women's greater involvement in local politics, the intense internationalism of the 1920s and the effects of a prolonged Great Depression on women's paid work in households and in industrial establishments. Focusing on the period before the zenith of authoritarian rule in the Kingdom of Romania does not push aside the question of some experts' and activists' eventual involvement in dispossession and genocide during the Second World War. Rather, emphasizing the array of political visions and practices available before the triumph of fascism in Europe in the late 1930s reveals the actual strength of earlier ideological allegiances and the choices available to most historical actors when faced with political crossroads. It can contribute to a historiography of Romania's twentieth century in which previously submerged, complicated continuities across political regimes and systems become visible.

A women's and gender history of interwar Romania is not a history of swift progress or inclusion, especially when classed experiences are considered. It

51 Simion Cutișteanu and Gheorghe I. Ioniță, *Electoratul din Romania în anii interbelici [The Electorate in Romania during the interwar years]* (Cluj Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1981), 75.

52 Linda Gordon, "Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women's Welfare Activism, 1890–1945," *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 2 (1991): 559–590.

53 Roland Clark, *Sfântă tinerețe legionară—Activismul fascist în România interbelică [Holy legionary youth—Fascist activism in interwar Romania]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2015), 238.

should not be an uncritical celebration of feminist foremothers. In the 1920s, middle-class women in the Kingdom of Romania had more power and visibility than in previous decades but continued to suffer from professional marginalization and political discrimination.[54] Because they did not have the electoral rights they wanted in national level politics, some of these well-connected women intensified the municipal level welfare activism in which many had been involved since the 1910s. The preferred (and most-easily constructible) vehicles for such greater involvement were voluntary associations dealing with urban social assistance, particularly in Bucharest. Romania's capital city was growing and industrializing in bad conditions, and established welfare activists could enhance their existing cooperation with public institutions for handling social problems, especially if such problems affected women and girls. Other women from the same network, usually a generation younger than the welfare activists who were involved in philanthropy before the First World War, sought to turn such activism into formally credentialed professions, especially that of social worker.

The urban "social question" in the first decade after the First World War was the domain of moderates and pragmatists. Communist women and men were feared and prosecuted as Communist International (Comintern) agitators and social democrats had relatively little say in local and national politics.[55] Therefore, as I shall show, in the 1920s, the aspirations of women involved in social reform in Romania were primarily shaped by the left-liberal "reform" current of thought; transnational feminist organizing and politics; the American Charity Organization Society's social assistance practices; and the politics of expertise fostered by the International Labor Organization and the League of Nations.

Women social reformers and researchers forged a specific forum for research and discussion related to women's welfare: the Section for Feminine Studies [*Secția de Studii Feminine*, SSF] of the Romanian Social Institute [*Institutul Social Român*, ISR]; the SSF was led by feminist social reformer Calypso Botez.[56] I reconstruct in this book how members of the Section for Feminine Studies re-

54 Paraschiva Cîncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii în România, 1848–1948 [The Movement for woman's emancipation in Romania, 1848–1948]* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1976); Alin Ciupală, *Bătălia lor—Femeile din România în Primul Război Mondial [Their Battle—Women in Romania in the First World War]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2017); Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu, *Birth of Democratic Citizenship: Women and Power in Modern Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), 18–40.

55 Brigitte Studer, *Travellers of the World Revolution: A Global History of the Communist International*, Kindle edition (London and New York: Verso, 2023); Elisabeta Ioniță, "Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare din România UFMR [The Union of Women Workers of Romania]," *Revista de istorie* 33 (October 1980): 1905–1926.

56 See short biography in Appendix 3.

searched and discussed working women's lives in the city. The ISR was founded by sociologist Dimitrie Gusti shortly after the end of the First World War. As a rich historiography has shown, Gusti and the so-called "Gusti school" of social research in interwar Romania focused on researching (and reforming) peasants and rural environments.[57] This preoccupation for rural issues left urban social assistance policy and reform in the hands of other social reform actors, including the women involved in religiously inflected philanthropy before the First World War. Women researchers were part of Gusti's "monographic campaigns" in rural areas and promoted conservative gender roles in those settings.[58] However, I suggest that many of them were more strongly linked to the SSF, a framework for meetings, research, conferences and lectures through which women interested in social reform sought to understand how women's lives were transforming.

Despite the impression created by the scholarly visibility of pioneering English-language scholarship on eugenics in interwar Romania,[59] "negative eugenics"—the (explicitly) exclusionary or marginalizing variant of a very broad and fundamentally problematic current—was not the dominant framework or approach in public policy for most of the period discussed here. Eugenics did, however, become an influential part of the rhetoric of social reform by the late

57 Among many titles I could have included, emerging especially from the research of Zoltán Rostás and his collaborators, see Zoltán Rostás, "The Bucharest School of Sociology," *East Central Europe* 27, no. 2 (2000): 1–19; Zoltán Rostás, *O istorie orală a Școlii Sociologice de la București [An Oral history of the Bucharest Sociological School]* (Bucharest: Printech, 2001); Zoltán Rostás, *Sala luminoasă. Primii monografiști ai şcolii gustiene [The bright hall. The First monographists of the Gustian school]* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2003); Antonio Momoc, *Capcanele politice ale sociologiei interbelice: Școala gustiană între carlism și legionarism [The political traps of interwar sociology: the Gustian school between carlism and legionarism]* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2012); Emilia Plosceanu, "Les débuts cosmopolites de la sociologie : réseaux, textes, discours, terrains en Roumanie," in *Circulations savantes entre l'Europe et le monde : XVIIe-XXe siècle*, ed. Thomas Preveraud, Enquêtes et documents (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2018), 81–120. See also the early Joseph S Roucek, "Sociology in Roumania," *American Sociological Review* 3, no. 1 (1938): 54–62.

58 Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu, "Suave făpturi, cerbere, blânde mume, diletante agreabile, vivandiere . . . Femeile în publicațiile periodice ale Serviciului Social, România 1935–1939 [Suave beings, amazons, tender mothers, agreeable dabblers, bonnes vivantes . . . Women in Rural Interventionism: Romania, 1935–1939]," *Revista Transilvania*, no. 1–2 (2022): 65–79; Raluca Mușat, "Sociologists and the Transformation of the Peasantry in Romania, 1925–1940" (PhD Thesis, London, University College London, 2011), 258–260.

59 Especially Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002); Marius Turda and Paul Weindling, eds., *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006).

1930s.[60] Doubtlessly, from the late nineteenth century, in Romania as in many other parts of the world, eugenics as a broad, protean vision of promoting population health and vigor was an influential view on welfare and public health.[61] Both "positive" (linked especially to maternal and infant health) and "negative eugenics" (including support for sterilization of those considered disgenic, and eventually euthanasia) ideas were part of an emerging global science policy, disseminated by, among others, the Rockefeller Foundation and its globally influential philanthropy after the First World War.[62] Yet, as Doina Anca Crețu has argued, the Rockefeller Foundation supported eugenicists in Romania not primarily because they were eugenicists but because Foundation staff perceived the doctors and demographers interested in eugenics as a group of modernizing public health professionals.[63] These physicians, demographers and to a smaller extent, nurses and social workers were seen as broadly aligned with the Foundation's preventative healthcare (and anticommunist) agenda in East-Central Europe.[64]

Even as social reform and policymaking were internationalizing after the First World War through the work of wealthy foundations and the operation of international organizations, local dynamics and local influence weighed heavily. Bucharest had a distinctive field of local welfare activism and social reform, in which women social reformers were prominent. In this context, transnational social reform initiatives could be transformed according to these influential women's locally devised priorities. Crețu reconstructs how in 1919, Queen Marie of Romania insisted that an organization she had founded, the "Principele Mircea" Society, should be the main beneficiary of funds for a program for food and healthcare that the American Relief Administration–European Children's Fund (ARA–ECF) had devised. Initially, children were the only intended beneficiaries of the ARA–ECF program. In the process of "nationalizing" this scheme at the Queen's (and her local collaborators') insistence, mothers became eligible too.[65]

60 Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization*; Marius Turda, "The Nation as Object: Race, Blood, and Biopolitics in Interwar Romania," *Slavic Review* 66, no. 3 (October 1, 2007): 413.

61 Marius Turda, "Romania: Overview," in *The History of East-Central European Eugenics, 1900–1945: Sources and Commentaries*, ed. Marius Turda (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 274.

62 On Rockefeller Foundation support for institutes specifically researching eugenics in Germany, from the mid-1920s, see Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20–21.

63 Crețu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania*, 155.

64 On the goals of the Rockefeller Foundation in East-Central Europe, see Paul Weindling, "Public Health and Political Stabilisation: The Rockefeller Foundation in Central and Eastern Europe between the Two World Wars," *Minerva* 31, no. 3 (1993): 253–267.

65 Crețu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania*, 69.

In my interpretation, the expansion of eligibility to mothers Creţu mentions in relation to this specific program was not circumstantial but was instead owed to a deeply embedded feature and priority of women's welfare activism in Bucharest, welfare provision for poor, deserving, mothers.

It is telling of a social reform eclecticism in which eugenics was but one locally-available discourse that social worker and researcher Veturia Manuilă, although married to prominent statistician Sabin Manuilă, who from 1935 would lead one of the three eugenicist associations in Romania,[66] and while working closely with feminists elected to the municipal council, wrote in 1931 that both eugenics and feminism were "extreme movements" that prevented a full understanding of the family in its "biology and pathology", the former current placing too much emphasis on individualization, the latter seeing the family only "as a means for the perpetuation of the human race, and thus neglecting the individualization process, as individualization is disadvantageous for eugenics".[67]

From the mid-1930s, in an international context rapidly shifting to the right, the language of eugenics became more strident.[68] By the early 1940s, eugenicists in Romania began referring frequently to disgenic heredity and racial hierarchies. In 1941, the above-mentioned Sabin Manuilă, head of the Central Statistical Institute,[69] wrote for publication in such terms,[70] while devising a plan for ethnic cleansing at the behest of Marshall Ion Antonescu, the leader of Nazi-allied Romania.[71] That plan would be partially implemented, through deportations to Romanian-occupied Transdniestria and killings of Jews and Roma from Romania, from 1941 to 1944. Veturia Manuilă herself would be closely involved with the Patronage Council of Social Works [*Consiliul de Patronaj al Operelor Sociale*, CPOS], the main welfare body in the Antonescu military dictatorship, as this book's epilogue outlines.

Before the late 1930s, both welfare relief and violence could be as often enacted in the name of productivity, or of combatting crime, as in the name of the health and welfare of Romanians. This does not mean eugenics-inflected racism was not present, even prominent before that point. For instance, in 1934, while expressing doubts that a "pure race" could exist, Sabin Manuilă argued that the Roma were of non-European origin, making them predisposed to wanting the

66 Turda, "Romania: Overview," 321.

67 Veturia Manuilă, "Desorganizarea familiei [The Disorganization of the family]," *Asistența Socială* 3, no. 1 (1931): 48.

68 Solonari, *Purificarea naţiunii*, 85, 98–99.

69 Solonari, *Purificarea naţiunii*, 86.

70 Turda, "Romania: Overview," 292.

71 Solonari, *Purificarea naţiunii*, 27.

goods of others, that is to theft.[72] Such prejudices very likely permeated social assistance practices and require detailed future research and tailored reading strategies for sources that (seemingly) do not discuss the Roma but may in fact have been produced through punitive state practices which disproportionately affected them.

Without welfare: Poverty politics before the Second World War

In Romania, welfare work performed primarily by women essentially subsidized an interwar welfare state for which welfare laws existed but for which the public funding was missing. In this, Romania was a typical East-Central European country for much of the interwar period. In the 1920s, a feeling of threat from the Russian revolution, labor militancy, and the promotion of social policy convergence through the International Labor Organization (ILO) led to the creation of a broad range of social policies in the region. In 1933, Romania unified (or, rather, centralized) the distinct social insurance frameworks which had applied on the one hand, in the territory of the pre-1918 Kingdom of Romania and on the other hand, in each of the regions that were acquired through the Versailles Treaties. The categories of risk covered by mandatory insurance under these frameworks were disease, death, invalidity due to illness or accident, maternity, and old age.[73]

Adaptation to international circumstances was often merely discursive, with few actual funds available. Even though, in the 1930s, certain East-Central European states created social security systems, funded from wage workers' contribu-

72 Solonari, *Purificarea naţiunii*, 97. This argument was partly a translation in the language of science of long-standing local prejudice and partly, possibly, the local uptake of an emerging association between Blackness and criminality produced via social science discourses in the USA. On the "the mismeasure of crime," see *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2011), 1–14.
73 Johannes Jäger, Gerhard Melinz, and Susan Zimmermann, *Sozialpolitik in der Peripherie: Entwicklungsmuster und Wandel in Lateinamerika, Afrika, Asien und Osteuropa* (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2001), 17–18; Sandrine Kott, "Constructing a European Social Model: The Fight for Social Insurance in the Interwar Period," in *ILO Histories. Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century*, eds. Jasmin Van Daele, Magaly Rodriguez Garcia, and Geert van Goethem (Bern and Berlin: Peter Lang, 2011), 173–195. On the evolution of the insurance and pension system in Romania, an accurate overview (up to 1934) in I. Argeșeanu, "Date cu privire la sarcinile financiare ale asigurării de pensii, potrivit legii de unificare [Data concerning the financial burden of pension insurance, according to the unification law]," *Buletinul muncii și asigurărilor sociale* 15, no. 1–4 (April 1935): 161–210.

tions, the scope of benefits was limited. Often, they covered well-positioned or skilled employees from industries considered strategic.[74] During the Great Depression, most East-Central European countries eventually provided forms of insurance against unemployment and created New Deal-style public works to combat it, covering primarily steadily employed men. Yet as I have shown elsewhere, this kind of systematic help for the unemployed never materialized in interwar Romania. In fact, Romania was outstanding in its opposition to ILO proposals for combatting unemployment through both social insurance and relief programs.[75]

Between 1933 and 1934, in a country of 15,000,000 only 600,000 people were insured against risks the state recognized[76]— one in five of the three million inhabitants who lived in the cities of this overwhelmingly rural country in which agricultural workers were not insured. Most urban women were not covered by the existing contributory schemes, because they did precarious and informal jobs and because the insurance system did not cover family members of insured men until the late 1930s.[77] Marioara I., in other words, was quite unusual in having had some insurance, already before 1933.

Rather than through a publicly funded institutional infrastructure for insurance and social assistance, welfare was thus provided through an ill-funded mix of statutory (that is, enshrined in law) and non-statutory (that is, only minimally formalized) programs. Such programs inherited the eclecticism of the "poverty policy" originating in eighteenth-century England in reaction to the urban poverty created by industrialization and spreading globally. "Poverty policy" included policies of expulsion and incarceration of the neediest, obliging extended families to take care of poorest members, or the granting aid only to those who could prove destitution and a kind of respectability deserving of praise.[78] Such harsh approaches to need were condoned by classical liberal thinkers as conducive to virtuous austerity, with economist David Ricardo arguing in 1817 that the government should not provide relief to struggling workers, even if laborers' condition was "most wretched".[79]

74 Jäger, Melinz, and Zimmermann, *Sozialpolitik in der Peripherie*, 17–18.

75 Ghiț, "Romania: Serving Fewer by Design", 213.

76 MMSOS, *Dare de seama asupra activității Casei Centrale a Asigurărilor Sociale pe anii 1912–1934 [Report on the activity of the Central House of Social Insurance for 1912–1934]* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1935), 59.

77 Ghiț, "Romania: Serving Fewer by Design", 227–229.

78 James Midgley, "Poor Law Principles and Social Assistance in the Third World: A Study of the Perpetuation of Colonial Welfare," *International Social Work* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 1984): 21.

79 Quoted in Blyth, *Austerity*, 116.

By 1942, the International Labor Office was defining social assistance as "a service or scheme which provides benefits to persons of small means, *granted as of rights*, in amounts sufficient to meet minimum standards of need and *financed from taxation*".[80] However, in the half century before the definition was produced, in Romania, social assistance was not solely "financed from taxation" but from a strong mix of money from tax and from donations. Or, frequently, from public money subsidizing private organizations. Such forms of social assistance (in cash, in kind, free access to health services) were not "granted as of rights" but based on morality and need criteria assessed on a case-by-case basis.

As I shall show throughout this monograph, assistance programs for women, children, and the disabled were especially eclectic. Philanthropic, charitable, mutual assistance or social reform associations were the kinds of organizations involved in both religious and secular assistance, be it in institutions or through direct aid, usually in the home of the assisted. In Bucharest, because insurance-related programs (such as public healthcare) had limited coverage, social assistance programs (free medical care but also small aids in cash and in kind, mostly firewood) were a large part of a very limited public welfare provision set-up. At the center of such social assistance programs were women welfare activists, seeking to secure a space of social involvement for themselves after the First World War and the dashed hopes for women's suffrage in the years that followed.[81]

Transnational feminist welfare history as gendered labor history

The history of welfare provision is a history of gendered work. In seeking to substantiate this claim, this book aims to contribute to a tighter integration of welfare history, gender and women's history and labor history as fields shaped by the transnational turn and aiming towards global-scale awareness and interpretations.

In the first place, this volume contributes to expanding the notion of the "mixed economy of welfare". Authors of several recent histories of the "mixed economy of welfare" across Europe emphasize that the interwar period was one of social policy experimentation, shaped by frequently transnational entangle-

80 International Labor Organization, *Approaches to Social Security: An International Survey* (Montreal: International Labor Office, 1942), 84, https://ilo.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/41ILO_INST/1jaulmn/alma993201113402676, emphasis mine.

81 Ghizela Cosma, *Femeile și politica în România: Evoluția dreptului de vot în perioada interbelică [Women and politics in Romania: The Evolution of the franchise in the interwar]* (Cluj Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2002).

ments between public actors and voluntary associations.[82] They point out that the interwar period displays significant continuities with nineteenth century approaches and local practices in public welfare, including the emphasis on reform through work.[83] Like these authors, I find that experiments co-existed with very old practices, unearth transnational connections between social reformers and underline the preoccupation for productivity. However, differently from recent works, I portray this "mixed economy" as including the historically gendered unpaid and paid work occurring in familial settings as well as knowledge production and activism concerning such work. This conceptual shift makes visible women's care work, among others as mothers and as servants, in a "mixed economy of welfare" so far described with little mention of family-related work, rather only as involving public institutions and private associations and groups. I suggest in this book that many of those who were socially marginalized and in need of assistance through private-public "welfare mixes" were themselves ensuring the well-being of others in their communities and especially in the households in which they worked, often in bad conditions. Recent work that centers on the experiences and "experiential expertise" of socially marginalized actors within welfare provision supports this perspective.[84]

In revealing the "austerity welfare work" at the core of the "mixed economy of welfare", this volume builds on a valuable historiography of welfare activism which has developed in the field of gender and women's history in the past forty years. This body of work has documented the link between women's struggles for political and civil rights and the emergence of social research, social policy visions and welfare practices that dealt with women's work (and overwork), especially in the aftermath of the First World War.[85] Such research has revised as-

82 Fabio Giomi, Célia Keren, and Morgane Labbé, eds., *Public and Private Welfare in Modern Europe: Productive Entanglements* (London: Routledge, 2022).

83 Michele Mioni and Stefano Petrungaro, "Assistance and Vulnerability in Interwar Europe: An Overview," in *Caring for the Socially Marginalised in Interwar Europe, 1919–1939*, eds. Michele Mioni and Stefano Petrungaro (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024), 1–17.

84 Caitríona Beaumont, Eve Colpus, and Ruth Davidson, "Introduction," in *Everyday Welfare in Modern British History: Experience, Expertise and Activism*, eds. Caitríona Beaumont, Eve Colpus, and Ruth Davidson (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 13.

85 I highlight here several titles dealing with the US context that have shaped the global historiography on this topic. See Kathryn Kish Sklar, Anja Schüler, and Susan Strasser, eds., *Social Justice Feminists in the United States and Germany: A Dialogue in Documents, 1885–1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998); Susan Ware, *Beyond Suffrage. Women in the New Deal* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Dorothy Sue Cobble, Linda Gordon, and Astrid Henry, *Feminism Unfinished: A Short, Surprising History of American Women's Movements* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014).

sumptions about the development of "universal provision" welfare states and the effectiveness of social policies, revealing the gendered, classed and racist biases of public and private welfare practices.[86] Early on, these histories (many using the "maternalism" label for the activism they described) directed my attention towards the political history of feminism and feminists' activities for social reform in urban settings as integral to the history of welfare,[87] as well as to the operation of institutions and policies on an everyday basis. In the archival record, this is where women's activism and its significant, concrete influence most often becomes visible. To this body of work, this volume contributes an East-Central European case study which incorporates approaches and conclusions from recent research on the role of international institutions such as the International Labor Organization for the production of expert knowledge on women's experiences.[88] It uncovers similarities and links with earlier and contemporaneous developments in Western Europe, North America and South America.

In equal measure to histories of welfare, this book was molded by the historiography of women's work. An established (sub)field in the English-speaking academic space since the 1980s, women's labor history was for a long time a sidenote to historical research in East-Central Europe, before 1989 and certainly after.[89] This monograph aims to reflect and add to the unfolding encounter between women labor his-

86 Gordon, "Black and White Visions of Welfare"; Lynne A. Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); S. J. Kleinberg, *Widows and Orphans First: The Family Economy and Social Welfare Policy, 1880–1939* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Donna J. Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State: Performing Charity and Creating Rights in Argentina, 1880–1955* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Susan Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule: An Integrative, History of Poverty Policy, Social Policy, and Social Reform in Hungary under the Habsburg Monarchy* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011); Marisa Chappell, "Protecting Soldiers and Mothers Twenty-Five Years Later: Theda Skocpol's Legacy and American Welfare State Historiography, 1992–2017," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 17, no. 3 (2018): 546–573.

87 For an overview of this literature, see Marian van der Klein and Rebecca Jo Plant, "Introduction: A New Generation of Scholars on Maternalism," in *Maternalism Reconsidered: Motherhood, Welfare and Social Policy in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Marian van der Klein et al. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 1–21.

88 Véronique Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy: The ILO Contribution to Development (1930–1946)* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020); Kirsten Scheiwe and Lucia Artner, "International Networking in the Interwar Years: Gertrud Hanna, Alice Salomon and Erna Magnus," in *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards, and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present*, eds. Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker, and Susan Zimmermann (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 75–96.

89 Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1987); Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work: 1700 to the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998).

tory's and "new global labor history".[90] It sheds light on the unpaid and badly-paid home-based work in an urban center of an agrarian country, on the regional aspect of the global twentieth-century trend of women's entry into paid employment outside the home and its effects on social reproduction arrangements, on the gender history of domestic service in Romania, and, obliquely, on educated women's access to the professions and the history of intellectual workers in this region. Feminist historians have underscored that histories of women's social reproduction work, especially within households, are indispensable for understanding the development of global capitalism.[91] Heeding them, this book insists that histories of welfare and lack of welfare are histories of work and are thus essential for understanding politics, policy and the choices women and men made and could make.

As argued above, this is a book about women's unpaid and badly paid work in Romania's capital city, especially as reflected in knowledge produced by women welfare activists. It relates, distantly, to a state-socialist historiography on women's work and activism and is part of a steadily growing post-socialist historiography on women's activism and experiences in interwar but especially postwar East-Central Europe.[92] Yet not least, this volume is meant to contribute to thinking differently about state-building in Romania in the interwar period, by looking more closely at how transnationally connected local actors linked to the state contributed to managing social change. Post-socialist historiography underscores that the interwar Romanian state focused on nationalizing state-building.[93] But what kind of state was being built in this economically struggling country, especially in areas that were not recently acquired and thus in need of urgent "nationalization"? Did a (theoretically) growing bureaucracy and an expanding welfare state, for instance,[94] mark

90 Dorothy Sue Cobble, "The Promise and Peril of the New Global Labor History," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 82, no. 10 (2012): 103.

91 Eileen Boris and Kirsten Swinth, "Household Matters".

92 Selin Çağatay et al., "Women's Labour Struggles in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond: Toward a Long-Term, Transregional, Integrative, and Critical Approach," in *Through the Prism of Gender and Work: Women's Labour Struggles in Central and Eastern Europe and Beyond, 19th to 20th Centuries*, eds. Selin Çağatay et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2024), 5–25.

93 Roland Clark, "The Shape of Interwar Romanian History," *Journal of Romanian Studies* 3, no. 1 (April 2021): 11–42.

94 Silviu Hariton, "Asumarea politicilor sociale de către stat în România. Cazul invalizilor, orfanilor și văduvelor de război (IOVR) după Primul Război Mondial [The creation of social policies by the state in Romania. The case of invalids, orphans and war widows (IOVR) after the First World War]," *Archiva Moldaviae*, no. Supplement 1 (2014): 115–40; Sergiu Delcea, "A Nation of Bureaucrats or a Nation of Workers? Welfare Benefits as Nation-Building Modernization Tools in Interwar Romania," *Journal of European Social Policy* 32, no. 1 (2022): 75–90.

the "turn to welfare" which Stephen Kotkin discusses?[95] New work in the resurgent field of labor history argues that new labor laws and collective bargaining mechanisms helped keep the price of (urban) labor low, a tendency that would extend into postwar industrialization.[96] This supports the notion that this may have been state-building towards the (self)restraint of state power. Research on international aid and the cross-border circulation of social reformers who supported state-building processes (whether directly or indirectly) underscores not only transnational interaction but also the significance of locally embedded actors for shaping these circulations.[97] However, we still know relatively little about the local effects of these circulations. New work on interwar policies for war veterans, orphans and widows underscores the dysfunctionality and male bias of cherished welfare programs for a large category of beneficiaries, nation-wide.[98] Yet the history of welfare provision, let alone the gender history of welfare provision during the interwar period, have so far not received detailed treatment. In this volume, I put such topics at the core of inquiry.[99]

Sources and approach

To investigate austerity welfare work I focused on archives and publications related to public welfare programs, especially social assistance, pursued in both governmental and non-governmental institutions in Romania. To reconstruct

95 Kotkin, "Modern Times."

96 Adrian Grama, "The Cost of Juridification: Lineages of Cheap Labor in Twentieth-Century Romania," *Labor* 17, no. 3 (2020): 30–52; Adrian Grama, *Laboring Along: Industrial Workers and the Making of Postwar Romania* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2019).

97 Emilia Plosceanu, "L'Internationalisation des sciences et techniques réformatrices. Les Savants roumains et la fondation Rockefeller (1918–1940)," *New Europe College Yearbook*, 2007–2008, 319–343; Călin Cotoi, *Inventing the Social in Romania, 1848–1914: Networks and Laboratories of Knowledge* (Schöningh: Brill, 2020); Crețu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania*.

98 Maria Bucur, *The Nation's Gratitude: World War I and Citizenship Rights in Interwar Romania* (New York: 2022).

99 Valuable article-length studies touching on urban women's labor history are Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu, "Coopter et écarter. Les Femmes dans la recherche sociologique et l'intervention sociale dans la Roumanie de l'entre-deux-guerres," *Les Etudes Sociales*, no. 1 (2011): 109–142; Emilia Plosceanu, "L'Internationalisation des sciences et techniques réformatrices. Les Savants roumains et la fondation Rockefeller (1918–1940)," *New Europe College Yearbook*, 2008 2007, 319–343; Emilia Plosceanu, "Coopération en milieu rural, économie nationale et sciences sociales en Roumanie," *Les Études Sociales*, no. 2 (2016): 179–207. The source collection Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc: Studiu și antologie de text [From the history of Romanian feminism: Study and text anthology]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2006), building on its coordinators research from before as well as after 1989, is a precious first stop for researching these topics.

transnational connections and influences, I included publications by international feminist and labor organizations.

I read these sources both "along the grain" and "against the grain". I read "along the grain" by paying attention to "the competing logics of those who ruled and the fissures and frictions within their ranks."[100] I employed this analysis and interpretation strategy especially when looking into the social research and municipal policymaking aspects of austerity welfare work in Bucharest. I interpret "against the grain" by assessing and critically re-reading social reformers' knowledge production, especially in the case of documents that made a claim to objectivity and social scientific authority when they were produced, such as survey data and social work investigations. I used this strategy to better understand those forms of austerity welfare work performed by low-income women, including domestic work and mixes of paid and unpaid work in their homes.

Despite my best efforts to go "against the grain" and to excavate details about the work and living conditions of working-class women, their voices are faint in this book. Several letters, a few transcribed poems, and a published oral history interview are the sources that capture low-income women's experiences in their own words. Otherwise, information about low-income women's welfare work in Bucharest, for their families or for others' families, comes from documents produced by various kinds of welfare activists. In her masterful analysis of Black and White working-class women's survival strategies during the Great Depression, Lois Rita Helmbold warns that welfare casework files contain what Karen Tice has called "tales of detection [of fraud]" and "tales of protection" about the women being investigated by social workers.[101] Sociologists of expertise underscore that social knowledge-making is shaped by experts' allegiances and by field-specific "dynamics of competition and recognition".[102] "Material devices, accounting tools, [. . .] formulas" involved in creating knowledge about the social have a strong influence on results.[103] Social reformers wanted to be seen as experts and to influence social

100 Ann Laura Stoler, "Matters of Intimacy as Matters of State: A Response," *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 3 (2001): 895.

101 Lois Rita Helmbold, *Making Choices, Making Do: Survival Strategies of Black and White Working-Class Women during the Great Depression* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 2022), 5; Karen Whitney Tice, *Tales of Wayward Girls and Immoral Women: Case Records and the Professionalization of Social Work* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998).

102 Gil Eyal and Larissa Buchholz, "From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 36 (2010): 124.

103 Charles Camic, Neil Gross, and Michèle Lamont, "The Study of Social Knowledge-Making," in *Social Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 3; Eyal and Buchholz, "From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions," 130.

policy. Even if read "against the grain", these documents bear deep traces of the power asymmetries that created them.

To understand social policies and capture the competing social reform visions which shaped national and municipal responses to need and crisis, while keeping women's welfare work at the center of the investigation, I began with the archives of key women's organizations and key women welfare activists. Among these are the archives of the large Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women (SONFR), the personal papers of the SONFR president Alexandrina Cantacuzino, as well as the microfilmed archives of several social democratic and communist-leaning women's organizations involved in welfare activism, all hosted by the Service of the Central National Historical Archives (SANIC) Bucharest. (While I consulted several files from the Sabin Manuilă personal papers collection at SANIC, I do not draw on archival documents from that collection here.) At the Center for the Study of the History of Jews in Romania "Wilhelm Filderman" (CSIER), I looked into the archives of the Cultural Association of Jewish Women (ACFE) and records related to welfare provision by the Bucharest Jewish Community (CEB). I explored the interesting archives of better- or lesser-known women welfare activists held in the "Saint Georges" collection of documents at the Romanian National Library. Online databases dedicated to the history of women's activism, such as Alexander Street "Women and Social Movements International" (WASI), the Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs and the digitized archives of the Labor and Socialist International (LSI/SAI) were very useful.

To understand debates on social policy and the policy frameworks that emerged in Bucharest, I consulted Romanian government publications, including the *Bulletin of Labor, Cooperation and Social Insurance* [*Buletinul muncii, cooperației și asigurărilor sociale*] and the *Official Monitor* [*Monitorul oficial*]; the latter publishes parliamentary debates, the text of new laws and all kinds of mandatory announcements. I included articles from social reform journals such as the *Archive for Science and Social Reform* [*Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială*] of the Romanian Social Institute (ISR), the *Review for Social Hygiene* [*Revista de igienă socială*] and the journal *Social Assistance* [*Asistența socială*] and various publications of the Ministry of Labor.

Finally, to understand how welfare programs functioned and failed in practice, I researched the archives of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection (MMSOS) and the Eforia (Foundation) of Civil Hospitals, at the Central National Historical Archives (SANIC). In the Bucharest Municipal Service of the National Archives (SMBAN), in the handful of files available for the interwar General Bucharest City Hall and the Sector 4 (Green) City Hall, I found several letters and petitions for social assistance. As a historian of welfare, I can only wonder how different this book would have been had a large number of preserved casework files or individ-

ual questionnaires, such as the ones at the core of recent volumes on welfare work in Paris and the American Midwest,[104] been available for Bucharest. Publications by social workers from Bucharest mention hundreds of case files and tens of detailed interviews,[105] yet the closest I got to the archives created by such welfare workers were a few questionnaires from the framework of the Hospital Social Service in the late 1930s and the published case file of Marioara I.

By design this volume places the spotlight on women as historical actors and women's experiences as gendered experiences. It refrains from reading educated women's class position strongly in relation to that of their men relatives. For this historical case study, this is a justified choice. For most of the educated or otherwise privileged women discussed in this book, wealthy or supportive fathers, brothers and husbands were certainly important. Yet many if not most of the women welfare activists mentioned here were actively involved in a political project or at least a concrete practice of changing the terms under which they were expected to live their lives, through association with the broad feminist current energizing women's activism across the world after the First World War and by doing new kinds of jobs. These relatively privileged women controlled at least some of their money (whether earned or inherited), were educated as well as the men in their circles (even if, at times, in less formalized or prestigious settings) and were internationally connected through networks of their own. Many sought to wield power and gain public recognition, often pushing against restrictive legal frameworks. The lower-class women whose experiences are discussed here are often women "without men" at high risk of destitution: orphaned girls and young women, unmarried mothers, widows. As they encountered social reformers and thus became a part of the archives of social reform at the core of this book, their lower-class position was very much their own.

Although focusing on women's experiences, this remains a gender history account. As needed, this book notes middle-class and aristocratic women's alignment with the men who dominated the public sphere and the professional domains in which they were active. As possible, it links precarious women's labor patterns to

104 Lola Zappi, *Les visages de l'État social. Assistantes sociales et familles populaires durant l'entre-deux-guerres* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2022), 23; Helmbold, *Making Choices, Making Do*, 3–4.

105 A study from 1939 claimed to have drawn its conclusion after summarizing files about 764 families, created in the previous several years. Veturia Manuilă, "Pauperismul şi criza familială într-un cartier mărginaş al Bucureştilor (Tei) (1939) [Pauperism and familial crisis in a peripheral Bucharest neighborhood (Tei) (1939)]," ed. Zoltán Rostás, *Între proiecții urbanistice și sărăcie letargică. Bucureștiul arhitecților, sociologilor și al medicilor. Antologie* (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 2015), http://www.cooperativag.ro/veturia-manuila-despre-pauperism-si-criza-familiei-in-bucurestiul-interbelic/.

patterns in the work of men in similar circumstances—by discussing, for example, the link between men's unemployment and women's entry into domestic service. A further developed intersectional analysis would bring to light many more of the intricacies of social reproduction mechanisms than captured here, particularly in relation to the effects of ethnicity and race in a Romanian nationalist, antisemitic and anti-Roma racist context. Most likely, accounts that look at constructions of gender through welfare provision would problematize and queer, to illuminating effect, the "women" and "men" historical categories which this book does not explicitly question, and their impact on welfare provision. Still, this volume hopes to persuade that its women-centric approach does not result in rudimentary exercises in historical visibility that miss out on major phenomena because of a lack of more attention to men's and boys' experiences, nor on account of its, admittedly, very limited dealing with gender fluidity and sexuality. Instead, beyond its limits and inevitable flaws, it hopes to show how a focus on women as part of a focus on gender history can lead to rich historical accounts of major phenomena (interwar austerity, modern versions of the gendered division of labor) that were strongly co-produced by women and affected women the most.

Chapter overview

This monograph reconstructs welfare provision in interwar Bucharest and reveals the gendered austerity welfare work at the core of such provision. In a nod to feminist accounts of welfare provision as linking states, markets and families (or rather households),[106] it deals with both welfare policy and welfare work, in institutions and within urban communities. Therefore, the first three chapters focus on policymaking and policymakers at the national and the municipal level and their effects on developments in Bucharest. The last two chapters focus on austerity welfare work especially within households, be it paid (domestic service) or unpaid work (household work). In the book, as often in reality during the interwar, women welfare activists—through their "private initiatives" and social research works—link the seemingly distinct domains of public institutions and private households. Unstable markets and their effects on welfare provision are integral to the analysis in each chapter.

In Chapter 1, I set the stage, conceptually and historically. I argue that social policy in Romania after the First World War was stingy, by design and by necessity. I show that the risk of destitution for those depending on wages or doing unpaid

106 Jane Lewis, "Gender and Welfare Regimes: Further Thoughts," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 4, no. 2 (1997): 160–177.

work for their families was much higher in Bucharest than in other large cities, such as those in Transylvania. This stingy "interwar welfare conjuncture", to gloss on Stephen Kotkin's term,[107] meant that welfare provision through women's societies as well as care work within families carried a comparatively heavy burden of care work in the Romanian capital, in European, even East-Central European perspective. I historicize "austerity welfare work" by drawing on the historiography of welfare, expertise and women's work; describe living conditions in interwar Bucharest; and map insurance-based welfare policies and practices, analyzing the limited coverage various rounds of social insurance reform afforded to women.

In Chapter 2, I explore unpaid or underpaid social work and activism as a form of "austerity welfare work". I establish the existence of a loose network of women welfare activists who shared an interest in understanding how recent social transformations in Romania were affecting women. Formed in the 1920s, with links to organizations and social movements in Europe and the United States, this network would be influential in municipal welfare politics until the middle of the 1930s. Organizations and activists discussed here have until now been researched in isolation of other similar organizations or at best as connected by suffragist activism. In this chapter, I argue that feminist and non-feminist social researchers were part of a network of social reformers whose members debated and shared research in the Section for Feminine Studies. Such debates and research were then translated into municipal welfare policies. Social democratic, communist and Jewish welfare activists were part of this broad network and shaped its workings through their critical positionings towards the left-liberal or socially conservative women at its core.

Chapter 3 reconstructs the workings of municipal social assistance policy in Bucharest. I uncover how councilwomen who were first co-opted and then, from 1929 to 1937, elected, drove reforms of municipal social assistance. Women welfare activists who became councilwomen formed the core of the women's network that met at the Section for Feminine Studies. They sat in Bucharest City Council meetings as representatives of different parties and as such were clear political rivals. Despite rivalries and different understandings of scientific, expertise-based approaches to social work, they supported a vision of "assistance through work" while nevertheless seeking to increase the eligibility of women with caring duties, especially single mothers, for the meager aid available. Because of this focus, councilwomen and their allies contributed to constructing a low-spending version of local-level public welfare provision.

In Chapter 4, the focus shifts from policies and networks to austerity welfare work practices. I argue that paid household workers, servants, became increas-

107 Kotkin, "Modern Times."

ingly important for managing the effects of the Great Depression for families in the city and in the countryside. In the chapter, I reconstruct the role played by women welfare activists in perpetuating domestic service as a seemingly predestined occupation for orphan girls and women migrating from the countryside and discuss servants' own accounts of work they perceived to be emotionally and physically difficult. I suggest that women welfare activists in Bucharest cooperated with state authorities in controlling domestic servants to an unusually high degree, even as volunteers for organizations such as the Women Friends of Young Women [*Amicele Tinerelor Fete*, ATF] devoted considerable energy to providing emergency help for young servants.

Chapter 5 deals with austerity welfare work as work done by low-income adult women for the well-being of members of their families and how such work was reflected in small-scale survey research conducted by women welfare activists and medical professionals throughout the 1930s. I show how social workers and social hygiene doctors had different understandings and especially different prescriptions for the seemingly new trend of women's work outside the home. Social workers linked to the Section for Feminine Studies insisted that women had no choice but to work to support children and elderly relatives. They assigned the blame for "familial disorganization" on men. This stance was a product of their links to American social workers and women bureaucrats from the International Labor Office. I read this research against the grain, showing that women overworked themselves to provide for families, in the context of high levels of male unemployment.

In the book's conclusion, I return to the cross-cutting themes of this work and provide an epilogue. I reconstruct, thus, a Bucharest without welfare but with plenty of welfare work meant to enable the survival of households and "dependents". In the epilogue, I bring the histories of key welfare activists mentioned here into the post-1945 period. Finally, I reflect on how a focus on austerity welfare work, or perhaps "austerity welfare labors", might help us rethink the twentieth century in Eastern Europe and beyond. Whereas the past century has been frequently associated with the peaking of biopolitical rationalities, in much of the world unpaid or barely paid care work made up for missing resources to match rhetoric and ambition. The ten-page transcript of the casework file for Marioara I., as previously published in *Asistența socială*, provided as a now anonymized appendix (Appendix 1), illustrates in vivid detail the themes of want, work, welfare and unequal interactions explored throughout this book. A table and timeline of councilwomen and general mayors in Bucharest's four sectors (Appendix 2) is meant to help readers to place key names in a broader setting of municipal politics. A table on the evolution of prices of basic consumer items between 1918 and 1938 (Appendix 3, Table 1) can be used to quickly grasp the smaller amounts of money (in Lei) mentioned in the book.

Map 1: Plan of Bucharest, 1940, with sectors indicated in roman numerals (I–IV).
Source: Institutul Cartografic "Unirea" Brașov, *Planul Bucureștilor cu liniile de tramvai, stațiile, Editura Ghidul României [Plan of Bucharest with tram lines, stations, publisher Editura Ghidul României]*, 1940, Paper (51 x 61 cm (original medium and size). Digital reproduction cropped and color modified. Culturalia, Europeana, https://www.europeana.eu/en/item/951/Culturalia_6e9e24f6_c0a8_456c_82ad_c9ffaae15d47. CC BY-SA 4.0.

Chapter 1
Welfare as Women's Work in Interwar Bucharest

In 1937, at the end of the period I focus on in this book, Bucharest, the capital of "Greater Romania", was still, largely, the city of poor inhabitants and muddy streets it had been at the end of the First World War, even if it had many more prosperous-looking areas, taller commercial buildings and not a few world-class modernist residences. In 1930, of 1,381 houses built in the city, 61 percent were cob (earth-and-wood) houses [*paiantă*], with an average of 2.4 rooms per building.[108] Such houses mostly appeared in marshy, sometimes dustier, sometimes greener, suburbs with poor infrastructure.[109] In these more or less peripheral popular neighborhoods, the *mahalale*, tenants—usually those recently immigrated from the countryside—produced their own food by tending to gardens, fowl or pigs, and made up for the lack of infrastructure by digging private or community wells, creating dirt roads and landfills. Bucharest was an unequal city but ultimately a poor one. In 1936, after a trip to the city of Craiova to attend the trial of fellow antifascist Ana Pauker, the Belgian socialist MP Isabelle Blume wrote in *Femmes dans l'action mondiale,* the magazine of the Belgian branch of the Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism, that in a Europe where workers were poor everywhere, poverty in Romania was "atrocious". Most inhabitants struggled, on a day-to-day basis. "In the city itself, not only are the clothes of the poor dirty, tattered and patched, but you can feel that even the middle-class struggles to pay for cheap clothing", Blume wrote.[110] While Blume's presence is confirmed only in Craiova, her description captures the situation of most inhabitants of the nearby capital city as well.

Many Bucharest inhabitants would have needed greater stability and access to more public services than were available in the city. Women's austerity welfare work made up for their lack. In this chapter, I unpack the key elements that contributed to creating this dynamic in Romania's capital city, placing them in a

108 Luana Irina Stoica, "La Banlieue bucarestoise de l'entre deux-guerres. Mahalaua topos et réalité sociale," *New Europe College Yearbook*, no. 1 (1997): 384.

109 For instance, in 1935, out of 158,043 buildings in Bucharest, 97,697 (60 percent) were not connected to the electricity grid. The sewage system was even less developed, with mud or billowing road dust emblematic for much of the city during most seasons. Stoica, 385; Emanuela Constantini, *Capitala imaginată. Evoluția Bucureștiului în perioada formării și consolidării statului național român 1830–1940 [The imagined capital city. The evolution of Bucharest during the formation and consolidation of the Romanian national state 1830–1940]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2019), 205.

110 Isabelle Blume, "Victimes du fascisme: Anna Pauker," *Femmes dans l'action mondiale* 1, no. 9 (September 1936).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111137162-002

transnational and global perspective. I proceed by briefly reprising, in the first section, the "austerity welfare work" concept introduced in the previous chapter, to illustrate its operation in the concrete context of Bucharest. In the sections that follow, I discuss the evolution of five key elements in Bucharest's austere "welfare mix": government-level welfare politics, local level public social assistance, social reform and "private initiative" organizations and working-class or otherwise "lower-class" women's paid and unpaid work. Thus, in the second section, I discuss the evolution of welfare policies intended to cover large parts of Romania's population in the 1920s and their exclusionary effects. In the third, I show how the Great Depression affected a seemingly expansive round of policymaking on social insurance and healthcare. In the fourth section, I explain how these policy changes were processed into local-level policies. In the fifth section I show how Bucharest, as a capital city, was shaped by transnational ideas and policies on welfare that bypassed the national scale, resulting in a complicated and particular welfare-related setup, especially with regard to social assistance practices. In the sixth and final section I provide an overview of patterns of low-income women's work in interwar Bucharest, to illuminate how austerity welfare work was tied to changes in women's paid labor. The chapter provides the necessary state-scale grounding and key transnational threads for the unfolding of an argument that deals primarily with actors and processes at or below municipal scale, over the next three chapters.

Facets of welfare in a changing city

Before the First World War, Bucharest had an official population of 378,867. By 1927 it had grown to 472,035, jumping to 569,855 people in the 1930s, 786,929 in 1937, and reaching 992,536 people in 1941.[111] Population-wise, in the 1930s, Bucharest was thus as big as Amsterdam at the time but smaller, by around 200,000 inhabitants, than Prague or Budapest.[112] Over the course of the 1920s, migration brought into the city an official number of 91,666 people, while by 1941, 353,496 people living in Bucharest (including war refugees) had been born elsewhere. In 1941, this meant a density of 11,700 per square kilometer, almost double the

111 The 1927 hike can be attributed to the inclusion of suburban neighborhoods within the formal perimeter of the capital city through a new administrative law. See Stoica, "La Banlieue bucarestoise," 388.

112 Primăria Municipiului Bucuresti, *Anuarul statistic al orașului București 1931–1936 [Statistical yearbook of the city of Bucharest 1931–1936]* (Bucharest: Serviciul Municipal de Statistică, 1937), 8.

6,100 per square kilometer before the First World War or the 6,760 in 1936.[113] The near-doubling of the populating between 1927 and 1941 speaks not only to the displacement caused by war but also to the long-term effects of the Great Depression in the countryside: whereas work in the city picked up somewhat after the middle of the 1930s, it was increasingly hard to live well in the countryside. Bucharest had always been a multiethnic city, but diversity increased after the First World War. In 1930, 77 percent of inhabitants identified as ethnically Romanian, 12 percent as Jewish, 4 percent as Hungarian and 2 percent as German.[114]

Key public social assistance providers in the city argued that in Bucharest it was difficult to give help. In 1938, summing up half a decade of activity in the experimental Hospital Social Service, Xenia Costa-Foru, a social worker and sophisticated social researcher, explained that the trainee, poorly paid or entirely unpaid social assistants (social workers) from the Superior School of Social Assistance (SSAS) were overworked by hospital managers and distrusted by (former) patients. Managers tasked the social workers in training with establishing, through home inquiries, whether the many uninsured patients who claimed to have no means to pay for medical care were indeed indigent.

Former patients hid from these welfare workers. Costa-Foru explained:

> These administrative inquiries have meant an overwhelming number [of inquiries] which exceeded the powers of the assistants who were working in the Service [. . .]. If we add the fact that sometimes these persons cannot be found at the first attempt and that most live in periphery neighborhoods, some on hardly walkable streets and with messy house numbering; – that some addresses are purposefully lied about; and that you are not always received with good will and helped in your research, we can easily get an idea about the difficult work and the time that was required for each of the inquiries mentioned above.[115]

Costa-Foru's account of the difficulties social workers encountered in their work captures how a form of unpaid or quasi-unpaid women's work (by social workers in training) became a form of austerity welfare work. It was well-meaning, diffi-

113 Primăria Municipiului Bucuresti, *Anuarul statistic al orașului București 1931–1936*, 9; Stoica, "La Banlieue bucarestoise," 389.

114 Primăria Municipiului Bucuresti, *Anuarul statistic al orașului București 1931–1936*, 9; Institutul Central de Statistică, *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930 [General census of the population of Romania from 29 december 1930]*, vol. 2–Neam, limba maternă, religie (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1938), 256. Percentages calculated for data on the municipality of Bucharest, without surrounding villages.

115 Xenia Costa-Foru, "Serviciile sociale generale și serviciile sociale speciale pe lângă diferite spitale și clinici [The general social services and the special social services functioning alongside different hospitals and clinics]," *Asistența socială – Buletinul Asociației pentru Progresul Asistenței Sociale* 7, no. 2 (1938): 135.

cult work which patched major gaps in publicly funded social services. Work such as this enabled not only cost-cutting by state welfare institutions but also contact with and monitoring of the poorest inhabitants of Bucharest, production of social knowledge about their situation and recommendations for new, sometimes more inclusive, municipal policies or adjustments to existing ones.

In 1931, some years before complaining about hardships for the Hospital Social Service, the same Xenia Costa-Foru created a portrait of someone this book considers to be simply a different kind of austerity welfare worker, compared to the professional social worker. Ana, a widowed and immiserated mother of nine, was the kind of "welfare beggar" who, as far as Costa-Foru was concerned, required reform rather than alms. Costa-Foru described Ana as

> thin and swarthy, is dressed in black, simply and clean. She makes a good impression, is communicative and can relate well the misfortunes she has endured. [. . .] The situation is very difficult, but the woman is smart and fear of hunger and her love for the children had taught her how to speculate the misery. An appeal in the newspaper: "nine children without bread"; a pension from City Hall; some doors she knocks on regularly; different associations and the aid of the alms the priest collects for her in the church, these enable her survival. But this not without humiliations, not without deceit and lies, because to obtain the maximum from everywhere, the woman is all day long on the street, crying to each one, exaggerating her situation and hiding as much as possible—fearful that she might see her income lowering—the aids she receives from all places. As the societies only communicate among each other very imperfectly, the work is easily achieved, and Ana knows it.[116]

While the family's genuine difficulty was regarded with empathy, the social worker perceived Ana to be a skillful manipulator of what were not merely limited but (especially) uncoordinated urban social assistance initiatives by private associations ("the societies"). However, in many ways, this widowed mother was simply among the very poorest of the city's many unpaid or underpaid subsistence workers, most of whom were women. The work of supplication and petitioning was likely a supplement to housework and informal or otherwise precarious paid work, judging by the experiences of women in situations almost as dire as Ana's. We need only think of Marioara I., introduced in the previous chapter, and her mixing of intense paid work, requests for relief and, as her case file shows, begging from door to door in moments of despair.[117]

Together, women welfare activists, precarious paid household workers (that is, servants) and struggling homemakers from Bucharest became poverty allevia-

116 Xenia Costa-Foru, "Colaborarea în asistență [Collaboration in social assistance]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 2, no. 1 (1931): 17.
117 See Chapter 5 and Appendix 1 for details.

tors, engaging in what I call in this book "austerity welfare work". I argue that certain forms of austerity welfare work helped construct and maintain a low–welfare-spending state. These different forms of women's austerity welfare work constructed, complemented, or replaced the limited public measures meant to bring relief to the city's poorest citizens. As social reproduction feminists underscore, in times of economic instability, women ensure families' subsistence through their work.[118]

Austerity welfare work encompasses the work of women who provided welfare, as welfare activists of various kinds, and the work of women frequently intended to be "recipients" (or "clients" or "beneficiaries") of forms of welfare activism. Despite the historically evident hierarchies and highly unequal power relations among the various kinds of austerity welfare workers thus defined, I place them in the same conceptual category because in their work, the well-being of others was a main intended or expected effect. Welfare workers could thus include the servants or homemakers with heavy care responsibilities mentioned above.

In interwar Bucharest, low welfare spending by the central administration ("the state", that is ministries and their bureaucracies) for women and children empowered a certain kind of austerity welfare workers, namely women welfare activists who performed "private initiative" work in associations and self-managed (but publicly subsidized) institutions. As elsewhere during the period, welfare activists became policy makers, expert knowledge producers and direct welfare providers. At the time, women welfare activists were heavily involved in the development of early welfare programs.[119] These actions could entail intense surveillance.

In many ways, this development was part of a global story. From the end of the nineteenth century, women ran private or semi-public welfare organizations as complements, substitutes, or alternatives to state-organized assistance. For the American context, Linda Gordon has used the term "women welfare activists" to describe the women coming from diverse social backgrounds, who between 1890 and 1945, as members of philanthropic groups, social movements, or as professionals; within formal and informal settings; and through practices such as advocacy, casework or social research, pushed for broader public concern with questions of social need or asked for the expansion of specific social policies. The term captures the way in which women's welfare activism was, by the interwar period,

118 Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero*, 108; Dalla Costa, *Family, Welfare, and the State*.

119 Midgley, "Poor Law Principles and Social Assistance in the Third World"; Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State*; Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule*.

a world of its own—a field within which certified and lay women experts cooperated and struggled around issues concerning the politics and policies of social need and vulnerability.[120]

According to Gordon, in the US context, male social reformers shaped male-centric schemes, such as unemployment and accident insurance.[121] In the period's emerging welfare states, women welfare activists tended to be involved in the development of non-contributory schemes. Unlike social insurance (the most widespread kind of contributory scheme), non-contributory schemes did not (and do not) accumulate their funds from the regular contributions of insured or participating members. Instead, they were funded from public budgets, at various government levels. These non-contributory schemes were "social assistance" policies and social services whose main beneficiaries were groups defined in opposition to male wage workers in stable employment. Recipients were, thus, often poor women and girls (who did unpaid work or informalized work), children, the elderly or the chronically ill. Similar broad patterns existed in Europe too, even as, among others, ILO policymaking after the First World War did promote the inclusion of women in innovative insurance-based welfare schemes.[122]

In interwar Bucharest, women from modest backgrounds or with little education had to frequently manage with very few resources, especially when men's unemployment was high or if male partners deserted the family while children or other family members still needed to be cared for. In this sense, working-class women's paid and unpaid work was no less important than the work of politically influential philanthropists and social workers. In Bucharest, as in other contexts, informalized work (be it paid or unpaid, within households or outside them) was crucial for household survival exactly when "monetized income" and "other forms of support (social services, welfare transfers) decline".[123] To an extent, forms of women's unpaid work (as volunteer or low-paid social workers, as homemakers) enabled social policy expansion, with women subsidizing through their labor, labor that went unnoticed or was made invisible, whatever expansion of contributory social policy the state enacted for the benefit of male industrial workers and especially of (overwhelmingly male) civil servants.

120 Gordon, "Black and White Visions of Welfare."

121 Linda Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance: The Influence of Gender in Welfare Thought in the United States, 1890–1935," *The American Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (1992): 20–21.

122 Susan Zimmermann, "Equality of Women's Economic Status? A Major Bone of Contention in the International Gender Politics Emerging During the Interwar Period," *The International History Review* 41, no. 1 (2018): 18.

123 V. Spike Peterson, "Rethinking Theory: Inequalities, Informalization and Feminist Quandaries," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14, no. 1 (2012): 16.

Welfare-related government politics in Romania

Gendered austerity welfare work was important because interwar Romania did not have an expansive "welfare conjuncture", to gloss Stephen Kotkin's term.[124] This despite having governing politicians who were ostensibly preoccupied with the health and welfare of ethnic Romanians in this newly highly multiethnic state.[125] Recent scholarship points out that new social insurance and labor laws were created.[126] However, these laws' impact for most people's level of well-being was minimal. In fact, as I have discussed elsewhere,[127] low social spending and exclusionary welfare laws defined the 1920s and most of the 1930s. Where welfare spending on contributory programs such as healthcare or pensions is low, social assistance programs and especially families (through unpaid and paid household workers) provide for those who need care of one kind or another. Women were often excluded from new welfare programs, even as family members of employed men or of war veterans or as employees themselves.

Romanian politicians' limited orientation towards welfare politics was visible early on after the First World War. New and urgent welfare programs for war veterans and their families, landmarks for welfare-state-building in European and American context,[128] were disjointed and highly gendered in Romania.[129] In 1920, when these new programs were debated in Parliament, politicians emphasized that the benefits to be accessed through the novel National Office for War Invalids, Orphans and Widows [*Oficiul Național al Invalizilor, Orfanilor și Văduvelor de Război*, IOVR] were not "charity", "mercy" or "philanthropy" and were distinct from those for industrial accidents.[130]

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124 For Kotkin, preoccupation with populations' welfare is one of the features of the "interwar conjuncture" in Europe. See Kotkin, "Modern Times."

125 Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization*.

126 Sergiu Delcea, "A Nation of Bureaucrats or a Nation of Workers? Welfare Benefits as Nation-Building Modernization Tools in Interwar Romania," *Journal of European Social Policy* 32, no. 1 (2022): 75–90; Grama, "The Cost of Juridification."

127 Parts of this and the following section summarize the account provided in Ghiț, "Romania: Serving Fewer by Design."

128 Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Chappell, "Protecting Soldiers And Mothers Twenty-Five Years Later"; Herbert Obinger, Klaus Petersen, and Peter Starke, eds., *Warfare and Welfare: Military Conflict and Welfare State Development in Western Countries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

129 Silviu Hariton, "Asumarea politicilor sociale de către stat în România. Cazul invalizilor, orfanilor și văduvelor de război (IOVR) după Primul Război Mondial [The creation of social policies by the state in Romania. The case of invalids, orphans and war widows (IOVR) after the First World War]," *Archiva Moldaviae*, no. Supplement 1 (2014): 115–140.

130 Hariton, "Asumarea politicilor sociale de către stat în România," 129.

However, Maria Bucur shows how the IOVR, funded by the national government and (technically) apart from the rest of the social insurance and public assistance system, was chronically underfunded and could not deliver on most of the rights promised to veterans and their offspring. Furthermore, as Bucur points out, IOVR policies marginalized widows and excluded women who had served in the war, as nurses for example.[131] If widows' pensions were foundational for the development of federal social protection in the USA, as Theda Skocpol has famously argued,[132] in Romania "though [war] widows were included in these [IOVR] legal provisions, they were always last on the list, after orphans".[133]

The National Liberal Party [*Partidul Național Liberal*, PNL] and its priorities dominated politics in the first decade after the First World War, with King Ferdinand (r. 1914–1927) rarely interfering in policymaking. In the 1920s, Prime Ministers from the ranks of the PNL headed the government between November 1918 and September 1919, January 1922 and March 1926 and June 1927 and November 1928. At all times during the period covered in this book, Liberals had considerable influence on local administrations, especially in Bucharest, and were the party of choice for most entrepreneurs and landowners.

In the 1920s, under the influence of the International Labor Organization (ILO), innovative labor laws were introduced – under PNL governments. Landmark national laws on employment offices and labor exchanges, Sunday rest, labor inspection or the (stalled-on) regulation of women's and minor's labor were "directly inspired by Geneva decisions".[134] By 1930, a representative of the Ministry of Labor boasted that "of 62 decisions (28 convention projects and 34 recommendations) approved in Geneva, we ratified 28 (16 convention projects and 12 recommendations)".[135] Notably, Romania's "special solicitude"[136] towards the ILO in the 1920s was linked to the success of the Kingdom of Romania at the Paris Peace Conference. From 1918 to 1919, the Romanian constitutional monarchy in-

131 Maria Bucur, *The Nation's Gratitude: World War I and Citizenship Rights in Interwar Romania* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 75.

132 Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*.

133 Bucur, *The Nation's Gratitude*, 49.

134 Ioan Setlacec, "Din activitatea Ministerului Muncii în raport cu Biuroul Internațional al Muncii din Geneva [From the activity of the Labour Ministry in relation to the International Labour Office in Geneva]," in *Zece ani de politică socială în România 1920–1930* (Bucharest: Ministerul Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale, 1930), 109.

135 Setlacec, "Din activitatea Ministerului Muncii," 104.

136 Alexandru Duvăz, "Exposé de motifs. La Protection du travail des mineurs et des femmes. La réglementation de la durée de travail.," 1927, Fond 1038–MMSOS. Oficiul pentru Studii Sociale și Relații Internaționale (1870–1949), File 233/1927, p. 63, SANIC Bucharest.

corporated several provinces which had belonged before the war to Austria-Hungary, the Russian Empire or the Kingdom of Bulgaria.[137]

Despite ILO-related foreign policy commitments to improve labor laws and social policy frameworks, Romanian Liberals were ideologically reluctant to favor state intervention for the benefit of workers. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, liberal politicians were protectionist when it came to investment and trade policies but had a "classical liberalism" take on social issues.[138] In an overwhelmingly agrarian country, Liberal governments wanted rapid industrialization, with capital preferably in the hands of ethnic Romanian entrepreneurs. By 1930, one of the secretaries of the Ministry of Labor, who had served in PNL governments in the previous decade, argued that both "the freedom to work without limits" and "the sovereign right to strike" belonged to "the old theory of liberalism and individualism", whereas the "modern social conception" meant that "freedoms are and must be limited to the extent that the superior and general interest of the state, or the public require it".[139]

In this political context, the "Greater Romania" of the 1920s had a very poor social and inclusion record. In this multiethnic agrarian country transformed by global conflict, most politicians had neither Bolshevik-fearing interest in women's well-being nor patience for the claims of feminists, minorities or industrial workers, all regarded with an amount of suspicion. "Universal" (adult male) suffrage was introduced in November 1918, local level electoral rights for educated women and war widows in 1929, but most women in Romania were not enfranchised until 1938, during the Carol I royal dictatorship. In 1921, agrarian reform distributed small plots of about five hectares (12 acres) to 1,4 million male peasants. Of 15,500,000 inhabitants, four fifths of which lived in villages, some 70 percent identified as Romanian, 8 percent as Hungarian, 4 percent as German, 4 percent as Jewish and 3 percent as Ukrainian. In 1919, Jews across Romania were naturalized as Romanian citizens and minorities from newly acquired territories were granted political rights, not at the initiative of the government but through the Treaty on Minorities included in the Treaty of Saint Germain with Austria.[140] The

137 Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months That Changed the World* (London: Random House, 2002), 337–338.

138 Brown, "The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory," 281–282.

139 Ioan Setlacec, "Legislația socială posterioară înființării Ministerului Muncii [Social legislation after the creation of the Ministry of Labor]," in *Zece ani de politică socială în România 1920–1930* (Bucharest: Ministerul Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale, 1930), 76.

140 Constantin Iordachi, "The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of Non-Citizens' in Romania, 1866–1918," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'histoire* 8, no. 2 (2001): 183.

country had the highest infant mortality rate in Europe at the time, because of malnutrition, lack of medical care and the overwork of expectant mothers.[141] Outside Transylvania, around 60 percent of women and almost as many men were illiterate. These trends continued. By 1938, Romania seems to have had the lowest social indicators in Europe, especially for meat and textiles consumption per capita.[142] These low levels for basic consumer items underscore the difficulties of providing for families on an everyday basis.

The Paris Peace Conference and its treaties system enabled, at once, the development of labor laws in Romania and the repression of the labor movement in the country. In the Conference negotiations, taking place between January 1919 and January 1920, the Romanian delegation built part of its eventually highly successful case for extensive territorial gains on the argument that the country would be a reliable buffer against Bolshevik Russia. Unlike neighbor and rival Hungary, where a councils' republic had been set up in March 1919,[143] Romania could commit to be a loyal part of the anticommunist *cordon sanitaire* which Allied politicians and diplomats were hoping to establish in Europe.[144] In fact, in early August 1919, Prime Minister Ion I.C. Brătianu had ordered the Romanian army to undertake an incursion into Hungary and occupy Budapest; this led to the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic on 4 August. At the negotiations, Brătianu claimed the brutal actions of the Romanian army in Hungary were a way of safeguarding European civilization from communism.[145]

In the 1920s and 1930s, Romania's governments delivered on these *cordon sanitaire* promises with continued enthusiasm. Between 1921 and 1924, laws passed in the aftermath of a brief 1920 general strike placed significant limits on trade unionism. Left-wing organizations, particularly in Bessarabia (formerly part of the Russian Empire), were heavily surveilled.[146] The Communist Party of Romania, formed in 1921, was banned in 1924 and communists hunted by authorities, particularly in the 1930s. Even the Social Democratic Party and trade unions,

141 Keith Hitchins, *Romania, 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 337.

142 Meat, textiles, electricity and steel (household tools, machinery) consumption per capita were lower than in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, neighbors which otherwise fared similarly badly in this category. Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 218. On literacy rates by gender and region, see *Enciclopedia României [The Encyclopedia of Romania]*, vol. 1 Statul [The State] (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1938), 143.

143 MacMillan, *Paris 1919*, 94–95.

144 Weindling, "Public Health and Political Stabilisation," 254.

145 Crețu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania*, 55.

146 Katherine Verdery, "Notes on a Century of Surveillance," *Journal of Romanian Studies* 1, no. 1 (April 2019): 39.

which asked that existing labor laws be applied or improved but were quite moderate otherwise, were closely spied on and harassed.[147]

Bureaucracy-wise, the hot potato of budgetary commitments to "social politics" was passed from one minister to another repeatedly. A Ministry of Labor and Social Protection [*Ministerul Muncii și Ocrotirilor Sociale*] was created in 1920, largely because the International Labor Organization promoted the creation of such ministries in Europe.[148] The first iteration of the portfolio of the Labor Minister consisted of labor law, insurance, cooperatives, social assistance and a "social museum." In 1922, the Ministry acquired authority over healthcare, becoming the Ministry of Public Health, Labor and Social Protection. In 1923, the labor and welfare portfolio and the healthcare portfolio were split again, into a Ministry of Labor, Cooperation and Social Insurance and a Ministry of Health and Social Protection. In 1929, the two ministries were re-joined, under the name they would retain until 1938, the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection [*Ministerul Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale*, MMSOS].[149] The Social Assistance Direction within the MMSOS was the predictable victim of all budget cuts or adjustments.[150]

Labor laws were difficult to enforce nationally and social insurance was deficient. Key laws on labor protection for women and minors, work hours or collective labor contracts were passed only in the late 1920s and contained large loopholes,[151] especially when it came to women's night work and permissible work hours for adults. Linda Gordon terms "the first track" of welfare those programs, such as social insurance and pensions, that are relatively generous, are "received as a matter of entitlement" (need does not need to be demonstrated) and do not entail monitoring. By contrast "the second track" of welfare, public (social) assis-

147 Alexandra Ghiț, "The Treacherous Trade Unionist: Paraschiva B. Ion and Labour Activism in the Romanian Tobacco Sector, 1920s to 1940s," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 31, no. 2 (2023): 261–278. On anticommunism as frame of governance in Romania in the interwar and later, see Adrian Grama, "Law, Labour, Sovereignty: One Century of Anti-Communism in Romania," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 32, no. 3 (2024): 513–531.

148 Ludek Rychly, "Ministries of Labour: Comparative Overview. History, Mandate, Challenges World-Wide Database and Organizational Charts," Working paper (Geneva: International Labor Organization. Labor Administration and Inspection Programme, June 19, 2013), https://researchrepository.ilo.org/esploro/outputs/encyclopediaEntry/Ministries-of-labour-comparative-overview/995331253902676.

149 I. Răducanu, "Zece ani de activitate a Ministerului Muncii [Ten years of activity of the Ministry of Labor]," in *Zece ani de politică socială în România 1920–1930* (Bucharest: Ministerul Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale, 1930), 3–4.

150 Ghiț, "Romania: Serving Fewer by Design", 214–219.

151 Setlacec, "Legislația socială."

tance, is stingy, stigmatizing, means-tested and ungenerous.[152] Across the country, the insurance of public employees for the major categories of risk was covered entirely from the state budget, making them a better and more steadily covered category, compared to craftsmen and blue-collar workers.[153] Thus, in 1933, the "first track" of welfare, social insurance, covered only 600,000 people,[154] mostly in Transylvania (Figure 1).

Although politicians in "Greater Romania" wanted to centralize as fast as possible, social insurance was very much a regional affair. Until 1933, the "Old Kingdom" (Romania within the pre-1914 borders) and Bessarabia had different social insurance laws and practices compared to Transylvania and Bukovina. This is why between 1921 and 1933, an industrial worker in "Old Kingdom" Bucharest or in Bessarabian Chișinău was covered by a 1912 Law on the Organization of Trades, Workers' Credit and Workers' Insurance,[155] whereas one in Transylvanian Cluj (Kolozsvár/Klausenburg) was still handled within the (adjusted) framework of the 1907 Hungarian XIX Law on Social and Accident Insurance, and one in the Bukovina region's capital Cernăuți (Chernivtsi/Czernowitz), by several prewar Habsburg Austrian laws on social and accident insurance.[156] Importantly, in the Old Kingdom and Bessarabia, agricultural workers, servants of all kinds and some categories of commercial workers were not insured. Servants were eventually included in social insurance in 1934.[157] Agricultural workers from Transylvania were de-insured in 1932; across the country, this large category of rural wage workers was not reinsured until after the Second World War.[158]

Until 1933, when insurance was unified through the Law for the Unification of Insurance (sometimes referred to as the "Ioanițescu Law"), workers in Transylvania especially had more generous benefits and could make better use of

152 Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance," 19–20.

153 Delcea, "A Nation of Bureaucrats or a Nation of Workers?," 82–84.

154 *Enciclopedia României [The Encyclopedia of Romania]*, vol. 1 Statul [The State] (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1938), 549, Diagram 1.

155 Parliament of Romania, "Lege pentru organizarea meseriilor, creditului şi asigurărilor muncitoreşti [Law for the organization of crafts, (labor) credit and labor insurance]," Monitorul Oficial 236/ 27 January 1912.

156 M Enescu, "Zece ani de activitate în câmpul asigurărilor sociale [Ten years of activity in the field of social insurance]," in *Zece ani de politică socială în România 1920–1930* (Bucharest: Ministerul Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale, 1930), 115.

157 "Controlul întreprinderilor și conformarea servitorilor casnici [The control of enterprises and the bringing into conformity of domestic servants]," *Buletinul muncii și asigurărilor sociale* 15, no. 5–8 (August 1935): 303.

158 "Asigurările sociale în România [Social insurance in Romania]," in *Enciclopedia României [The Encyclopedia of Romania]*, 1: 546.

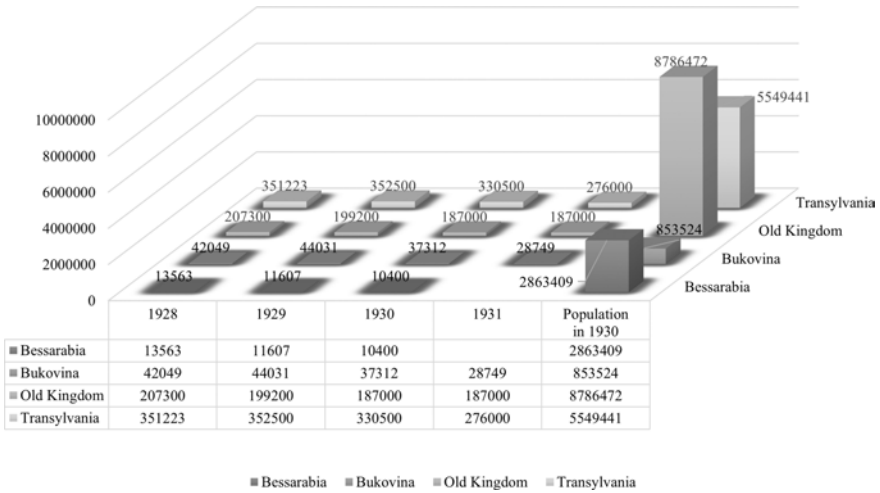

Figure 1: Average number of insured persons in the four historical regions of Romania, 1928–1930, compared to region's population in 1930. Source for figure: "Table 12–Raw data on the numbers of insured, cases of disease, disability and their distribution per 100 insured, average length of a case of illness, average number of illness days for an insured person," in Monitorul Oficial 7 April 1933, vol. Part 3 (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, 1933), 1178. Select data.

them. In theory, workers in the "Old Kingdom" could receive a pension from the pension funds of state-managed workers corporations (guilds).[159] (Large industrial establishments such as mines and tobacco factories had, historically, their own pension houses. But most blue-collar workers everywhere in Romania worked in workshops with fewer than ten employees; these ran pension schemes through guilds, if at all.) By contrast, most workers in Transylvania were not insured for old age.[160] However, health insurance meant much more for those insured in Transylvania than for those insured anywhere else in Romania at the time. A steadily contributing worker from a Transylvanian city such as Cluj or Timișoara (Temesvár/Temeschwar) could receive twice as much in weekly illness compensation [*ajutor bănesc de boală*] for ten weeks longer than a worker in Bucharest. He (it was usually "he") had much better access to insurance-based

159 Parliament of Romania, Lege pentru organizarea meseriilor, creditului şi asigurărilor muncitoreşti [Law for the organization of crafts, (labor) credit and labor insurance], art. 78. See also Rizescu, "Începuturile statului bunăstării," 54.

160 Parliament of Romania, "Senatul: Ședința de vineri 17 martie 1933 [Senate: Session from Friday 17 March 1933]," *Monitorul Oficial* Part 3, no. 34 (April 7, 1933): 1112.

healthcare. In 1930, eleven of fourteen publicly funded hospitals in Romania were in Transylvania.[161] Furthermore, the employer of a worker from Transylvania paid half of the insurance contributions in that region, so overall, insurance was somewhat cheaper for the contributing worker there.

In the capital city, social insurance helped an insured person less than it did in Cluj or Timișoara. In the "Old Kingdom" and in Bessarabia, until 1933, workers' corporations were "initial" or "first instance" insurance bodies for various professional categories.[162] Trade unions played a limited welfare role for members, even though emergency aid or aid for funerals could be obtained through unions as well. On behalf of workers in small industrial workshops, the Ministry of Labor administered the Central House for Crafts, Credit and Labor Insurance [*Casa Centrală a Meseriilor, Creditului şi Asigurărilor Muncitoreşti*] and oversaw the finances of corporations forming the Central House, through designated accountants from the civil service. This was a highly dysfunctional system. In most cases, the employer and the state did not contribute to the cost of insurance; the entire amount was deducted from the wages of the employee—through a 2 Lei deduction from each wage.[163] Workers' contributions were deducted through "insurance stamps", bought and attached by the employer on an insured person's Insurance Book. In theory, craft corporations distributed pensions and aids in cash to the various workers in their registers. On paper, a craftsman or craftswoman, or otherwise someone employed in a workshop, who paid his or her dues regularly, could benefit from monetary aid in case of illness, disability, lack of work (a kind of rudimentary unemployment insurance), and aid to cover the cost of his or her own burial and a craftsman's pension. The 1912 Law on the Organization of Trades, Workers' Credit and Workers' Insurance required the employer to pay half of the healthcare contributions for the employee. Yet by 1930, this was a reality only in establishments where the employers' obligation to pay into employees' healthcare were inscribed in collective labor contracts.[164] Workers insured through the Central House for Crafts could benefit from only small amounts of aid and only after at least twenty-five years of contributions (more specifically, 1,200 weeks). The level of pensions for those contributing to the Central House of Crafts was a fixed 500 Lei monthly,[165] a meager

161 Enescu, "Zece ani de activitate în câmpul asigurărilor sociale," 105.

162 Rizescu, "Începuturile statului bunăstării," 54.

163 Parliament of Romania, "Senatul: Ședința de vineri 17 martie 1933," 1141.

164 The author claims, erroneously, that the 1912 law did not require employers to pay part of contributions. In fact, the law mentions contributions by both, but formulations are broad enough to have enabled subsequent misinterpretation. Enescu, "Zece ani de activitate în câmpul asigurărilor sociale," 116.

165 Parliament of Romania, "Senatul: Ședința de vineri 17 martie 1933," 1144.

amount by 1932.[166] Lapses in payments as well as mismanagement of funds by the corporations meant that workers' needs for occasional aids and pensions were always far greater than the means available. In Marioara I.'s case file, the social worker noted in November 1929 that "unfortunately, no official mutual aid house is able to help her, as the corporation has no funds".[167]

Before the 1933 unification of insurance, coverage for the family members of the primarily insured person was stingier in Bucharest than in a Transylvanian city such as Cluj. The legal wife of any man insured in Transylvania received a fixed childbirth aid, for six weeks after delivery. In Bucharest and other cities in the Old Kingdom, a woman had to be insured (and therefore, steadily employed) herself to receive up to six weeks of the small childbirth-related aids in cash available.[168] A minimal period of twenty-six weeks of contributions was necessary. The wives of insured men could receive medical care and medication "means of the corporation permitting".[169] In case of death caused by a work accident, by 1930, the widow of an insured man received a 200 Lei monthly pension in Cluj, whereas in Bucharest and elsewhere in the Old Kingdom region, there was a monthly pension of 100 Lei per descendent.

Overall, in Bucharest, in case of illness and lack of work the risk of destitution was high, both for those whose employment was steady enough to be insured without gaps and for the many more in irregular and informalized employment. Charts published by the MMSOS in 1930 reveal that between 1923 and 1928, the total amounts of aid in cash paid in Transylvania for illness and childbirth were three time as high as those paid in the Old Kingdom and Bessarabia, even as Transylvania had 15 percent fewer contributors.[170] These differences were evened out through the 1933 reform which adjusted insurance in Transylvania downwards, to the lesser levels of benefits of the Old Kingdom.

The Great Depression arrives in Romania . . . and lingers

The stock market crash in the autumn of 1929 reached Romania quietly but quickly.[171] The National Peasantist Party [*Partidul Național Țărănesc*, PNȚ], in coa-

166 See Appendix 4 for other prices of basic consumer goods and their evolution.

167 "Anexă: Copia unui cazier." See Appendix 1.

168 Enescu, "Zece ani de activitate în câmpul asigurărilor sociale," 119–120; Ghiț, "Romania: Serving Fewer by Design", 227–229.

169 Parliament of Romania, Lege pentru organizarea meseriilor, creditului şi asigurărilor muncitoreşti [Law for the organization of crafts, (labor) credit and labor insurance], art. 120.

170 Enescu, "Zece ani de activitate în câmpul asigurărilor sociale," 116, 121.

171 Ghiț, "Serving Fewer by Design."

lition with smaller centrist and left parties, including the Social Democrats, had won elections in December 1928. PNȚ Prime Minister Iuliu Maniu and his new government promised an end to economic policies protecting local capital, the lowering of import duties, decentralization and a more thoughtful use of public money, as well greater attention to rural development.[172] Money would be borrowed on foreign markets to achieve a balanced budget and sustain planned reforms. Yet the 1930 crash in grain prices impoverished rural households while the drop in oil prices deprived the state budget of a relied-upon source of revenue.[173] Sovereign loans were granted under stringent conditions, and were accompanied by monitoring missions, dispatched by the main lender, the Banque de France, to enforce financial orthodoxy.[174] Lenders insisted on public sector downsizing.[175] Three rounds of cuts to public sector wages, so-called "sacrifice curbs", were applied, at the beginning of 1931, 1932 and 1933. The already "miserable budget" of the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection was heavily affected.[176]

Social insurance, as it existed in Romania when the crisis began, was of little help during the Great Depression. Unemployment insurance did not exist in Romania, unlike in neighboring countries. In fact, the PNȚ government as well as quite a few of the social reformers with ties to Peasantist politicians, repeatedly denied the existence of unemployment, usually claiming that the phenomenon was impossible in an agrarian country.[177] It was simply assumed that laborers out of work would revert to agriculture in the villages from which they had migrated

172 "Manifestul către țară al Partidului Național Țărănesc [Manifesto to the country of the National Peasantist Party]," *Foaia Poporului*, December 9, 1928, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

173 Romania was the second largest oil producer in Europe, after Russia, at the time, but a small global player, with a 1–3 percent market share in the interwar. Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 244; Constantinescu, *Situaţia clasei muncitoare*, 221, 226.

174 Dominique Torre and Elise Tosi, "Charles Rist and the French Missions in Romania 1929–1933. Why the 'Money Doctors' Failed?," in *Economic and Financial Stability in Southeast Europe in a Historical and Comparative Perspective (Conference Proceedings of the 4th Meeting of the South-Eastern European Monetary History Network)*, 2009, 91–106. See also Raphaël Chiappini, Dominique Torre, and Elise Tosi, "The Little Paris and the New Berlin: The French Money Doctors' Unsuccessful Mission in Romania, 1929–1933," *Revue d'économie Politique* 134, no. 2 (2024): 253–283.

175 Blyth, *Austerity*, 200–203.

176 "Bugetul pe 1931 al Ministerului Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale [The 1931 budget of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection]," *Revista de igienă socială* 1 (1931): 67.

177 Veturia Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor în sectorul I al Municipiului București [Principles in the organization of help for the unemployed in Sector I of the City of Bucharest]," *Buletinul muncii, cooperatiei și asigurarilor sociale* 12, no. 10–12 (December 1932): 437.

more or less recently.[178] This argument ignored the pleas of social democratic MPs to set up systematic relief and create large scale public works to employ industrial workers increasingly affected by underemployment and unemployment.[179] And it ignored the debt crisis that affected the countryside because of peasants' defaulting on loans taken out to cover the subsistence of families which could not be fed by working the very small plots most peasants had, with the inefficient tools most owned.[180] In this context of governmental reluctance to intervene, entrepreneurs were emboldened to claim that raising the level of contributions for social insurance to the 15 percent paid in neighboring Yugoslavia would lead to unemployment, to the irritated astonishment of a representative of the International Labor Organization visiting Romania in 1930.[181] Whatever publicly-funded relief for the unemployed there was in cities, especially beginning with 1931, was handled as a matter of social assistance at the local level.[182]

A 1930 law on public health, amended in 1933, and the already mentioned 1933 law unifying social insurance across the country bear the marks of the stringent austerity program on which PNȚ governments, in power throughout the crisis, embarked. The 1930 Sanitary and Protection Law, driven by MMSOS Minister Iuliu Moldovan (therefore given the moniker the "Moldovan Law"), enhanced the technical monitoring and supervision powers of the Ministry, doctors and certified social workers.[183] But it took on few additional budget burdens and made a lot of costs the responsibility of municipalities. For example, hospitals were to manage their own budgets. In practice, authorities encouraged hospitals to find their own additional revenues.[184] All public (social) assistance costs were to be borne by municipalities, with no mention of the government subsidies for private organizations that had been frequent before. Expectably, the 1933 Law for the Unification of Insurance did away with regional variation in insurance by, as

178 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 437.

179 Ghiț, "Serving Fewer by Design," 211–213.

180 W. Spizu, "Das rumänische Proletariat zwischen Krise, Hunger und Krieg," *Die Rote Gewerkschaftsinternationale* 12, no. 5 (March 1932): 707; Keith Hitchins, *Romania, 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 326.

181 Kott, "Constructing a European Social Model," 191.

182 Ghiț, "Serving Fewer by Design," 218–219.

183 Parliament of Romania, "Legea sanitară și de ocrotire [Sanitary and protection law]," Monitorul Oficial 236/14 July 1930.

184 B. Duţescu and N. Marcu, "Medicina în perioada dintre cele două războaie mondiale [The Medical sciences in the period between the two world wars]," in *Istoria medicinii româneşti*, ed. VL Bologa et al. (Bucharest: Editura Medicală, 1972), 302.

mentioned, making entitlements in Transylvania less generous.[185] In 1933, some craftsmen working in clients' homes were included into compulsory insurance, the contribution rate was raised to 6 percent, contributions were to be shared by employer and employee, with some state participation added in, and generally the administration of insurance became simpler. However, the higher contributions obtained through the 6 percent contribution rate were most likely directed towards replenishing the reserves of a pensions' system on the verge of collapse.[186] Widows' and descendants' pensions remained unprovided for. Supporters of the law admitted that "such a system for the insurance of widows and orphans will have to be achieved as soon as possible. The lack of such insurance is a great lacuna of the current system".[187] The family members of insured persons were not co-insured but were instead eligible for an optional insurance. Agricultural workers were purposefully excluded from the new insurance set up. And the inclusion of servants was deferred for several years.[188] This was, broadly, the insurance regime until 1938, when a new Law on Social Insurance finally co-insured family members of insured men and those employed in agricultural enterprises, albeit not small-plot farmers.[189]

The period 1934 to 1938 is marked by the rise of the fascist Iron Guard movement ("the legionaires"), the increasingly intrusive reign of King Carol II and a slow recovery from the Great Depression. The PNȚ was ousted from government in 1933, to be replaced once again largely by PNL governments. Liberal government cabinets found a way of cohabitating with the increasingly impatient and ambitious king. During this period, Carol II pursued a modernizing vision of his own, focused in part, on rural development.[190] In cities, the PNL's way of doing things in public administration—tight fisted on social service spending, generous on infrastructure and to political clients—prevailed. The Iron Guard grew increasingly violent and disruptive, even as Carol II thought he might secure them as allies.[191] Economically, the mid-1930s were a period of return to nationalist economic policy, similar to the 1920s in certain protectionist practices, but of higher

185 Parliament of Romania, "Legea pentru unificarea asigurărilor sociale [Law for the unification of social insurance]," Monitorul Oficial 83/8 April 1933.

186 Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy*, 207–208.

187 Parliament of Romania, "Senatul: Ședința de vineri 17 martie 1933," 1098.

188 Parliament of Romania, 1116.

189 King Carol II of Romania and Parliament of Romania, "Legea Asigurărilor Sociale [Law for Social Insurance]," Monitorul Oficial 298/ 22 Dec 1938.

190 Raluca Muşat, "'To Cure, Uplift and Ennoble the Village': Militant Sociology in the Romanian Countryside, 1934–1938," *East European Politics & Societies*, December 23, 2012, 360–361.

191 Clark, *Sfântă tinereţe legionară*, 119.

octane.[192] Romania intensified its role as an exporter grain and, especially oil. Still, the standard of living for most was low: prices remained high, real wages small and making a living in rural areas tough. Formally registered unemployment increased in the second half of the 1930s, partly because larger industrial establishments introduced machinery and labor management technologies that increased output and reduced the need for workers.[193]

In February 1938, Carol II instituted a royal dictatorship. A new Constitution was passed on 20 February 1938; political parties, except for the unity party called the Front of National Renaissance [*Frontul Renașterii Naționale*], were banned. Professional corporations [*bresle*] were set up to replace unions and professional associations. Each *breaslă* was represented by MPs in a "royal parliament" that could meet only when convoked by the king. Under the new constitution, all men and women over the age of 30 could now vote in national elections and be part of the royal parliament.[194] However, all Jews had had their Romanian citizenship revoked, already in January 1938.[195] These sweeping changes occurred on the background of a state of siege declared by the king.[196] Carol II's vision may have been inspired, in part, by the "corporatist" political thought of fascist economic thinker Mihail Manoilescu. Manoilescu was, at times, close to the king and had been advocating for the creation of a total "corporatist state" since the middle of the 1930s.[197] However, by 1938 tried and tested German and especially Italian governance models likely had a stronger influence on the design of institutions for the so-called "carlist dictatorship", compared to Manoilescu's ideas.[198] It is perhaps important for understanding the nature of corporatist ideas in the country and their limited links to concrete policies and political actors that the Iron Guard, a very popular fascist social movement by the late 1930s and potential promoter of a corporatist vision outlined by a Romanian right-wing intellectual, found Manoilescu's views unappealing,[199] because his vision was not oriented towards the peasantry and their traditions.

192 Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 256–257.

193 Constantinescu, *Situaţia clasei muncitoare*, 316–317.

194 Florin Grecu, *Construcția unui partid unic: Frontul Renașterii Naționale [The Construction of a single party: The Front of National Renaissance]* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2012), 139–140.

195 Solonari, *Purificarea naţiunii*, 63.

196 Grecu, *Construcția unui partid unic*.

197 Love, *Crafting the Third World*, 95–97; Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 38.

198 Grecu, *Construcția unui partid unic*, 230.

199 Antonio Costa Pinto, "Corporatism and 'Organic Representation'in European Dictatorships," in *Corporatism and Fascism* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 23.

In the period between 1938 and 1944, public welfare was provided in the framework of authoritarian and antisemitic regimes. In 1939, the Iron Guard assassinated Prime Minister Armand Călinescu. Carol II abdicated in September 1940, as part of Transylvania was re-awarded by Hitler to Hungary through the Second Vienna Award of 30 August. Romania spent much of the war as an ally of the Third Reich, under the command of Marshall Ion Antonescu. An ultra-nationalist himself, Antonescu repressed and eventually made illegal the increasingly violent Iron Guard, after seeking to share power with them for a year, from January 1940 to January 1941. On 14 February 1941, Romania was declared a military dictatorship.[200]

Layers of welfare provision in Bucharest in a global context

Before the late 1930s, Romanian politicians' reluctance to lend genuine support to contributory welfare programs is remarkable even though other countries from the region also had a stingy approach to welfare because of similar structural constraints. Like Romania, most post-imperial East-Central European states were agrarian semi-peripheries of industrialized Central and Western Europe. As previously outlined, in the 1920s Romania had policies protecting industry but remained an exporter of raw materials, especially grains.[201] Therefore, like other postimperial states in East-Central Europe, the country deepened its disadvantageous incorporation in global capitalist markets, as supplier of agricultural commodities.[202] This situation constrained policy options in domestic settings in such states, with effects on the development of social policy. So much so that after the middle of the 1920s, social policy developments stagnated in much of the region.

In peripheralized areas, the interwar tendency was to see social insurance and other components of social policy as simply adding to the costs of industrial production.[203] East-Central European states pursued conservative-demographic and nationalist goals as a way of challenging global hierarchies without restructuring local ones.[204] By contrast, in industrialized countries, social insurance

200 Solonari, *Purificarea națiunii*, 128–136.

201 Murgescu, *România și Europa*, 239.

202 Jäger, Melinz, and Zimmermann, *Sozialpolitik in der Peripherie*, 15–18.

203 Jäger, Melinz, and Zimmermann, 18.

204 Attila Melegh, "Between Global and Local Hierarchies: Population Management in the First Half of the Twentieth Century," *Demográfia English Edition* 53, no. 5 (2010): 51–77.

could be publicly defended—by social democrats, left liberals, even social conservatives—as a device for social integration and stabilization.[205]

Where contributory social insurance was underdeveloped and exclusionary, assistance provided to the urban poor through unstable mixes of private and public funding and providers was as significant for everyday survival—or, rather, as splendidly insignificant—as the insurance programs covering wage workers. Studies on late nineteenth century Hungary and twentieth-century Argentina already suggest that welfare provision by voluntary women's organizations (often subsidized by the state) was important for dealing with poverty and need precisely in those circumstances where state funds were limited.[206] The Great Depression counts among such circumstances. Still, it bears pointing out that economic instability was a feature of life in semi-periphery countries like Romania throughout the period.

According to Donna Guy, in the early 1950s, the ultimately expansive Peronist welfare state in Argentina was built around the kind of interwar social policies "that [had] offered a disjointed but rather effective edifice comprised of national subsidies to philanthropic groups".[207] Similarly to Buenos Aires, in Bucharest so-called "private initiative" associations provided emergency aid and raised public awareness about working-class urban poverty. And as in Hungary, well-educated women welfare activists in the Romanian capital were no strangers to the idea of managing social need in the city by removing the poor from sight or ignoring poverty[208]—as we will see in Chapter 4.

In the interwar period, public social assistance—that is, the form of public welfare usually reserved for those who did not benefit from any form of social-insurance–related entitlements such as a pension—continued many of the assumptions and practices of the older "poverty policy". In the many areas of the world influenced by "pessimistic versions" of English Liberalism,[209] from the middle of the nineteenth century, poverty policy was designed to "deter the needy from seeking welfare and coercing them to maintain themselves through their own efforts".[210] Such minimalism often merged with Christian principles of charity or other ideological tenets, depending on local political cultures. Practices associated with (but not exclusive to) the English Poor Laws that circulated globally

205 Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe*; Kathleen Canning, "Order/Disorder/Reordering: Rereading Charles Maier's 'Recasting Bourgeois Europe,'" *Contemporanea* 16, no. 3 (2013): 449–454.

206 Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule*, 11; Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State*, 6.

207 Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State*, 6.

208 Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule*.

209 Brown, "The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory," 273.

210 Midgley, "Poor Law Principles and Social Assistance in the Third World," 21.

and proved durable were the incarceration of the neediest and the disabled, insistence on any existing relatives assuming responsibility for someone devoid of means, devolution of responsibility to individual local governments, practices of expulsion to (usually rural) localities of origin in order to reduce social spending in large cities, punishments for vagrancy, and various morality-related criteria.[211]

In the twentieth century, eligibility criteria such as proof of absolute destitution (termed a "pauperism certificate" [*certificat de paupertate*] in Bucharest), evidence of inability to work, of dependent children or single parenthood, as well as more insidious respectability related criteria were increasingly frequent. At the same time, the end of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of various reformist currents pushing for less harsh conceptions of poverty, within Europe and beyond. Among others, the rise of labor politics and "the concern for facts and rationalization mixed up with a counteracting moral sensibility"[212] led to changes in practices of welfare provision, especially as social action became linked to social investigation, which tended to interpret poverty as both moral predicament and macroeconomic phenomenon.[213]

In the 1920s and the 1930s, the types of aid provided as part of public or private social assistance to those residing in accommodation of their own choice or means, not in welfare institutions (such as asylums or orphanages), in Europe and beyond, included: monetary benefits (usually modest), food parcels or clothing, aid towards the payment of rents or children's schooling, coverage of medical costs, and "means tested old age pensions".[214] Because those receiving assistance were not housed in assistance institutions, such assistance was known in England as "outdoor assistance". (The "indoor"/"outdoor" dividing principle existed beyond England, even as terms varied.) As I will show in the following chapters, especially in Chapter 3, all these types of aid were granted to those deemed eligible in Bucharest during the interwar, with firewood (essentially an in-kind wintertime heating aid) most systematically offered. Frequently, benefits were granted on a temporary basis, and by the 1930s, were accompanied by caseworkers who provided advice or promoted other practices of reforming the poor.[215]

In the twentieth century, besides the disciplinary reform tactics incorporated in social assistance, elements of repressive "poverty policy" were maintained. Susan Zimmermann argues that poverty policy in nineteenth century Hungary

211 Midgley, 20–5; Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule*.

212 Martin Bulmer, Kevin Bales, and Katherine K. Sklar, eds., *The Social Survey in Historical Perspective, 1880–1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 11.

213 Bulmer, Bales, and Sklar, *The Social Survey*, 17–19.

214 Midgley, "Poor Law Principles and Social Assistance in the Third World," 24.

215 Midgley, "Poor Law Principles," 25.

was characterized not only by state or philanthropic interventionism but also by more brutal practices: the criminalization of poverty (through the punishment of vagrancy and prostitution, or the use of expulsion to a poor person's birth place), the willful ignoring or downplaying of poverty, and great unevenness among cities in the interpretation of statutory assistance rules, generating administrative arbitrariness. As such, "local variation notwithstanding, low levels of public provision, ignorance of need, and a focus on 'doing away' with and criminalizing the visible signs of neediness seem to have prevailed everywhere".[216] At different points in time, as the following chapters clarify, practices addressing need in interwar Bucharest exhibited similar features.

In Romania, these poverty policy features of help for the uninsured or the barely insured (as through ill-functioning corporations) were maintained and developed through the interaction of three layers of state and civic institutions, each with their own assistance budgets and specific priorities. The original terms for these layers, in discussions related to the capital city, were: "the state" (that is, the central government), the "commune" or "the municipality" (that is, the city and its districts), and "the private initiative" (that is, charitable volunteer-run organizations).

"The state" (the central government) created strategy and policy primarily for the "first track" of welfare, contributory social insurance. Still, in theory and in selective practice, it had significant powers in the domain of the "second track" of welfare, social assistance. As suggested before, the central government operated with strongly gendered definitions of categories of beneficiaries of social assistance, a definitional practice that illustrates the gendered two-tracking of publicly funded welfare provision in the Romanian interwar context, in a way resembling for instance, North American dynamics. In the 1920s, government documents referred to "mandatory social assistance" as the assistance for which public funds could be spent. Such "mandatory social assistance" was defined as assistance to those "in a physical, moral or material state of inferiority" who "could not support themselves through their own efforts". Within this definition categories of special interest were: "poor new mothers and infant children", "poor and orphaned children, foundlings, the disabled and invalids", "the morally-abandoned vagrants and those children whose poor parents are unable to work", "the poor wounded, convalescents, and the ill", "widowers and old people who can no longer work, the blind and the deaf-mute, the abnormal and the feeble".[217] By 1930, the Moldovan Law curtly referred to "individuals and families

216 Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule*, 5.

217 Eugen Botez, "Asistența socială [Social assistance]," in *Zece ani de politică socială în România (1920–1930)* (Bucharest: Ministerul Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale, 1930), 229.

incapable of supporting themselves" as the ones for whom municipalities were meant to provide social assistance.[218] Implicit in these more or less detailed definitions of who could benefit from social assistance from government funds was the recognition that care work and widowhood exposed women to poverty as much as severe disability exposed everyone, that poverty was often a family rather than an individual issue, and on the flip side, implicitly, that social insurance covered especially those able to work according to an ideal built around the life trajectory of an able-bodied, regularly employed man conceived as an individual (albeit one with bread-winning responsibilities). The extent to which this produced unequal outcomes for different categories of inhabitants was not a key concern at state level.

The asymmetrical gendering of public welfare tracks underpinned the continuous devolution of responsibility for social assistance issues and for the welfare of those most likely to need such assistance onto the municipal and associational sector. By contrast, the social insurance track was continuously centralized. In the 1920s, Liberal governments encouraged social assistance by non-governmental organizations. Still, between 1920 and 1927, a Social Assistance Direction within the MMSOS had considerable autonomy to pursue this politics—the Direction collected its own funds through a "social assistance [fiscal] stamp" through which concert tickets and the purchase of luxury items were taxed. From these revenues, the Direction subsidized private organizations, while requiring them to register legally and have clear statutes. The Direction maintained institutions of its own, such as schools for the hearing- and visually-impaired, correctional schools and "work colonies"—rural institutions where people found begging in cities could be interned.[219] However, a 1927 reform placed all revenue collection in the sole power of the Ministry of Finance. The Direction could no longer collect its own revenues; its head complained that funds earmarked for the Direction were abusively directed, towards the IOVR, for example.[220] The 1930, "Peasantist", Sanitary and Protection Law turned the Social Assistance Direction into a technical, advisory bureau within the MMSOS.[221] Nevertheless, the central government continued to subsidize "private initiative" organizations through mechanisms other than the Social Assistance Direction. In 1935, the central government was once again the main source of funding for the private initiative in most cities in Romania, but especially in Bucharest. There, twenty "assistance institutions" received more than 21,000,000 Lei from the

218 Parliament of Romania, Legea sanitară și de ocrotire [Sanitary and protection law], 466.
219 Botez, "Asistența socială."
220 Botez, "Asistența socială."
221 Botez, "Asistența socială," 252.

central government. The municipality provided another 2,000,000 Lei to seven institutions in the city.[222]

The Bucharest municipality, one layer below "the state", was a main provider of public social assistance already before the First World War. The 1919-founded MMSOS reinforced municipal attributions for public social assistance across the country, through its laws and regulations on social assistance and protection. In the 1920s, "communes" ran bureaus for the triage of vagrants and beggars, for job placement and in-home relief [*asistența la domiciliu*], clinics for infants and toddlers [*dispensare*], public baths and "temporary shelters and food kitchens for the poor".[223] The food kitchens, a night shelter and some in-home relief had been provided by the local government in Bucharest since the 1910s. Since the eighteenth century, the territories under Ottoman domination that became the Kingdom of Romania in 1877 had an institution for providing relief to impoverished urban dwellers of respectable backgrounds (*Cutia Milelor*) and the city itself had a tradition of free healthcare for the poorest in the largest hospitals.[224] Free healthcare could still be accessed after the First World War but with difficulty, as destitution needed to be proved with documents. In 1929, a new "Regulation for Public Assistance in the Municipality of Bucharest with Sections on Different Sectors" created a central welfare office, meant to coordinate welfare provision across the city.[225] The 1930 Sanitary and Protection law confirmed the provisions of the 1929 municipal regulation and clarified that the Central Welfare Office was to be staffed by women graduates of the Superior School of Social Assistance, a new institution which certified social workers after a two-year course of study.[226] In fact, as mentioned before, the law was careful to place the budget burden of assistance for the most vulnerable onto the municipality. As we shall see, these 1929 provisions

222 Ministerul Economiei Naționale, Institutul Central de Statisticã, *Instituțiunile de asistență socialã și de ocrotire: Rezultatele recensãmântului institutiunilor de asistență socialã și de ocrotire din 1 ianuarie 1936 [The Social assistance and protection institutions: The Results of the census of institutions for social assistance and protection from 1 January 1936]* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Central de Statistică, 1938), 50–51. Similarly, in the city of Iași, in Eastern Romania, seven assistance institutions received more than 21,000,000 Lei.

223 Botez, "Asistența socială," 231.

224 Ligia Livadă-Cadeschi, *De la milă la filantropie. Instituții de asistare a săracilor din Țara Românească și Moldova în secolul al XVIII-lea [From mercy to philathropy. Institutions for the assistance of the poor in Valachia and Moldova in the 18th century]* (Bucharest: Nemira, 2001).

225 Primăria Municipiului București, *Regulament pentru asistența publică a municipiului București cu secțiuni pe sectoare [Regulation for public assistance in the municipality of Bucharest with sections on the different sectors]* (Bucharest: Primăria Municipiului București, 1929).

226 Parliament of Romania, Legea sanitară și de ocrotire [Sanitary and protection law], arts. 90, 136–148.

were practically undone, if not formally overturned, in 1934 when a PNL mayor ran the capital again, following an interlude during which the PNȚ dominated municipal affairs, between 1929 and 1934.[227]

Besides the central government and the municipality, "private initiative" societies were a third key type and layer of publicly funded welfare provider in cities. A significant section of these societies worked especially for the benefit of women and children. These societies were private in that they functioned as (non-governmental) associations and set their own goals and methods. Yet as mentioned above, they received subsidies from the central government. In effect, the expertise of their volunteers, and the labor power of these volunteers, was integrated into municipal level provision.

Many of these "private initiative" societies were run by women and women's organizations; their history was tied to both women's philanthropy and women's suffrage politics.[228] The 1930 Sanitary and Protection Law placed "charitable associations" [*societățile de binefacere*] under more stringent ministerial technical control and financial supervision. It put them under the coordination of the new county- or city-level Central Welfare Offices. From that point on, the budgets of all societies that received government subsidies had to be approved by the MMSOS; subsidies were capped to 20 percent of the funds a society managed to raise itself. Through the 1930 law, charities were encouraged to create federations around specific topics, with the various federations building up to a union.[229] Once the Liberals governed again, from 1934, the politics of subsidizing associations, especially those that maintained various institutions, resumed. As this book will make clear, especially in chapter 3, the women welfare activists running such societies developed complex, relatively harmonious, relationships with the central government and local authorities.

Transnational activists and urban social-knowledge-making practices

The public-private setup of welfare may have had strong continuities with the nineteenth century, but the policymaking process changed. In Europe, the interwar was a period when relatively new techniques, such as "censuses, principles

227 See Appendix 2.

228 Ștefania Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc: Studiu și antologie de text [From the history of Romanian feminism: Study and text anthology]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2006).

229 Parliament of Romania, Legea sanitară și de ocrotire [Sanitary and protection law], arts. 468–471.

of urban planning, models of public housing, social work techniques" advocated by municipalists were seriously taken up by administrators.[230] By the end of the First World War, the social sciences had largely stabilized their key concerns and techniques.[231] At the same time, "social scientists" did not yet belong to a discipline or profession. They were part of the knowledge production processes which in Daniel Horn's definition "identified the social domain as their object. These included not only anthropology and sociology, but also demography and urbanism, and such hybrid fields as social hygiene and social medicine, the goals of which were to diagnose, cure, and prevent diseases that threatened the 'social body'".[232] In Horn's account, at this point the social sciences could claim to be part of the discourses widely accepted as authoritative—what Mitchell Dean terms "veridical discourses".[233]

As Stéphane Van Damme has argued, "the regime of knowledge of expertise became dependent on institutions of urban power" and on capital cities as scenes for the production of norms, as veritable "tribunals of knowledge" due to the multiplication of affairs and polemics which enabled "central scientific institutions to judge and define good science".[234] Having appeared in the eighteenth century, the link between (capital) cities and knowledge production gained an additional, transnational dimension after the First World War, through the circulation of expert knowledges in what Pierre-Yves Saunier termed "the transnational municipal moment".[235] Saunier points out how in that historical conjuncture the urban and processes at the urban scale became unusually important for the debate on "the European world order" and the meaning of universalism.[236]

Three political currents were particularly influential in constructing a city-centric point of view in international politics. Socialists, those subscribing to the epoch's brand of political technocratism ("the reform current") and American democratic liberals ("the progressives") turned "the municipal" into a protean notion. In their views, "the municipal" easily fused politics, science, and social assis-

230 David G. Horn, *Social Bodies: Science, Reproduction, and Italian Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 8.

231 Horn, *Social Bodies*, 7.

232 Horn, *Social Bodies*, 6.

233 Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty: Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 216.

234 Stéphane Van Damme, "Expertise in Capital Cities," in *Fields of Expertise: A Comparative History of Expert Procedures in Paris and London, 1600 to Present*, ed. Christelle Rabier (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), xv–xvi.

235 Pierre-Yves Saunier, "Taking up the Bet on Connections: A Municipal Contribution," *Contemporary European History* 11, no. 4 (2002): 516.

236 Saunier, "Taking up the Bet on Connections," 512.

tance. Interwar municipalism thus comprised "not only municipalities as such but also the idea of 'the municipal' as a field of research—the population, policies, and administrative methods to be found in municipalities".[237] These transnationally-oriented municipal currents added to the ideological diversity already shaping urban social reform in different countries. For example, socialists, feminists, and Christian democrats were active reformers in major cities in both Wilhelmine and Weimar Germany.[238]

Regardless of experts' internationalist enthusiasm, cities were connected to and constrained by national level politics and policies in important ways. In Europe, in places where a French-style of local administration was adopted (as was the case in Bucharest), municipal administrations had seemingly less autonomy and were more highly politicized than in many German or English cities, which had strong traditions of urban self-government.[239] On the other hand, bureaucrats in Europe had considerable space of action within the limits created by national statutes and guidelines. Local bureaucrats contributed to shaping these limits and national policies, with municipal practices and institutions frequently becoming national ones. Sometimes, municipal administrations recognized and sought to deal with social problems that national-level administrations could not and did not want to see, among which were rapid urbanization or rising unemployment.[240] In the twentieth century, the tensions between expertise and democratization increased within city administrations, as the social and technical sciences gained prestige and suffrage was expanded.[241]

In this context, as I detail in the next chapter, women involved in social knowledge-making in municipal settings (be it as long-time charity workers, social reformers, local politicians, or a first generation of university-educated professionals) became both pressed and drawn into asserting their legitimacy as experts on social issues and toward formalizing their knowledge. One way in which legitimacy could be asserted was by claiming expertise in relation to topics associated with women's life experiences. Anne Epstein argues that between 1900 and 1918, France saw the emergence of "feminine/womanly expertise"—a claim to au-

237 Saunier, "Taking up the Bet on Connections."

238 Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006): 30–50.

239 Michèle Dagenais, Irene E. Maver, and Pierre-Yves Saunier, eds., *Municipal Services and Employees in the Modern City: New Historical Approaches* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 3.

240 Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Eléments pour une socio-histoire des catégories de l'action publique," in *Historicités de l'action publique*, ed. Pascale Laborier and Danny Trom (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), 84.

241 Dagenais, Maver, and Saunier, *Municipal Services and Employees in the Modern City*, 5.

thority accessible to socially active women, who could now become recognized as non-academic authorities on all issues relating to women and "the feminine life cycle," as well as childcare.[242] By 1910, feminism as a political current and the "woman question" had become part of the topics associated with such "feminine expertise". Epstein explains that such consecration was made possible by the increasing weight of professional and scientific credentials globally, and the growing preoccupation of post-Dreyfus Affair liberal intellectuals in France for women's issues, gender relations, and social welfare.[243]

A second way in which women involved in social investigation and social reform movements could assert themselves as experts was by designating about whom they could or should speak authoritatively. In a pioneering essay on the production of "women" as a category of social action linked to feminism as a political movement in the British context, Denise Riley argued that after the First World War, "this new production of 'the social' offered a magnificent occasion for the rehabilitation of [the declining political category] 'women.' In its very founding conceptions, [the social] was feminized; in its detail, it provided the chances for some women to enter upon the work of restoring other, more damaged, women to a newly conceived sphere of grace".[244] In Riley's reading, the growing public interest for social issues writ large neutralized feminist political claims; social research on women was, in Britain, a way to keep gendered categories visible and legitimate, partly by reconfiguring how progressive women related to class.[245] While it is tempting and to an extent easy to think of women involved in social reform as ultimately, participants in and forgers of social control practices meant to reproduce class hierarchies and tame class conflict, pursuing only or primarily this interpretation schema here would prematurely do away with a lot of the complexity of the historical phenomenon of social reform and welfare provision as form of public action in interwar Romania, with the complexity of working-class or otherwise lower-class experience and with considerations of the strong complications brought by ethnicity and race to such an account. To give an example of the ideological complications of feminism (and feminists) in the interwar period: one of the most articulate defenses of working-class women's right to work and to organize their lives in ways that fit not societal expectations but everyday needs, discussed in chapter 5, came from a teacher

242 Anne R. Epstein, "Gender and the rise of the female expert during the Belle Époque," *Histoire@Politique* 2, no. 14 (June 17, 2011): 84.

243 Epstein, "Gender and the rise of the female expert,"85.

244 Denise Riley, *"Am I That Name?": Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (London: Springer, 1988), 48.

245 Riley, *"Am I That Name?"*, 57.

associated with the conservative SONFR [Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women] led by "Princess" Alexandrina Cantacuzino. All in all, because the historiography on gender and welfare in Romania is very limited, in this book, I sought to convey the complexity emerging from the sources I had access to rather than to align my interpretation of middle-class women's social reform and welfare provision work between 1918 and 1937 with the historiography and social theory of modern social control.

Thirdly, expertise could be translated between municipal, national and transnational scales, and women seeking public recognition availed themselves of such conversion strategies. In the French case, "feminine expertise" manufactured at home became a form of social capital once international congresses and publications on social issues began to multiply at the end of the nineteenth century, constructing the space of transnational social reform.[246] After the creation of large organizations that consecrated social reform questions as matters of international security and peace, "feminine expertise" constituted bona fide professional expertise, despite bringing practitioners a lesser type of prestige, because of its feminized character and not always academically credentialed practitioners, when compared to the prestige of other newly-institutionalized domains of knowledge such as "sociology" or "statistics".

FInally, women involved in charity work could ask to have their view on social issues heard by invoking a history of municipal social involvement, particularly as against credentialed professional women. Discussing the case of welfare provision in Buenos Aires, Donna Guy argues that the interwar period was one of transition, from the dominance of women's and religious charities in urban social reform towards the heightened authority on social welfare issues of women who were credentialed professionals, bureaucrats, or recognized internationally as activists on social issues.[247] Because both formally qualified and non-formally experienced women involved in social reform and welfare provision were marginalized in the fields of politics and among cultural producers, they sometimes struggled with each other in order to gain entry in male-dominated spaces of influence such as political parties, research institutes or important councils or committees.

The interwar period's interlinked social research and welfare provision practices focused on understanding changes in patterns of women's employment outside the home. With increasing frequency, since the nineteenth century, public discourse and scholarly research portrayed familial intimacy and women's paid

246 Epstein, "Gender and the rise of the female expert"; Sklar, Schüler, and Strasser, *Social Justice Feminists*.

247 Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State*.

work in a tense relation.[248] As Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott point out, industrial employers' policies "[incorporated] views about women's supposedly natural, exclusively reproductive role into economic arrangements", thus skirting responsibilities for women's childbearing and families' childcare, leaving these societal issues to be solved by each family through individualized solutions.[249] After the 1850s, alarmist metaphoric representations equating "factory women" with misery and sexual debauchery were replaced with a conceptual vocabulary increasingly reliant on the "act of observation" and the "complexity of concrete details," while still participating in a gendered moralizing discourse.[250]

In many settings, it was not until the 1930s that authoritative researchers did complex surveys on women's employment and working women's living conditions. Certainly, data on women's basic employment patterns in France or England existed since the 1850s.[251] Yet in 1931, Marguerite Thibert, the woman who would become a lead investigator of the International Labor Office, running the ILO's Correspondence Committee on Women's Work, complained in a personal letter that: "There has been so little research on the organization of work and related issues in [France] that I really can't think of any qualified public figure to suggest, while in Germany 10 or 15 names come to mind immediately".[252]

Once international organizations encouraged the process of corroborating small-scale data (through the collection of statistics from multiple settings and attempting international comparison), the association of women's wage work with questions of social reproduction of the family increased as well. Differences in the timing of such investigations were tied to country and regional variation in women's visibility in the formal labor force and the type of wage labor they engaged in. I show in this book, especially in Chapter 5, that solid research on women's work outside the home in Romania emerged and quickly multiplied as part of such transnational dynamics from the 1930s onwards, with the clearest circulation channels between Romania and Geneva (as the seat of the ILO and the

248 Joan W. Scott, "'L'ouvrière, Mot Impie, Sordide': Women Workers in the Discourse of French Political Economy, 1840–1860," in *The Historical Meanings of Work*, ed. Patrick Joyce (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 119–142; Kathleen Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850–1914* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

249 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 8.

250 Scott, "L'ouvrière, Mot Impie, Sordide," 141.

251 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 68.

252 Quoted in Françoise Thébaud, "Difficult Inroads, Unexpected Results: The Correspondence Committee on Women's Work in the 1930s," in *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards, and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present*, eds. Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker, and Susan Zimmermann (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 95.

League of Nations) and the United States of America (and experiments in community-based welfare provision there), respectively.

Patterns of Bucharest women's paid and unpaid work in global context

Most women who worked in Bucharest worked in domestic contexts, doing either paid or unpaid labor. However, after the First World War, more and more adult women worked full time jobs outside the home. The major reason for women's pursuit of paid work outside the home was the high cost of living compared to the low level of adult men's (and working children's) wages. In a 1920 study, government representatives contrasted local railway workers' wages and the cost of living. They concluded frankly that the wages of the relatively well-paid railway workers covered between 20 and 70 percent of the monthly 1,200 Lei needed for the modest living of a family of four.[253] Such meager "breadwinner wages", from which men tended to retain amounts for their leisure, then had to be allocated for daily needs by partners and mothers. Women's wages were much lower than men's, in some sectors (such as the textile sector) they could be half as much as those of men working in the same factory. From the middle of the 1930s, the number of formally employed women rose significantly. At that point, the expanding textile and leather industries, making export goods and working to supply a fast-reequipping army, contributed to the trend.[254] The 1930 census indicated that in the whole of Romania, of 399,599 adult workers in industry, 52,941 (13.2 percent) were women; by contrast, of 257,749 servants [*personal casnic*], 218,494 (89 percent) were women.[255]

These changing patterns of women's work in Bucharest were consonant with global developments that had started in the nineteenth century but were ongoing, including in "advanced" or "core" industrial economies. A composite picture of women's patterns of involvement in paid and unpaid, productive and socially reproductive work, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Global North has in its foreground the persistence of elements of the pre-industrial or otherwise agrarian household economy in urban industrializing settings. According to Tilly and Scott, "the family wage economy", previously typical for how propertyless people organized families, became an increasingly frequent

253 Constantinescu, *Situaţia clasei muncitoare*, 136.
254 Constantinescu, *Situaţia clasei muncitoare*, 289.
255 Constantinescu, *Situaţia clasei muncitoare*, 230–231.

way to organize the families of the working classes as well.[256] This entailed a gendered division of labor between wage earning outside the home (historically coded as male, but increasingly portrayed as of the 1880s as exclusively so) and socially-reproductive and productive labor occurring within the home—with such work becoming more and more strongly coded as the exclusive task of adult women, especially once children were born and childcare became a need within a household.

Like pre-industrial household economies, the family wage economy of industrializing urban settings relied on women's home-based income generating activities, done in combination with care work and household work. Yet the strengthening political association between wage-earning and work, between work and a workplace separated from the family household, finally between wage earning and industrial rhythms, made women's income-generating work within households invisible to most economists, politicians and social reformers.[257] By the early 1920s, discourses on women's household work as constituting "care" rather than work cemented a configuration in which women's income-generating activities within the working class home could be obscured.[258] So much so that as Boris and Lewis show, even if "in 1920, [in the USA] one quarter to one third of married women labored at home with the aid of their children, taking in laundry, keeping boarders, or manufacturing garments," such work "lacked the recognition as real work and served as the epitome of exploitative labor in a maturing industrial economy".[259] This association meant that households became linked with the expectation that only care work (rather than care work as well as income-generating work) would be performed, while bad working conditions, including self-exploitation, characterizing activities in the space of the home could not be easily problematized. I explore the intricacies of a process through which this discursive linkage was formed for the case of Bucharest especially in Chapter 5, building it into my argument about the role of informal labor in ensuring working-class families' survival, and social investigators' role in configuring and reconfiguring this issue as a matter of concern.

As income-generating work within homes was disregarded while making money became associated with working outside the home, the socially reproduc-

256 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 63.

257 Eileen Boris and Carolyn Herbst Lewis, "Caregiving and Wage-Earning: A Historical Perspective on Work and Family," in *The Work and Family Handbook: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives and Approaches*, eds. Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes, Ellen Ernst Kossek, and Stephen Sweet (New York: Routledge, 2006), 79–80.

258 Boris and Lewis, "Caregiving and Wage-Earning," 79.

259 Boris and Lewis, "Caregiving and Wage-Earning," 81.

tive "care work" women did within households became more visible to policymakers. Social reformers and investigators in the 1920s and 1930s were concerned about the well-being of children, the hygiene of homes, and increasingly the atmosphere of intimacy within families. Certainly, such caring work performed by working class women was itself a form of providing for the family.[260] Women who worked primarily within homes carried a heavy emotional work burden, in addition to housework and income generation, as they ensured the perpetuation of affective bonds within families, relations with kin and neighbors (essential to families' survival), and managed children's participation in the labor force. They negotiated and justified the allocation within the household of a portion of men's wages.[261]

Around the world, many women social reformers became preoccupied with care work partly out of a recognition that it was integral to the survival of families which depended on wages. Still, by the 1920s, the caring aspect of women's household work became emphasized in discourses on social issues. Social reform voices pitted women's wage work outside the home against the goal of the successful reproduction of working-class families, all the while veiling the various wage-earning activities taking place within family homes. Boris and Lewis explain that in the USA, the number of employed married women doubled in the period from 1900 to 1930, while previously, most women wage workers had been young, white and single. Because this posed a problem for a family model in which men were breadwinners and women were caregivers, American social reformers and policymakers claimed that women ought to work only as a last resort against destitution. By extension, "women's wage labor became evidence of failed masculinity".[262] Similar attitudes to women's wage work outside the home shaped the teaching of social work in Bucharest and social knowledge production about women's employment and economic contribution. At the same time, on the ground attitudes varied; many social investigators conceded that women did not have an alternative to wage work and sought to work within that reality.

The interwar spread of so-called "contributory" social protection schemes institutionalized the association of work with wages, and of women with home-based labor. Georgina Hickey points out that the New Deal "favored welfare work for men as family breadwinners, direct assistance for mothers, and work relief for women only when the gendered wage economy dictated".[263] Similar develop-

260 Boris and Lewis, "Caregiving and Wage-Earning," 79.

261 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 144.

262 Boris and Lewis, "Caregiving and Wage-Earning," 81.

263 Georgina Hickey, *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890–1940* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 13, quoted in Boris and Lewis, "Caregiving and Wage-Earning," 82.

ments occurred in Western Europe.[264] At the same time, the male breadwinner salary existed more in the domain of political projection, and rarely in workers' pockets. This was very much the case of interwar Bucharest, where both men's and women's labor was informalized and precarious—features of wage labor in agrarian economies which intensified after 1929. While welfare work for men was unavailable and unemployed men (and their families) were bought one-way train tickets and expelled from the city, some mothers could claim direct assistance through the small-scale public or private schemes run by women. Still, relief often came hand in hand with these families becoming involved in social knowledge-making as subjects of surveys and the like.

In the composite image of urban women's work in the first half of the twentieth century constructed in this section, young, unmarried women's work, particularly in domestic service, must represent another focus point. Especially in fluctuating agrarian economies, daughters' work as domestic servants in cities was crucial for the survival of peasant household economies. Tilly and Scott point out that in nineteenth-century France and England, daughters would be sent to work as live-in domestic servants for several years before marriage, whereas it was not unusual for a family's sons to remain in the countryside, employed as agricultural laborers.[265] According to Tilly and Scott, in nineteenth century England and France, "parents sent their daughters into service because such jobs were plentiful".[266] An expanding middle-class meant there was a greater demand for domestic servants. Service did not require special skills or previous training, and servant girls performed a variety of tasks in households, including caring for children, cleaning, even assisting with family shops. As Tilly and Scott explain, service "offered a relatively secure form of migration for a girl", because accommodation, food, sometimes clothing was provided to servants, making adjustment to city life easier for girls from rural areas.[267] Notably, by the 1930s, service was no longer the appealing occupation it had been only decades before. Smaller households, some labor-saving devices and the economic crisis meant that a growing number of women in England, France and across Europe sought to do without servants or no longer employed live-in servants but housekeepers, who tended to be older.[268] Interwar Bucharest still had many young servants but the

264 Lynne Haney and Lisa Pollard, "In a Family Way: Theorizing State and Familial Relations," in *Families of a New World: Gender, Politics, and State Development in Global Context* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 1–16.

265 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 108.

266 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 108.

267 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 108.

268 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 153–154.

occupation was changing in Romania too, with younger middle class women doing their own housekeeping.[269]

Similar patterns of domestic service work existed in Hungary and were maintained in twentieth century Britain.[270] Nevertheless, the deregulated, unprotected character of such work and the potential for abuse present in live-in labor came under growing (but by no mean widespread) international scrutiny in the 1920s. The issue was taken up by women and men involved in social research and welfare provision, in various settings to different degrees.[271] Women social researchers in Romania, like counterparts elsewhere, showed relatively little interest for labor conditions in domestic service. However, domestic service remained an important element in caring for young women through private or public assistance organizations in Bucharest as elsewhere: poor and orphaned girls were frequently oriented towards the occupation. I detail this conjuncture and its effects on labor relations in Chapter 4.

Social reproduction feminists point out that domestic service makes a complex contribution to the maintenance of capitalist social relations. Using a Marxist and Phenomenological Sociology framework, Jacklyn Cock showed how maids contribute to the reproduction of labor power by ensuring employers' physical maintenance (through childcare, house cleaning, cooking, shopping, sewing, and mending) and psychological maintenance ("tension absorption through promotion of cordial family relations," socialization of children, and historically, consensual or non-consensual sexual relations). Maids are also involved in reproducing relations of production through "ideological maintenance," ensured through "language, skills, and socialization into class, race, and gender relations".[272] The multiple and complex expectations placed on what is a deskilled, low-paid position ex-

269 In 1935, an older servant woman looking for work argued that she could not find any because the young ladies were now doing their own housekeeping. REX, "Oficiul de Plasare [The Job Placement Office]," *Ilustrațiunea română*, May 15, 1935, DigiBuc.

270 Gábor Gyáni, "A Chapter of the Social History of Hungarian Women Female Domestic Servants on the Labour Market, Budapest (1890–1940)," *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 32, no. 3–4 (1986): 365–391; Selina Todd, "Poverty and Aspiration: Young Women's Entry to Employment in Inter-War England," *Twentieth Century British History* 15, no. 2 (2004): 119–142.

271 Eileen Boris and Jennifer N. Fish, "Decent Work for Domestics: Feminist Organizing, Worker Empowerment, and the ILO," in *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers*, eds. Dirk Hoerder, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Silke Neunsinger (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 530–552; Scheiwe and Artner, "International Networking in the Interwar Years: Gertrud Hanna, Alice Salomon and Erna Magnus," 75–96.

272 Jacklyn Cock, *Maids & Madams: A Study in the Politics of Exploitation* (Randburg: Ravan Press, 1980), 8.

posed the Black South African maids Cock interviewed to "the ultra-exploitation of domestic workers".[273]

Shireen Ally argues that domestic service is implicated in creating "the affects of domination". In the first place, the daily practices of intimacy involved in this kind of labor, the adaptability consistently expected from the worker, the access to secrets and intimate information as well as the tactility of the occupation make domestic servants "intimacy workers," in Boris and Salazar-Parreñas's definition, and suggest an intensified experience of alienation due to the consistent demands placed on workers' emotions and social attachments. But in addition to this, in Ally's reading of domestic work through the work of Mbembe, Stoler, and Foucault, domestic service's social intimacy, sensoriality, and physical proximity constitutes it into a "dirty [type of intimate] work" which requires the master's "political disinfection" through abusive behavior. In her view, this feature makes domestic service a "contradictory cauldron of affect" in which distrust, fear, "compassion," and "love" between employer and employee coexist.[274] For Ally, this "simultaneity of intimate care and destructive violence that delineates the psychic field of domination", implicated in colonial and other forms of subjectivation, constitute the servant as a "figure deeply and historically implicated in psychic affect".[275] Whereas in Chapter 4, dealing with domestic service, I focus on understanding especially the politics of exploitation involved in domestic service in Bucharest, I ocasionally mention the role of affect in domestic service work.

All in all, welfare provision in interwar Romania remained a significantly "private" affair, even as social issues were a growing public preoccupation. The underpaid and unpaid austerity welfare work required to survive and help others thrive was taken up by women from very different social backgrounds. Regionally, Romania was not unusual in having limited resources to spend on welfare, neither in maintaining some elements of "poverty policy" in public assistance, nor in its initial enthusiasm for ILO-inspired labor and social politics. Interwar Romania, however, does seem to be unusual in the trend of creating new social insurance laws which left old gaps in place or even increased them—Transylvanian agricultural workers were de-insured in 1932, servants and co-insured family members were only fully covered in 1935. As I suggested here, this was a reluctance in part ideological, in a country where most policymaking elites naturalized inequality, seeing "social hierarchy as normal and desirable",[276] in Maria Bucur's

273 Cock, *Maids & Madams*, 6.

274 Shireen Ally, "Domestics,'Dirty Work'and the Affects of Domination," *South African Review of Sociology* 42, no. 2 (2011): 2–5.

275 Ally, "Domestics,'Dirty Work'and the Affects of Domination," 2.

276 Bucur, *The Nation's Gratitude*, 37.

words. This is how women in urban settings, especially if they had young children, but just as often if they were young servants or older widowed women, were at a high risk of poverty. In effect, I contend, women were the frequent beneficiaries of the "private initiative" assistance programs set up by the many women-run publicly subsidized societies of the city. Most significantly, working women, especially from low-income settings, were important welfare providers for their or others' families, by working as servants, by doing housework and by interacting with authorities to secure welfare. The chapters that follow further unpack this gendered nexus of welfare and work.

Chapter 2
Roads to Recognition: Contested Forms of Women's Expertise After the First World War

Women's welfare activists were subsidized by the central government to provide welfare to categories of citizens not included or barely included into newer forms of welfare, such as social insurance. Postwar activism for suffrage and the power of prewar precedent made these activists into preferred urban welfare provision partners for the central state. However, welfare activists had to assert and protect the power of having a say in social politics, considering that the association between social assistance (or otherwise help for the neediest) and women's welfare activism did not go unquestioned. This chapter focuses on how welfare activists' struggles with other kinds of social reformers and among each other were linked to knowledge production about gendered social issues.

Churches and professional bodies—especially the medical corps—could claim to be better suited to deal with the needs of the poorest in the city of Bucharest, and often did. To draw on Nikolas Rose, when arguing they were better at dealing with poverty, each such type of welfare expert could be expected to construct different urgent social problems, based on distinct "diagnostic gazes" claimed to be accurate (or truthful).[277] Such diagnostic gazes produce "categories of public action".[278] "Unemployment", "family dependency" as well as arguably, "demoralization", can be considered categories of public action circulating internationally in the interwar period. As Bénédicte Zimmermann points out, new categories of public action are created through definitional activities which entail political translation between various kinds of actors. Networks are at the core of experts' power to help define a social issue and how it should be acted on, with expertise less an output than the property "of a whole network that needs to be put in motion for a statement to hold up, circulate and produce effects".[279]

Beginning in the 1920s, a loose network of women welfare activists in Bucharest asserted and questioned, and therefore made circulate, claims to authority and expertise by various members of this women-dominated network. Whereas

277 Nikolas Rose, "Engineering the Human Soul: Analyzing Psychological Expertise," *Science in Context* 5, no. 02 (1992): 356.

278 Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Eléments pour une socio-histoire des catégories de l'action publique," in *Historicités de l'action publique*, ed. Pascale Laborier and Danny Trom (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003), 241–258.

279 Eyal and Buchholz, "From the Sociology of Intellectuals to the Sociology of Interventions," 127, 129.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111137162-003

activists from this network did not always reach similar conclusions about what was to be done, and especially by whom, they shared a concern with the woman question as a social question. Increasingly, these welfare activists were bound together by an interest in empirical social research on women's issues. They were united by gender-specific experiences of professional marginalization and lack of political access, even as they were divided by class, ethnicity and ideological commitments.

At the core of this network were upper-class women and their organizations, progressive feminists and, after 1930, women social researchers professionalized as social workers. They were embedded in a broader social reform milieu, with the prestigious Romanian Social Institute (ISR, the Institute) as one of its hubs. Within the Institute, they created the Section for Feminine Studies, thus asserting "feminine studies" as a specific knowledge production space. The "women's movement" and the women's welfare activism network overlapped significantly in the 1920s, but the match decreased as professionalized women became more influential, from the middle of the 1930s on.

At the margins of this network were Jewish and social democratic women. Until their exclusion from the mainstream of public life, in 1940, Jewish women appear to have participated in this network of welfare activists with warranted caution. Increasingly, many oriented their efforts towards welfare activism within the local Jewish community and the Jewish diaspora, especially through Zionism. Social democratic and communist women had expansive "welfare visions." From their international networks, social democratic women brought to Bucharest the promise of a high-social-spending-city, such as Red Vienna (where a social democratic government was spending and innovating in housing provision and social services),[280] and the demand for comprehensive welfare and labor laws addressing women.

Most social reformers saw communist women as outsiders to the local web of women welfare activists. To an extent they were, creating their own welfare practices, especially in the mid-1930s. However, their radicalism, and the sense that they were helping project the shadow of Soviet communism and its revolutionary approach to social issues, was an unspoken but significant shaping factor for women welfare activists interested in reform rather than revolution. In general, left-wing women, whether social democratic or communist, were critical of most of the initiatives of the more establishment-oriented women's organizations but

280 For a recent addition to a vast array of publications on the topic, see Rob Mcfarland, Georg Spitaler, and Ingo Zechner, eds., *The Red Vienna Sourcebook* (Rochester: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 2020).

organized as antifascists with the more progressive among mainstream women's welfare activists in the mid- to late 1930s.

Together, the actors at the center and at the edges of this internationally ramified web asserted the public, economic and scientific significance of social assistance as a domain of intervention focused on women and children. They did so in a context where old assumptions about the causes of poverty and what was to be done about it no longer seemed to hold as tightly. Globally, and in Romania, a growing number of women were wage workers: they could find both more autonomy, perhaps, some gasped, to the detriment of families and the nation; they might be exposed to harsher exploitation than before, with consequences for their and other's health. To have a say in how these issues were to be regarded and what they would mean politically, women welfare activists had to establish and maintain their authority concerning the questions of women's paid and unpaid work, at the time (and still now) inseparable issues.

The work of women welfare activists introduced here was austerity welfare work, because of its underfunded, marginalized character and because much of this work was oriented towards producing low-cost welfare policy solutions. Women welfare activists' reflection, research and discussion about societal transformation affecting women and children emerged in underfunded alternative political and academic fora. The government provided some funding for the Social Research Institute but did not pay for the research on women's work carried out in that framework, on the assumption women welfare activists would continue to provide this kind of work out of altruism or to make up for the lack of professional opportunities open to women. Similarly, the Superior School of Social Assistance drew part of its small budget from unsteady MMSOS subsidies and the donations by a women's association. In 1933 and 1934, the School struggled to pay staff; students who benefited from a study fellowship provided by their own municipalities donated their funds to help host colleagues who did not have such funding in a dormitory.[281] Whereas men involved in the Romanian Social Institute had academic careers, few of the women involved in the Section for Feminine Studies could make a living exclusively from their research work. The work of welfare activists was also austerity welfare work because these activists' "welfare visions", as visible in research, debates, informal interactions and outsiders' critiques—introduced here and developed in the remaining chapters—influenced

281 Veturia Manuilă, "Le rôle de l'École Supérieure d'Assistance Sociale dans le mouvement d'assistance sociale roumaine," in *L'assistance sociale en Roumanie* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1938), 73.

attempts at reforming municipal social assistance policy, and therefore at managing successive governments' low-social-spending tendencies.

This chapter introduces the field of women's welfare activism in Bucharest. Loosely informed by Pierre Bourdieu's "field analysis",[282] it regards the network of women welfare activists as knowledge producers about working-class women's paid and unpaid work, that is the kinds of work women performed especially for the sake of others. Indebted to Donna Guy's insightful history of the Argentine welfare state, it sees women welfare activists' production of various forms of lay and certified expertise itself as both a form of unpaid or badly paid, marginalized work,[283] and as labor performed for the sake of recognition among social reformers in Bucharest and abroad.

From *noblesse oblige* to "lay expertise": Upper-class women and their organizations

In the 1920s, politicians were more aware of privileged, upper-class, women's contribution to welfare provision. In a context of reluctance to meaningfully spend on the welfare of the poorest, the central government systematically subsidized with smaller amounts "private initiative" organizations involved in aiding those who were not insured and had very few means to survive.[284] By the early 1930s, the central government sought to control women's social assistance associations and restrict public funding for what some called "unsystematic philanthropic giving".[285] Yet this was short-lived skepticism. By 1935, the government was once again the main financial backer of registered "private initiative" associations in Bucharest.[286]

282 Especially Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Pierre Bourdieu, "The Force of Law: Toward a Sociology of the Juridical Field," *Hastings Law Journal* 38, no. 5 (1986): 805–813.

283 Guy, *Women Build the Welfare State: Performing Charity and Creating Rights in Argentina, 1880–1955*, 7–8.

284 Ministerul Economiei Nationale, Institutul Central de Statistică, *Instituțiunile de asistență socială și de ocrotire*, 33.

285 Veturia Manuilă, "Expunerea de motive și textul dispozițiunilor legii sanitare și de ocrotire cari privesc asistența socială [Exposition of motives and the texts of provisions in the sanitary law which concern social assistance]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 1, no. 2 (1930): 84.

286 Ministerul Economiei Nationale, Institutul Central de Statistică, *Instituțiunile de asistență socială și de ocrotire*, tbl. 24: 50–51.

In this shifting landscape of social reform and welfare, upper-class women sought, and largely managed, to preserve their power to define assistance practices and key beneficiaries of public aid. Despite philanthropist women's privileges, maintaining upper-class gendered authority over the handling of social issues in the city could be complicated. Associations linked to the English-born, Anglican Queen Marie of Romania easily received state support and public praise for their work. "Private initiative" organizations closely connected to the National Liberal Party or the royal family, such as the "Principele Mircea" Society for the Protection of Children in Romania or the Association of Housewives Circles, were consistently well-funded and well-regarded, especially for their healthcare activities in rural areas.[287] However, welfare organizations created or run by upper- and middle-class women with weaker ties to the royal family, active in urban areas, were on thinner ground. They were criticized as avenues of superficial involvement for privileged, sometimes corrupt, women. In the first few years after the war, women involved in aid for war widows and orphans, many from high-ranking military families, came under scrutiny.[288]

In the 1920s, upper-class women attached to local, Orthodox traditions of philanthropy found a kind of champion of their style of welfare work in Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino, president of the Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women [*Societatea Ortodoxă Națională a Femeilor din România*, SONFR]. Cantacuzino was a leader of the Romanian women's movement who kept apace of the newest developments in international social politics.[289] Ideologically, by the early 1940s, she claimed to have been a life-long "nationalist and liberal".[290] In the 1930s, less conservative women involved in the local welfare movement

287 Botez, "Asistența socială," 233; Asociatia Cercurilor de Gospodine, *Darea de seamă a activității Comitetului Central și filialelor sale de la 1920–1937 [Report on the activity of the Central Committee and its local chapters from 1920–1937]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Curtii Regale F. Gobl Fii, 1938); Maria Mihăilescu, "Societatea 'Principele Mircea' ["Prince Mircea" Society]," *Cronica Vrancei* 11, no. 3 (2011): 177–186 ; Crețu, *Foreign Aid and State Building in Interwar Romania*, 70–73.

288 An appeal on behalf of several thousand war widows without pensions, authored by lawyer Lucia Teodorescu, called for suffrage feminists' support for the widows and for "the closing down of the Societies of war widows and the IOV [National Office for Orphans and Widows] which have become employment offices for matrons married to superior officers and retired generals." "Un apel al văduvelor de război [An appeal from the war widows]," *Dimineața*, February 20, 1922.

289 See entry in Biographies section.

290 Cheşchebec, "Feminist Ideologies and Activism in Romania," 74–75.

had repeatedly implied she was a thinly disguised chauvinist.[291] Her 1930s writings and correspondence display a clear attachment to corporatist ideas and interest for developments in Mussolini's Italy.[292]

Between 1918 and 1938, Cantacuzino led the SONFR. She was also a leader of several key organizations in the local women's movement in Bucharest: president of the *Solidaritatea* women's association, the federative National Council of Romanian Women (CNFR), the "electoral formation" Group of Romanian Women (GFR) —Cantacuzino opposed women's membership in political parties but still wanted to run in municipal elections, the international Little Entente of Women (LEW; 1923–1929) and vice-president of the International Council of Women (ICW; 1925–1936).[293] Cantacuzino travelled extensively and met peers from the women's movement, during international congresses, in regional meetings and through visits to women's organizations in Canada, France, Egypt, Palestine, Serbia, and the USA.[294]

Although her Group of Romanian Women opposed women's formal membership in "demoralizing" political parties,[295] Cantacuzino welcomed, even sought out, appointment to public offices for herself and her collaborators. In 1926, Cantacuzino and a group of twelve other allied "ladies" served as "co-opted councilwomen" in Bucharest's General Council (see Appendix 2). Between 1930 and 1932, once Bucharest was divided into districts through a new 1929 administrative law, she was an elected councilwoman in a key district of the capital. Internationally, she was repeatedly endorsed by Romanian governments as Romanian representative in the League of Nations' Child Welfare Committee (1934) and the Advisory

291 Eugenia Deleanu, "Drept de vot pentru toate femeile dar . . . nu pentru toate [Voting rights for all women . . . but not for all of them]" (Newspaper cutout, March 1932), 365, MMSOS–Oficiul pentru Studii Sociale, File 294/1932, SANIC Bucharest.

292 Cosma, *Femeile și politica în România*, 77–85.

293 For a comprehensive biographical sketch, see Roxana Cheșchebec, "Cantacuzino, Princess Alexandrina (1876–1944)," in *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe: 19th and 20th Centuries*, eds. Francisca De Haan, Krasimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 89–94.

294 Alexandrina Cantacuzino, *Cincisprezeze ani de munca socială și culturală - discursuri, conferințe, articole, scrisori [Fifteen years of social and cultural work - Speeches, conferences, articles, letters].* (Bucharest: Tipografia Românească, 1928), 170–97, 204–219.

295 Gruparea Femeilor Române, "Manifestul Grupării Femeilor Române la alegerile comunale din Capitala [The Manifesto of the Group of Romanian Women for the local elections in the Capital]," *Din istoria feminismului românesc 1929–1948. Studiu și antologie de texte*, ed. Ștefania Gáll Mihăilescu (Iași: Polirom, 2006), 111.

Committee on Social Questions (1937, 1938, 1939), committees whose members were often drawn from the transnational women's movement.[296]

Cantacuzino worked to preserve the social authority of philanthropic women by drawing on both old and new forms of social capital. In defense of old forms of authority, in early 1920s press articles, she argued that Romanian boyars and generally, aristocrats in Europe had historically fostered countries' progress.[297] In 1925, while in Washington for the ICW Congress, her "Princess" title, a title not linked directly to the German-origin Hohenzollern princes reigning in the interwar Kingdom of Romania, secured her a warmer reception by First Lady Grace Coolidge compared to the welcome other ICW delegates received at the White House.[298]

At the same time as she drew on her old Romanian lineage, Cantacuzino kept abreast of new developments in municipal governance and shared this knowledge in public fora. In a 1926 speech in Bucharest advocating for women's participation in administration (under certain conditions), Cantacuzino distributed copies of graphs [*tablouri*] indicating the link between child mortality and the rate of national development to members of the audience. She had first learned about the use of the new political communication device by Canadian MPs at a 1925 National Exhibition in Canada.[299] In 1927, she reported to the General Assembly of the Romanian section of the International Union of Cities on the Congress for Administrative Sciences in Paris and the Address-printing Machine (used in fascist Rome for tax collection) presented there.[300] As a Bucharest councilwoman, in the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s, she informed the General Mayor and her fellow councilmen on advances in urban public assistance in the various countries she visited.[301]

In general, her stated conception of politics was of a field where inherited, spiritually rooted legitimacy met expertise and meritocracy. After showing the audience her graphs, in her 1926 speech on women in public administration, the SONFR president claimed that: "Politics is the holiest of sciences, as she is the sup-

296 Cheşchebec, "Feminist Ideologies and Activism in Romania," 240.

297 Cantacuzino, *Cincisprezeze ani de munca socială și culturală*, 256–8, 283–284.

298 Cantacuzino, 180.

299 Cantacuzino, 176.

300 "Darea de seamă asupra desbaterilor Adunărei generale a Uniunei Orașelor ținută la Constanța în zilele de 9 și 10 octombrie, 1927 [Report on the debates of the General Assembly of the Union of Cities held in Constanța on 9 and 10 October, 1927]," *Monitorul Uniunei Orașelor*, no. 11–12 (December 11, 1927).

301 Alexandrina Cantacuzino, "Ante-proiect pentru organizarea asistenței publice a comunei [Ante-Project for the organization of the Community's public assistance]," 1926, Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 86/1926–1929, 37–40, SANIC Bucharest; Alexandrina Cantacuzino, "Letter. Anteproect pentru Casa de Ocrotire [Project proposal for the Protection House]," 1927, Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 103/1927, 25–29, SANIC Bucharest.

port of the harmonious development of any state and through her peoples fulfill their destiny, so that not everyone can improvise themselves into a politician overnight".[302]

The strategy of harmonizing inherited and meritocratic authority was only partly successful in constructing Cantacuzino as a credible non-certified, lay, "feminine expert". According to Epstein, in late nineteenth century France, "feminine/womanly expertise" emerged as a claim to public authority accessible to socially active women, rooted in either philanthropy or in the new professions dominated by women (teaching, social work, nursing).[303] Although educated in a prestigious secondary school in France, Cantacuzino was not certified in any of the new caring professions; her authority was very much that of a self-fashioned expert, someone who had constructed an understanding of welfare work through philanthropy. Among local politicians, Cantacuzino was recognized as an authority on municipal issues and especially, questions related to women's and girls' welfare. However, her spiritualized vision for social research and politics was at first ignored, then directly contested by a group we might call "women experts"—women who were certified professionals in the new and increasingly scientized domain of the social.[304]

When in 1925, a Section for Feminine Studies [*Secția de Studii Feminine*, SSF] was to be added among the sections of the Romanian Social Institute, the day's pre-eminent forum for discussions on social issues in Romania, Cantacuzino's vision for social research flopped. Together with collaborators Zoe Romniceanu and Ecaterina Cerkez, she had prepared a "program proposal" for the Section.[305] The program advocated for the "scientific research of the feminine soul both within the country and internationally" through the collection of books, statistics and studies, and the preservation of Romanian traditions and the nation's "ethnic being".[306] But the program and its vision was not adopted for the Section for Feminine Studies of the Romanian Social Institute. In fact, over the following decade, the Section became increasingly committed to empirical social research on women's and children's situation influenced by American social work and ILO data collection practices. While some of its members were not strangers to nationalism

302 Cantacuzino, *Cincisprezeze ani de munca socială și culturală*, 137.

303 Anne R. Epstein, "Gender and the rise of the female expert during the Belle Époque," *Histoire@Politique*, no. 14 (June 17, 2011): 85.

304 On the "scientization of the social", see Benjamin Ziemann et al., "Introduction: The Scientization of the Social in Comparative Perspective," in *Engineering Society* (London: Springer, 2012), 1–40.

305 See short biography for Cerkez in Appendix 3.

306 Cantacuzino, *Cincisprezeze ani de munca socială și culturală*, 112.

and eventually, state racism, the Section seems to have been decidedly unpreoccupied with either "the feminine soul" or Romanians' "ethnic being" over the course of its existence.

Cantacuzino was an increasingly contested character. In 1925, the leadership of the Section for Feminine Studies went to progressive feminist Calypso Botez,[307] an occasional collaborator of Cantacuzino in the 1920s. In 1934, Cantacuzino and Botez became involved in a bitter, eventually internationally known, political conflict, complete with mutual accusations of fund embezzlement, related to the Bucharest municipal council mandates that the two women, and their allies held. In an official letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Botez and other women in the local women's movement demanded that Cantacuzino be dismissed from her official appointment at the League of Nations because she was not representative of the local women's movement and was "intellectually and politically incompetent".[308]

Despite scandals, through both aggressive tactics and diplomatic skill, Cantacuzino transformed the Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women, her favorite charity, into a key player on the local welfare scene.[309] In 1919, the Society was tasked with the distribution of a 200,000 Lei donation from Queen Marie of Romania to all orphans in the capital city while in 1924 the Society agreed to take charge of the distribution of occasional relief among city dwellers.[310] More importantly, the Society became one of the largest "indoor [residential-institution–based] assistance" providers in the country, focusing on orphan girls' education. Beginning with 1919, the SONFR administered the publicly funded "Radu Vodă" Orphanage (housing and educating "gifted" girls up to secondary schooling) and the publicly endowed "Sfânta Ecaterina" Crèche for abandoned infants. By 1932, the Society had opened fourteen boarding schools or schools without board [*externate*] throughout the country, eight kindergartens in Bucharest and nineteen in the rest of the country.[311] It benefited from funding from donations, from its widowed president's considerable fortune and from public subsidies whose full amounts it did not disclose,

307 See entry in Biographies section.

308 Cheşchebec, "Feminist Ideologies and Activism in Romania," 428, fn. 914.

309 Roxana Cheşchebec, "Nationalism, Feminism and Social Work in Interwar Romania: The Activities of Princess Alexandrina Cantacuzino," in *History of Social Work in Europe (1900–1960)*, eds. Sabine Hering and Berteke Waaldijk (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2003), 35–44.

310 Societatea Ortodoxă Națională a Femeilor Române, 1918, SONFR 1910–1948, Fond 1035, File 23/1918, SANIC Bucharest; Societatea Ortodoxă Națională a Femeilor Române, 1924, SONFR 1910–1948, Fond 1035, File 43/1923–1925, f. 115, ANIC Bucharest.

311 Societatea Ortodoxă Națională a Femeilor Române, 1932, SONFR 1910–1948, Fond 1035, File 27/1918–1933, ff. 1–3, SANIC Bucharest.

at least not for a comprehensive study published in 1938,[312] perhaps because Cantacuzino had fallen out of favor with Carol II by then.[313]

The Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women (SONFR) was founded in 1910, as a philanthropic women's organization. Its stated mission was to develop "the culture and education of Romanian children from a religious and national point of view as required by the patriotic interest."[314] In concrete terms, until the First World War, this meant organizing libraries, kindergartens, and children's fetes in the poorer neighborhoods of Bucharest and in several other cities. The Society had a confessional character but was not subordinate to the church; it collected its own donations. The authority of priests and parish committees declined in time: Originally, the members of SONFR parish committees were "priests and educators from the parish, a local lady serving as president, while the parish priest served as vice-president".[315] However, by the 1930s, Cantacuzino had to defend herself against accusations that as municipal councilor, she was marginalizing priests and parish committees in the provision of assistance.[316] SONFR would remain one of the largest private initiative organizations in the country until the Second World War and a key collaborator of the Bucharest municipality when it came to the assistance of abandoned children and girls.

In her concrete welfare work in Bucharest institutions that she led and as a councilwoman, Cantacuzino held on to a minimalist vision of welfare, meant to "deter the needy from seeking welfare and coercing them to maintain themselves

312 The SONFR was the most notable society absent from the detailed census of "private initiative" associations organized in 1935 by the Superior School of Social Assistance under the aegis of the Central Statistical Institute. The census-makers required associations to fill in detailed questionnaires about their activities and income. Ministerul Economiei Nationale, Institutul Central de Statistică, *Instituțiunile de asistență socială și de ocrotire*.

313 On Cantacuzino in the late 1930s, briefly in Anemari Monica Negru, "Dimensiunea ortodoxă a Societății Ortodoxe Naționale a Femeilor Române [The Orthodox dimension of the National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women]," *Revista de lingvistică și cultură românească*, no. 19 (2016), https://limbaromana.org/revista/dimensiunea-ortodoxa-a-societatii-ortodoxe-nationale-a-femeilor-romane/.

314 SONFR Statutes qted. in Anemari Monica Negru, "Dimensiunea ortodoxă a Societății Ortodoxe Naționale a Femeilor Române [The Orthodox dimension of the National Orthodox Society of Romanian Women]," *Revista de lingvistică și cultură românească*, no. 19 (2016), https://limbaromana.org/revista/dimensiunea-ortodox%C4%83-a-societ%C4%83%C8%9Bii-ortodoxe-na%C8%9Bionale-a-femeilor-romane/#_edn1.

315 Negru, "Dimensiunea ortodoxă."

316 Primăria Municipiului București, "Raportul Direcțiunei Asistenței în ședința Comitetului de Asistență din 13 ianuarie 1927 [Report of the Assistance Direction in the meeting of the Assistance Committee of 13 January 1927]," January 13, 1927, Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 86/1926–1929, 33–34, SANIC Bucharest.

through their own efforts",[317] as the next chapter will show in more detail. In this, despite conflicts, she resembled other key members of the women's movement and municipal councilwomen. By contrast, her concept that "fallen women" should be reformed in specific institutions, and if need be, separated from their infants, and her lack of concern for poor girls' upward social mobility had fewer adherents in the women's welfare network in Bucharest.

An alliance of marginalized professionals: Women social scientists and progressive feminists

By the late 1920s, Cantacuzino, the socially conservative "feminine expert", had her authority on welfare and social reform issues openly questioned and (more frequently) quietly undermined by an alliance of two distinct, new, kinds of women experts on gender and social assistance: "feminist [lay] experts" (in Anne Epstein's terms) and professional social workers (a category we may call "certified women experts").

In the early to mid-1930s, feminist experts dominated the Section for Feminine Studies of the Romanian Social Institute. They supported the research and welfare practices of the "certified experts" who taught or studied at the novel Superior School of Social Assistance [*Școala Superioară de Asistență Socială*, SSAS]. Once key feminist experts from the Section for Feminine Studies held mandates in the Bucharest General Municipal Council, between 1930 and 1932, they backed the social work experiments of the School in several Bucharest neighborhoods. In turn, the Superior School shared research results with the feminists, helping them strengthen their status as non-certified experts on the local political scene as well as within transnational networks of welfare activists. As we shall see, this was an alliance that would shape local welfare policy, especially during the Great Depression.

One half of this alliance, feminist experts, were progressive professional women involved in suffrage activism after the First World War, primarily through the Association for the Civil and Political Emancipation of Romanian Women (AECPFR). AECPFR leaders Calypso Botez and Ella Negruzzi were both jurists, pioneering middle class professionals from established but non-aristocratic progressive families.[318] They and the AECPFR were affiliated to the centrist Inter-

317 Midgley, "Poor Law Principles and Social Assistance in the Third World," 21.
318 See short biographies in Appendix 3.

national Alliance for Women's Suffrage/International Alliance for Women (IWSA/IAW) in the 1920s. Through its contacts with IWSA/IAW, the AECPFR had adopted a "program for social demands, besides political demands", which included the protection of mothers and children.[319]

The other half of the alliance, certified experts, were technocratic, formally certified social workers whose work methods relied heavily on casework, a cutting-edge American social work method involving participant observation and small-scale surveys in urban areas. The leading figures of the Superior School of Social Assistance were social workers Veturia Manuilă and Xenia Costa-Foru, both certified in universities from the USA and tied to the Rockefeller Foundation (Manuilă had self-funded her studies while her husband had a Rockefeller Fellowship, Costa-Foru was a Foundation fellow in 1932).[320]

Both categories of women experts were part and product of the network of social reformers gathering at the Romanian Social Institute (ISR), an association founded in 1921 and modeled after the influential left liberal *Verein für Socialpolitik* which had been founded in 1873 in Germany (and was still active during the ISR's own years of activity).[321] The Verein was "by the late 1880s, [. . .] a factory of social fact-finding and was cautiously and professionally building the empirical rationale for the socially active state"; it was also influencing policymaking through its frequent contacts with state officials.[322] Similarly to the *Verein für Socialpolitik*, driven by its Germany- and France-trained energetic founder, Dimitrie Gusti, the Romanian Social Institute sought to function as a para-academic institution which could promote social reform as a political goal, connect—through the languages of the "social question"—Romanian progressives to like-minded per-

319 Izabela Sadoveanu, "Cu prilejul unui congres feminin [On the occasion of a feminine congress]," *Adeverul*, March 12, 1935.

320 Emilia Plosceanu, "The Rockefeller Foundation in Romania: For a Crossed History of Social Reform and Science," Research Report, Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online (New York: Rockefeller Archives, 2008), https://rockarch.issuelab.org/resource/the-rockefeller-foundation-in-romania-for-a-crossed-history-of-social-reform-and-science.html; Plosceanu, "L'Internationalisation des sciences et techniques réformatrices," 330.

321 Dietmar Müller, "Instituţionalizarea cunoaşterii ştiinţelor sociale în perioada interbelică: Institutul Social Român şi Asociaţia de Politică Socială (Verein für Socialpolitik) [The Institutionalization of social scientific knowledge in the interwar: the Romanian Social Institute and the Association for Social Politics (Verein für Socialpolitik)]," Cooperativa Gusti, January 20, 2014, https://www.cooperativag.ro/institutionalizarea-cunoasterii-stiintelor-sociale-perioada-interbelica-institutul-social-roman-si-asociatia-de-politica-sociala/.

322 Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 93.

sons abroad, popularize and eventually institutionalize the new social science disciplines (including economics, sociology or statistics).[323]

Like the *Verein für Socialpolitik*, the ISR "played its cards with both skill and caution" and like the *Verein für Socialpolitik*, "in its search for means [. . .] tacked with time and occasions".[324] In time, the Romanian Social Institute became closer to the epicenter of political power and focused increasingly on research in rural areas, a focus that could promote national integration and foster social peace in a new state.[325] Politically, ISR founder Gusti initially aimed to maintain an "interstitial position" as mediator between specialists and members of government.[326] However, in the 1930s, he held various ministerial and minister-like appointments, garnering for his projects the support of authoritarian King Carol II (r. 1930–1940). In the 1920s, the Institute favored the construction of claims to expertise by encouraging a process of specialization and disciplinary boundary-making in various new social scientific disciplines, including economics and statistics. It was organized into sections, with a section "created as soon as there exist a number of members of the same specialization who can work together".[327]

By the 1930s, the ISR (and the related Sociology Seminar at the University of Bucharest, also founded by Gusti) prioritized monographic research in villages, seeing the "peasant question" in Romania as the reigning social question.[328] "Monographic campaigns", organized each summer between 1925 and 1931, involved tens of social researchers and their equipment spending weeks recording "all social subunits" (families, schools, pubs, churches), "all spiritual manifestations", "political manifestations", "biological conditions", "historical conditions", "psychological conditions" of a village chosen as representative for a certain historical region of the country.[329] In 1934, when Gusti became head of the Royal Cultural Foundations, the "monographic campaigns" were scaled up and reorganized towards greater emphasis on rural uplift (besides research).[330] Within this frame-

323 Institutul Social Român, *Institutul Social Român 1921–1926*, 6–7.

324 Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 93.

325 Raluca Muşat, "'To Cure, Uplift and Ennoble the Village': Militant Sociology in the Romanian Countryside, 1934–1938," *East European Politics & Societies*, December 23, 2012.

326 Plosceanu, "L'Internationalisation des sciences et techniques réformatrices.," 322.

327 Institutul Social Român, *Institutul Social Român 1921–1926*, 7.

328 Philip E. Mosely, "The Sociological School of Dimitrie Gusti," *The Sociological Review* 28, no. 2 (1936): 149–65; Joseph S Roucek, "Sociology in Roumania," *American Sociological Review* 3, no. 1 (1938): 54–62.

329 Dimitrie Gusti, "Știința națiunii [The Science of the nation]," *Sociologie românească* 2, no. 2–3 (March 1937): 56.

330 Muşat, "'To Cure, Uplift and Ennoble the Village.'"

work a new area of research, by women experts on women workers, the field of "feminine studies" emerged.

Again, like the *Verein für Socialpolitik* and similar institutions dealing with the social question, the ISR was in no small measure a platform for accumulating social capital and for professional affirmation. In this context, women researchers and gendered social questions dominated by women experts garnered a fundamentally pragmatic kind of attention at the male-dominated Institute. On the one hand, in the early 1920s, the ISR sought to turn suffragist feminist experts into collaborators. Arguably, knowledge about gendered issues could distinguish progressive reformers from less modern figures interested in social reform (be they conservative politicians or clerical figures). On the other hand, the ISR marginalized women experts, particularly women social researchers involved in rural monographic campaigns, even though women members were in theory welcomed to join both the ISR and the Royal Cultural Foundations.[331] The two tendencies contributed to the clustering of feminist experts and certified women experts in the Section for Feminine Studies and to these women developing a distinctive focus on urban social research.

In 1925, the Section for Feminine Studies, headed by Calypso Botez, was founded at the ISR, the same year as the Institute's Sociology section.[332] At its founding, the goals of the Section for Feminine Studies (SSF) were to use the methods of the monograph and the "experimental method of enquette" in order to study "especially the problems related to children and women, considered in the social environment in which their lives and productive activities develop, as well as the social policy problems connected to the situation woman faces in relation to the needs of today's life, the ways in which woman participates in this life and is faced with the new conceptions on the State".[333]

During more than a decade of regular activity, the members of the Section produced or hosted lectures or presentations of research reports on topics which reflected on changes in women's status and economic circumstances in Romania and abroad. Despite growing political divisions and mounting animus among women who had initially collaborated to push for suffrage in the 1920s, the SSF

331 Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 94.

332 The initial sections of the ISR were: agrarian, financial, commercial, industrial, legal, administrative, politics, social hygiene and demographics, cultural, political and social theory. Sections that were added later were those dealing with bibliography, foreign politics, sociology and feminine studies. Institutul Social Român, *Institutul Social Român 1921–1926* (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1926), 7.

333 Calypso Botez, "Dare de seamă a Secției de Studii Feminine [Report of the Section for Feminine Studies]," *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* 6, no. 3–4 (1927): 525.

remained an important forum for feminists of all stripes and its proceedings familiar to most women interested in social reform in Bucharest until the end of the 1930s. Alexandrina Cantacuzino, despite being, by all appearances, snubbed when it came to the leadership and program of the SSF, participated in meetings while her close collaborators presented research reports of their own.

Beginning in 1930, the Section for Feminine Studies cooperated closely with the Superior School of Social Assistance [*Școala Superioară de Asistență Socială*, SSAS], an innovative, semi-private higher education institution enrolling only women. The SSAS's students were the main collectors and interpreters of the data on reports on women and children discussed at the Section for Feminine Studies in the 1930s.

The SSAS was a private institution subsidized by the state, and accredited as a higher-education, undergraduate level school, not connected to the University of Bucharest. It admitted a maximum of fourteen students yearly, for a study course of three years. The final year of study was dedicated to research tutorials and social work practice at the Demonstration Center for Family Assistance in the Tei neighborhood.[334] The first director of the school, social worker Veturia Manuilă described the circumstances of the School's founding as linked to the goals of the local women's movement, tied to the ISR and backed by the MMSOS—a configuration which would define many social assistance initiatives in Bucharest:

> The idea of founding a school for social assistance was envisioned at various stages by the Association of Christian Romanian Women [ACFR], as by the Romanian Social Institute, the only public forum where it was possible at the time to voice the preoccupations of Romanian women. [. . .] My collaboration with the Association of Christian Romanian Women began in the spring of 1929, following a talk I gave at the Romanian Social Institute. I had recently returned from America, where I had followed a course in the college for social assistance at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. The Association of Christian Romanian Women reached out to me for the foundation of a school for social assistance, necessary for its works.[335]

In 1929, the ACFR provided a building for the school and a dormitory for the students of the Superior School, the MMSOS covered the salaries of professors, while Gusti and the Sociology Seminar he led at the University of Bucharest were the main providers of teaching staff.[336] The students, exclusively women, paid moder-

334 Manuilă, "Le rôle de l'École Supérieure d'Assistance Sociale."

335 Manuilă, "Le rôle de l'École Supérieure d'Assistance Sociale," 8–9.

336 On the YCWA-affiliated ACFR, founded in 1922, see Anemari Monica Negru, "Din istoria Asociației Creștine a Femeilor Române din România și liderele ei [From the history of the Association of Romanian Christian Women in Romania and its leaders]," *Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române* 8, no. 15 (2023): 21–40.

ately high tuition fees of 5,000 Lei a year in 1929.[337] The students generally came from prosperous, educated families where parents aimed to provide daughters with serious degrees, useful for finding wage work if need be, in a modern but still socially acceptable field such as social work, a domain which seemingly did not transgress gender norms. Owing to Manuilă's studies at Johns Hopkins, the curriculum of the SSAS had a strong American Progressive lineage. It was strongly influenced by the ideas of Mary Richmond and the Baltimore-based Charity Organization Society (COS). The COS sought to make almsgiving "scientific, efficient and preventative",[338] wanted to help those it considered paupers to rehabilitate themselves and take personal responsibility over their situation and saw social investigation and "friendly visiting" as integral to eliminating extreme poverty.

Besides the US-educated Manuilă, the Superior School attracted among its faculty and students women who had been marginalized in ISR's rural research. Theodora Eliza Văcărescu has described the process of marginalization with the formula "co-opt and distance": experienced as well as junior women researchers were heavily involved in rural monographic research at the ISR but were considered by male colleagues "good girls" without vision, diligent "data collectors" who were "given something to do";[339] women's research remained unpublished for decades, or their research topics were appropriated by male colleagues who went on to have careers in publicly funded institutions.[340] Anthropologist Xenia Costa-

337 In 1929, 5000 Lei was the price of a full men's suit, in a country with low salaries and low purchasing power. Institutul Central de Statistica, *Anuarul statistic al României 1930 [Statistical Yearbook of Romania 1930]* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1932), 256.

338 Donna L Franklin, "Mary Richmond and Jane Addams: From Moral Certainty to Rational Inquiry in Social Work Practice," *Social Service Review* 60, no. 4 (1986): 508.

339 Interview with sociologist Henri H. Stahl qted. in Văcărescu, "Coopter et écarter," 134.

340 According to Văcărescu, anthropologist Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția's work on women's magical practices was appropriated by a colleague, who in a loud argument told her she needed to switch her topic towards other disciplines, such as philosophy or linguistics. In personal letters from 1930, Cristescu expressed frustration and mentioned she had worked on magical practices for several months and had already drafted a report for that year's campaign in the village of Runcu. Cristescu ended up writing a parallel report on magical practices, which was not published with the other materials from the Runcu campaign. She published her manuscript as an independent volume, in 1944, when it received an award from the Romanian academy. Similarly, sociologist Xenia Costa-Foru, working on families (and using especially women as informants), published little during the 1930s, most notably a paper on the topic of families, co-authored with Henri H. Stahl. In 1945, Costa-Foru Andreescu published her interesting methodology volume on "The Monographic Research of the Family", based on notes from the 1930s rural campaigns, mentioning in the book's introduction that the manuscript had actually been finalized in 1932. Văcărescu, "Coopter et écarter," 136–137; Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția, *Credințe și rituri*

Foru and philosopher Alice Voinescu were two of the women who taught at the Superior School partly because they did not have stable positions in state universities;[341] Costa-Foru became director of the School in the mid-1930s.

The Section for Feminine Studies was a hub for women experts, whether lay or certified. The Section members met periodically, to present to each other and to a broader audience of ISR members and associates new research, and to discuss significant global economic trends and political developments affecting women. In 1925, the Section discussed the "situation of children—their biological and physiological inheritance", the child's mentality within the Romanian "harmonic and disharmonic family", children's education, their legal status and economic situation in Romania. In 1926, members of the Section met to consider "woman's evolution (where are we women headed?)", women's civil status in Romania, "women's classification from the point of view of the social economy (whether professionally prepared or unprepared)", women's readiness for the roles of wife and mother. In 1927, the Section discussed the problem of prostitution—causes and ways of restricting it, whether prostitution was a necessity, the experience of Anglo-Saxon countries, old ways of dealing with prostitution (police control, control of "immoral locales", "the trade in live flesh") and new ways of approaching the phenomenon ("the prohibition of immoral locales", "medical treatment, psychology", "reformatory schools, technical preparation", "women's police").[342] In 1929, a teacher, Caterina Cerkez, with ties to Cantacuzino, presented her report titled "Woman's work and its consequences for family and society".[343] In 1932, the Section scheduled lectures concerning the effects of the Great Depression on women. SSAS-founder Veturia Manuilă spoke on "the economic depression and the family", Ms. Cerkez discussed "the economic depression and the pro-

magice [Magical beliefs and rites] (Bucharest: Imprimeria Națională, 1944); Xenia Costa-Foru, *Cercetarea monografică a familiei–Contribuție metodologică [The Monographic research of the family–Methodological contribution]*, Biblioteca de Sociologie, Etica și Politică 10 (Bucharest: Fundația Regele Mihai I, 1945).

341 "The philosopher Alice Voinescu (1885–1961) trained at the Sorbonne and then Oxford. Though Voinescu's credentials surpassed those of many of her male colleagues, she never received a position at any of Romania's prestigious universities. Instead, relegated to a second-rate post at the Bucharest Conservatory, where there were no majors in philosophy, she taught history, theater, and aesthetics rather than philosophy." Bucur and Miroiu, *Birth of Democratic Citizenship*, 28.

342 Botez, "Dare de seamă a Secției," 526.

343 Caterina Cerkez, "Munca femeii și consecințele ei pentru familie și societate [Woman's work and its consequences for family and society]," in *Din istoria feminismului românesc. Antologie de texte (1838–1929) [From the History of Romanian feminism (1838–1929)]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002), 340–353. See Appendix 3 for a short biography.

fessional woman", Alexandrina Cantacuzino lectured on "the economic depression and the transformation of society", Calypso Botez spoke on "the economic depression and social assistance", philosopher Alice Voinescu discussed "the influence of the economic depression on the feminine psychology", and lawyer Ella Negruzzi spoke on "economic depression and leisure".[344] Several of the women speaking in 1932 had been elected as municipal councilwomen in Bucharest through the 1930 municipal elections, the first ones open to certain categories of women voters and to women candidates in Romania.[345]

Whereas in the 1920s feminist experts with ties to the women's movement were driving the agenda of the SSF, in the 1930s the balance shifted towards certified experts and their empirical research on women's problems and gendered issues. Feminist experts would serve especially as the certified social workers' political backers in matters of urban social assistance. Between 1932 and 1937, the Section hosted presentations on the results of the extensive social inquiries conducted by the students of the Superior School of Social Assistance. The discussion of at least some of these issues (most notably the approach to "prostitution") were influenced by developments in transnational women's organizations. Through the meetings of the SSF, the prominent members of the women's movement were engaging in the "work of political translation" which enabled the transformation of these transnational issues into categories of public action.[346]

The circulation of these issues within the cross-border network of reformers and beyond enabled the strengthening of these various' types of women experts' claims to expertise, and by extension their claims to public authority over social issues. Rather than being published in the *Archive for Science and Social Reform*, the journal of the ISR, or primarily in the *Social Assistance* journal of the Superior School of Social Assistance, the texts of the research reports presented at the SSF beginning with 1932 were sent by SSF president Calypso Botez to the publishers of the official bulletin of the Romanian Ministry of Labor, the *Bulletin of Labor, Cooperation and Social Insurance*.[347]

344 "Știri de pretutindeni [News from everywhere]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 3, no. 2 (1931): 16.

345 See the short biographies for Botez, Cantacuzino, Negruzzi in Appendix 3.

346 Zimmermann, "Eléments pour une socio-histoire des catégories de l'action publique," 241.

347 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor"; Rodica Luția, "Raportul dintre problemele de muncă și problemele de dependența familiei [The connection between work problems and family dependence issues]," *Buletinul muncii, cooperatiei și asigurărilor sociale* 16, no. 2 (1936): 666–672; Natalia Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei [Woman's work and its repercussions for the family]," *Buletinul muncii, cooperației și asigurărilor sociale*, 1935, 653–663.

These studies appeared regularly in the *Bulletin*, accompanied by graphs and tables, and could reach a national audience of people involved in policymaking, as the *Bulletin* was distributed to all major public institutions in the country. Unfortunately, what was gained in immediate visibility was lost in historiographical visibility. To my knowledge, the connection between these studies or their common institutional origin has not been noticed (or considered) in previous research.[348]

Unlike Cantacuzino and many of her allies, both "feminist experts" and "certified women experts" were part of a small category of wage-working highly qualified professional women in Romania. They were involved in welfare activism because they wanted to deal with urgent social issues of the era, especially as these issues affected women and children in industrializing areas. In other words, they had different reasons, compared to the religiously inflected aristocratic duty motivating Cantacuzino and some women in her circles. As opposed to several highly educated women who had been active in the socialist movement in Romania and were piping up as internationalist communist revolutionaries despite repression, feminist experts and certified social workers favored reform. In the 1920s, their rhetoric hewed closer to what in nineteenth-century Germany was termed "left liberalism" than to social democracy,[349] let alone the Bolshevism Romanian governments feared.

When feminists like Botez and Negruzzi ran for the Municipal Council, in 1929, they did so on an anti-National Liberal anti-Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women (SONFR) platform, on the National Peasantist Party (PNȚ) ticket. In 1929, when it swept into power, the PNȚ was a center-left formation which supported the call for women's suffrage and campaigned in Bucharest's Jewish community. By the mid-1930s, the PNȚ was a murky center-right, while in 1937 it concluded an "electoral non-aggression pact" with an extreme-right party.[350] Some feminist and social work experts meeting periodically in the Section for Feminine Studies would become a part of the rapidly growing, antisemitic, rightward current of Romanian interwar politics. Others, most prominently Ella Negruzzi, would try to fight it, by joining antifascist coalitions. In 1935, Negruzzi was the main barrister defending communist Ana Pauker (after 1944 leader of the Popular Republic of Romania) and sixteen others, all accused of plotting against state

348 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor"; Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei"; Luția, "Raportul dintre problemele de muncă și problemele de dependența familiei [The connection between work problems and family dependence issues]."
349 Thornhill, *Political Theory in Modern Germany: An Introduction*, 20.
350 Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria Partidului Național Țărănesc [History of the National Peasant Party]*, 2nd ed. (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedica, 1994).

order and judged in a highly irregular, very visible military trial that the national and international press termed "the trial of the antifascists".[351] This was the trial attended by Belgian socialist MP Isabelle Blume in Craiova (see previous chapter).

By contrast, from 1940 on, Veturia Manuilă, as adviser to Maria Antonescu, the head of the Patronage Council of Social Works, enjoyed greater technocratic clout and scientific authority than even before. The Patronage Council of Social Works "would become the most important government welfare institution during the war", focusing exclusively on ethnic Romanians, "funded in great part by money that came from the Jewish population, money that was legally or illegally, but certainly coercively obtained [. . .]".[352]

Innovation without clout: Jewish women's organizations

The Bucharest Jewish Community acted as a welfare provider to its members through tens of "private initiative" Jewish organizations. At the same time, in the 1920s and (to a lesser degree in the 1930s), Jewish women and men in the city were increasingly drawn (and pressured) towards assimilation into the Christian majority. Jewish women welfare activists and the organizations they created in Bucharest functioned in this complex and increasingly tense context.

The scope and vibrancy of Jewish welfare organizations was (somewhat enviously) recognized by government representatives seeking to reorganize non-Jewish "private initiative" assistance in the country: "In almost all cities, Jewish societies are the best organized ones", concluded Social Assistance Direction chief Eugen Botez in 1930.[353] After the First World War, Bucharest had a diverse and well-organized Jewish community and Jews represented the largest ethnic-religious minority of the city at around 10 percent of the population, or circa 73,000 people.[354] A 1929 report provided by the institution representing the com-

351 "Acțiunea d-nei Ella Negruzzi – Nuoi adeziuni [The action of Ms. Ella Negruzzi – New adhesions]," *Dimineața*, February 4, 1936; Ella Negruzzi, "Pentru amnistie [For amnesty]," *Adeverul*, May 26, 1935, DigiBuc.

352 Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization*, 215–216; On the role of the Patronage Council in distributing confiscated properties to various women's associations, see Ștefan C. Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to 'Romanianization', 1940–1944* (London: Springer, 2015).

353 Botez, "Asistența socială," 243.

354 Liviu Rotman, "Bucharest," in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, July 29, 2010, http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Bucharest. On the complex identity politics and cultural production of Jewish intellectuals in interwar Romania, see Camelia Crăciun, "Between Marginal Rebels and Mainstream Critics: Jewish Romanian Intellectuals in the Interwar Period" (PhD Dissertation, Budapest, Hungary, Central European University, 2009).

munity, the Bucharest Jewish Community [*Comunitatea Evreilor București*, CEB], listed several tens of welfare, cultural and educational associations functioning under the CEB's supervision and with its support, associations which brought "great benefits to the entire population of the Capital".[355]

Jewish women's welfare activism in Bucharest was influenced by the priorities of the CEB and the interactions it negotiated with the municipality and the central government. The quality of these interactions fluctuated. Correspondence with Bucharest City Hall in the 1920s shows that National Liberal Party-dominated municipal administrations were reluctant to subsidize the community's schools, repeatedly citing budgetary constraints.[356] In response to refusals of funding, by 1929, the CEB produced a list of the superior subsidies received by the Jewish Community in fifteen other cities in Romania, suggesting the Community was purposefully underfunded despite the scope of its activities on behalf of a large part of the city's population.[357] Once elected, progressive PNȚ mayor Dem Dobrescu showed more openness towards the Jewish community's desire to be supported and incorporated in municipal affairs while maintaining some of its autonomy.[358] Consequently, Dobrescu named Sector 3 (Blue) councilor Jacob Friedman as City Hall's direct representative in all matters concerning the Jewish community.[359] Jewish women's welfare activism in Bucharest was additionally shaped by transnational developments, particularly the growing importance of the Zionist current and the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO), founded in 1920.

355 In 1929, in a request for subsidies towards City Hall, the Bucharest Jewish Community (CEB), reported that it maintained the following institutions, all of which "bring such great benefits to the entire population of the Capital, regardless of nationality of religion": seven gymnasia and professional schools (two for girls); six primary schools for boys; three primary schools for girls; three kindergartens; two hospitals; a milk center and clinic; one elderly asylum; several school canteens; a children's sanatorium in the seaside resort of Techirghiol; the Jewish Public Assistance which undertook distribution of money, firewood, bread and food staples; several religious institutions (kosher butcheries; divorce courts and community counseling). CEB, "Instituțiunile întreținute de comunitate [The institutions maintained by the community]," 1929, File III 207/1940–1941, f. 155, CSIER Bucharest.

356 CEB, "Corespondență [Correspondence]," 1930 1923, File II 271/1920–1947, ff. 115, 152, 154, 163, 168., CSIER Bucharest.

357 CEB, "Subvențiuni acordate Comunităților de către primăriile locale [Subsidies granted to the communities by local mayories]," 1929, File II 271/1920–1947, f. 115, CSIER Bucharest.

358 "Letter No 8126A. Dem. I. Dobrescu to Mr. President of the Jewish Community of Bucharest," November 28, 1930, File II 271/1920–1947, f. 38., CSIER Bucharest.

359 Dem. I. Dobrescu, "Deciziune Nr. 37261/8034 A/930 [Decision No. 37261/8034 A/930]," 1930, File II 271/1920–1947, f. 139, CSIER Bucharest. The special delegate was maintained even after the administration reverted to the Liberals in 1934, but thereafter functioned mostly as a way for City Hall to disengage from, rather than pay undivided attention to, the Jewish Community's requests.

The largest Jewish women's organization in Bucharest was the the Cultural Association of Jewish Women [*Asociația Culturală a Femeilor Evree*, ACFE].[360] Founded in 1919, "inspired by the Balfour Declaration", the ACFE became affiliated to the WIZO already in 1921.[361] As such, besides a community-welfare orientation, ACFE's activities always had an important cross-national component, not only in the sense of consistent participation in WIZO international Congresses, and related knowledge transfer processes, but also because the Association primarily advocated and fundraised for the making of a state elsewhere, "Erez Israel", the Biblical land and utopian Jewish national state to be created in Palestine.

Nationally, ACFE had thirty-one local chapters and about five thousand members, making it one of the larger women's organizations in interwar Romania.[362] In Bucharest, the ACFE was very involved in maintaining institutions serving members of the Bucharest Jewish Community. Through fundraisers and donations from members, by 1925 the Central Bureau of the Association had accumulated a non-insignificant budget, which it used to subsidize initiatives such as the *Gan Yeladim* [Garden of Children] kindergartens, the *Știri* [News] general interest newspaper (where the ACFE had a regular column), and a newspaper for children.[363] In 1925, the Association reported that it was able to cover two thirds of the funds needed for the functioning of the *Gan Yeladim*, with only the remaining third provided by the CEB. Until the start of the Second World War, the ACFE had opened another eighteen Hebrew-language kindergartens across the country, several canteens and two "mothercraft training schools".[364] During the Second World War, ACFE sought to remain active in Bucharest and beyond, by becoming involved in the Jewish Community's Relief Committee, in 1942, providing aid to orphans from families deported by the Romanian government to Transdniestria (Germany had refused to take on deportations from allied rather than occupied

360 Claudia Ursuțiu, "Pe drumul către modernitate. Câteva considerații privind emanciparea femeii evreice din România [On the road to modernity. Some considerations on the Jewish woman's emancipation in Romania]," in *Noi perspective în istoriografia evreilor în România*, eds. Liviu Rotman, Camelia Crăciun, and Ana-Gabriela Vasiliu (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2010), 74–84.

361 Fay Grove-Pollak, *The Saga of a Movement: WIZO 1920–1970*. Tel-Aviv-Jaffa: Women's International Zionist Organization, 1970, 248, WASI.

362 Grove-Pollak, *The Saga of a Movement*, 248.

363 WIZO, *Bericht über die Zeit vom 1. Oktober 1923 bis 31. Juli 1925: Unterbreitet der III. Konferenz der Weltorganisation Zionistischer Frauen* (London, England: Women's International Zionist Organization, 1925), 34–37, WASI.

364 Grove-Pollak, *The Saga of a Movement*, 249.

Romania), running canteens and maintaining the functioning of two Bucharest kindergartens, named "Aleph" and "Beth".[365]

Especially through their work as kindergarten managers, ACFE became involved in issues of familial social reproduction within the community and contributed to the production of what Alice O'Connor terms "poverty knowledge"[366] about the poorest persons included in the Jewish community. In 1939, for instance, they assessed the needs of "pauper parents" through home investigations before admitting children to the kindergartens:

> Once the school locale was prepared, in the beginning of the school year there were received, following the social investigations done in their homes, 100 children. The children were definitively enrolled after a triage done by us, both at the moment when the request for enrollment was made, as well as after home inquiries and following the medical examination.[367]

Home investigations were used for municipal welfare provision since the early 1930s, sometimes with questionable effects.[368] It is not clear to what extent the practice of home investigations was developed within the Jewish community or in dialogue with the SSAS, but the 1930s inauguration of the method, at the same time as SSAS attempts at institutionalizing or expanding it, point towards contact —between the ACFE and the welfare activists of the SSAS and the SSF—or at least to basic familiarity with each other.

ACFE's engagement with issues of women's paid work represented another point of entwinement between Jewish and non-Jewish (usually Christian) women welfare activists in Bucharest and increasingly the need to react and protect against fascism. *Femeea evree* and ACFE's other publications had always advocated the worth and need of women's independence, arguments which matched a tradition of women's strong involvement in economic and secular life to accompany men's encouraged focus on religious study.[369] In the 1920s, the ACFE created professional training courses for young women who wished to settle in Palestine. In 1941, as young women were dismissed from their white-collar positions during

365 Grove-Pollak, *The Saga of a Movement*; CEB and ACFE Cultural Section, "Gradinita de Copii 'Beth' [Beth Kindergarten]," October 26, 1942, File III 84/1939–1948, f. 18, CSIER Bucharest.

366 Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

367 CEB–Grădina de Copii Alef., "Letter to CEB President," March 16, 1939, 28, File III 84/1939–1948, ff. 27–28, CSIER Bucharest; For a brief description in English of these kindergartens' operation, see "Rumania" (London, England: Women's International Zionist Organization, 1946), 7–8, https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cdocument%7C1726391.

368 See Chapter 5, the section "The flip side of investigative assistance."

369 Ursuțiu, "Pe drumul către modernitate. Câteva considerații privind emanciparea femeii evreice din România [On the road to modernity. Some considerations on the Jewish woman's emancipation in Romania]."

the Antonescu regime, ACFE organized retraining courses in more practical trades for those left unemployed:

> In 1941 when all the young Jewish girls were dismissed from their offices, the workshops and everywhere where they could honorably make a living, we founded a domestic science school —foreseeing as we did the need for professional re-orientation—where the young girls were, in addition to domestic science, taught a handicraft such as sewing and dressmaking.[370]

By providing relief and support for women affected by antisemitic legislation, the ACFE's welfare activism gained additional political urgency and gravitas. Whereas, as previously mentioned, the SSAS became extremely influential in national welfare policymaking, the ACFE was pushed towards an almost exclusive focus on women in the Jewish community. As a result, the ACFE became crucial for the survival of a marginalized community while being formally excluded from the rest of the local network of women welfare activists, in part via the direct contribution of key actors within that network.

Jewish women welfare activists in Bucharest faced a set of distinct challenges in their own quest for recognition and inclusion (primarily as "lay experts" on welfare provision). In the interwar context of "Greater Romanian" nationalism and surging antisemitism, Jewish women welfare activists engaged cautiously (mostly) with other women's organizations in the city. At the same time, Jewish women welfare activists in Bucharest became part of different transnational networks, including those fostered through the Women's International Zionist Organization. All in all, Jewish women in Bucharest faced unique challenges, forms of marginalization and exclusion. Whereas wartime welfare provision represented a moment of peak authority for women welfare activists linked to the SSAS, the same years were a period of maximum strain and exclusion for members of the ACFE, and for Jewish women (and men) in Bucharest more broadly.

Contesters of welfare assumptions within a local women's network: Social democratic and communist women

In conservative Romania, the leftist definition of "social questions", with its emphasis on class and urban organizing, was not overtly influential. The Social Democratic Party had a relatively small following outside Transylvania. In the early 1920s, in Bucharest, the party ran on the same municipal electoral ticket as the

370 WIZO, "Rumania," 2.

declining Conservative Party. It later briefly allied with the PNȚ.[371] Between 1928 and 1937, social democrats, socialists and several other splinter groups had between seven and nine MP in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of parliament.[372] The Communist Party was made illegal in 1924 and communist organizing actively persecuted in the two decades that followed.[373] Nevertheless, the policy agendas of transnational social democracy and communism merged with local claims and contributed to making visible in the Romanian capital city issues connected to productive and reproductive labor performed by women. Two left-wing organizations had important albeit different roles in shaping social policy in Bucharest: the social democratic Union of Working Women [*Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare*, UFM] and the short-lived, (covertly) communist Association for the Protection of Women and Children [*Asociația pentru Protecția Mamei și a Copilului*].

The Union of Working Women functioned between 1930 and 1946, with interruptions. It was a federation of social democratic women's organizations tied to the Social Democratic Party (rather than the Party's women's section), headquartered in Bucharest, with branches in several towns. At its peak, in 1932, the Union networked twelve sections, mostly in industrial towns and cities, with around 1200 members.[374] By 1937, it had only six sections and about five hundred members.[375] Between 1931 and 1934, the UFM published its popular monthly *Buletinul "Femeia muncitoare"* [The "Working Woman" Bulletin], with an average circulation of three thousand copies and parallel (not identical) issues in the Hungarian and German languages. In concrete terms, the Bucharest section of the UFM was numerically weak and, like all labor organizations, faced police and army chicanery when involved in activism. Unlike in Cernăuți (a city in the formerly Austrian province of Bukovina with a strong social democratic tradition, today Chernivtsi in Ukraine), Bucharest social democrats never had a municipal councilor

371 Cutișteanu and Ioniță, *Electoratul din România în anii interbelici*.

372 Ioan Scurtu et al., *Enciclopedia de istorie a României [The Encyclopedia of Romanian history]*, 3rd ed. (Bucharest: Editura Meronia, 2002), 65–67.

373 Marin C. Stănescu, *Stânga politică din România în anii crizei (1929–1933) [The Political left in Romania in the years of the crisis (1929–1933)]* (Editura Mica Valahie, 2002), 24–25, 139, 143, 195; "Se urmareste dizolvarea Blocului Democratic? - Percheziţiile şi arestările de eri [Is the Democratic Bloc to be dissolved? - Yesterday's house searches and arrests]," *Dimineața*, May 4, 1936, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

374 Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc: Studiu și antologie de text [From the history of Romanian feminism: Study and text anthology]*, 177.

375 Elisabeta Ioniță, "Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare din România UFMR [The Union of Women Workers of Romania]," *Revista de istorie* 33 (October 1980): 1925.

from among UFM members.[376] Despite its small scope, the UFM maintained strong ties with international social democratic women's organizations. Through its meetings and journals, the UFM popularized the stances of international social democratic women in industrial centers in Romania and shaped the parameters of public discourses around issues such as labor laws and birth control.

Social Democratic women in Bucharest were particularly inspired by Austrian social democracy and looked up to the achievements of municipal governance in "Red Vienna". In 1934, a guest lecturer at an event the UFM had publicly termed a "soirée" (in fact, it was a kind of wake after the violent fall of Red Vienna) mournfully stressed that unlike Soviet Russia, social democratic Austria had had impressive welfare achievements "without sacrificing the current generation for the sake of the future one" and that the Viennese example was a testament of the importance of "practical achievements" that could improve workers' everyday lives.[377] In July 1931, four UFM members had been part of the small delegation from Romania attending the Fourth Congress of the Labour and Socialist International, held in Vienna).[378] More importantly, while there, between 23 July and 25 July, they participated in the proceedings of the Fourth International Women's Conference of the Labor and Socialist International.[379]

The issue of the *Bulletin of the Working Woman* published following the delegates' return from Vienna contained enthusiastic summaries of reports presented during the Conference. Editors reported about speeches and presented reports, especially those concerning the international situation of women working in industry and commerce, in agriculture and as housewives. In relation to the topic of "housewives", the author of the account added that "we very much regret not

376 Lea Kissman was a Social Democratic councilwoman in Cernăuți and a speaker at the Labor and Socialist International Congress in Vienna. Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare, "Informațiuni [Information]," *Buletinul "Femeia muncitoare"*, November 1931, Fond 30–Organizații feminine democratice, Microfilm roll no. 400, s.42, SANIC Bucharest.

377 "Textul conferinței cu titlul 'Copiii noștri' ținută de Ion Pas la serata literară organizată în București, 18 martie 1934, de Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare [Text of a lecture titled 'Our children' delivered by Ion Pas at the literary soirée organized in Bucharest, 18 March 1934, by the Union of Working Women]," March 18, 1934, Fond 30 – Organizații feminine democratice, Microfilm roll no. 400, SANIC Bucharest.

378 Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare, "Marea sărbătoare muncitorească de la Viena [The Great workers' celebration in Vienna]," *Buletinul "Femeia muncitoare"* 1, no. 4–5 (August 1931): 1–5.

379 *Fourth International Women's Conference of the Labor and Socialist International, Vienna, July 23rd to 25th, 1931: Report of the Secretariat to the Women's Conference and Proceedings of the Women's Conference* (Zurich, Zurich Canton: Labour and Socialist International Archives, International Institute of Social History. Labour and Socialist International, 1931), https://search.alexanderstreet.com/view/work/bibliographic_entity%7Cbibliographic_details%7C1728431.

being able to share [the report at length] with our comrades other than through some of the more important conclusions".[380] The UFM report of the Vienna meeting outlined the Conference's demands for improved working conditions and protective legislation for workers in industry, commerce and in the home. Finally, the *Bulletin of the Working Woman* relayed the achievements and demands of social democratic women, as outlined by Austrian social democratic leader Adelheid Popp, "whose wonderful book *Autobiography of a Working Woman* has been translated into Romanian too and it is certain that many of you are familiar with it".[381] Popp was reported to have discussed issues such as the founding of social democratic women's organizations, the right to vote and the promotion of "conscious maternity".[382] It is especially this latter, pro-birth control, pro-abortion stance that would distinguish social democratic women from activists in all the other women's organizations (except for the communist ones) in Bucharest. In addition, as defenders of labor protection laws specific to women (such as a ban on night work), social democratic women were an important—if somewhat shadowy pole—in discussions on women's productive and reproductive labor as tackled through labor laws.[383]

Besides relaying information from abroad to Romania, social democratic women in the UFM gathered and compiled information for different international inquiries initiated by social democratic women's bodies. At its 1931 meeting, the UFM Executive Committee presented information about the newly-founded Union of Working Women and "owing to the strong ties between our organization and the feminine international Committee in Zurich [. . .] information about our movement can be found in all chapters [of the feminine international] Executive Committee report".[384] The "feminine international Committee in Zurich" referred to the International Advisory Committee on Women of the Labour and Socialist International (LSI), founded in 1927.[385] As Dorothy Sue Cobble points out, many of the women asso-

380 Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare, "Marea sărbătoare muncitorească".

381 Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare, "Marea sărbătoare muncitorească"

382 Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare, "Maternitatea conștientă [Concious maternity]," 1934, Fond 30–Organizații feminine democratice, Microfilm roll no. 400, s.60–62, SANIC Bucharest.

383 Ion Mirescu, "Federația Sindicală Internațională și Internaționala Ușilor Deschise: Protecție sau bun plac [The International Trade Union Federation and the Open Door Federation: Either protection or arbitrariness]," Buletinul "*Femeia muncitoare*", September 1931, Fond 30–Organizații feminine democratice, Microfilm roll no. 400, s.90, SANIC Bucharest.

384 Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare, "Informațiuni [Information]," 7.

385 Secretariat of the LSI, "Women in the Labour and Socialist International : Report Submitted to the Third Women's International Conference of the L.S.I. and the Third Congress of the L.S.I. by the Secretariat of the L.S.I." (Labour and Socialist International, 1928), https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/166012.

ciated with this LSI Advisory Committee were closely involved with the ILO.[386] Social democratic women in Romania sent information about their activities to comrades in this Committee in 1930 and in 1931 and asked to be sent publications.[387]

In the years after participating in the remarkable Women's Congress in Vienna, social democratic women in Romania regularly sent information to comrades abroad, especially to the *Women's Supplement* of *International Information*, the publication of the LSI. The *Supplement* was published by the secretariat of the International Advisory Committee on Women in the LSI. In 1938, a critical "Letter from Roumania" appeared in the *Women's Supplement.* After providing statistics on women's employment and trade union membership, the letter denounced that labor protection legislation concerning women's and children's work was not applied, contraceptives were lacking and maternal healthcare (especially in rural areas) absent, while the martial law instituted that year completely hindered social democratic women's organizing.[388]

Communist women, for their part, were largely barred from maintaining party organizations, publications or welfare associations with any degree of continuity. However, they did play an important cultural function, as they were turned into public examples of hyper politicized, out-of-control women. In 1933, Eugenia Economu, governess of the Mislea Women's Penitentiary, complained about communist inmates in the following terms:

> I have today in the prison eighteen so-called political detainees. All of them, absolutely all, are possessed by the fixed idea of happiness under communism [. . .]. As soon as they enter

386 Dorothy Sue Cobble, "The Other ILO Founders: 1919 and Its Legacies," in *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards, and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present*, eds. Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker, and Susan Zimmermann (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 47.

387 Eugenia Deleanu, Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare to Sozialistische Arbeiter-Internationale (SAI), Internationales Frauenkomitee, December 13, 1930, Labour and Socialist International, and Sozialistische Arbeiter-Internationale (SAI). Labour and Socialist International Archives. File 4398, f. 1, International Institute for Social History, http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01368.4398?locatt=view:pdf; "Sozialistische Arbeiter-Internationale (SAI), Internationales Frauenkomitee to Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare," February 25, 1931, Labour and Socialist International, and Sozialistische Arbeiter-Internationale (SAI). Labour and Socialist International Archives. File 4398, f. 2, International Institute for Social History, http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01368.4398?locatt=view:pdf; Lilly Radaceanu, "Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare to SAI, Internationales Frauenkomitee," May 5, 1931, Labour and Socialist International, and Sozialistische Arbeiter-Internationale (SAI). Labour and Socialist International Archives. File 4398, 4–5, International Institute for Social History, http://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01368.4398?locatt=view:pdf.

388 I thank Prof. Susan Zimmermann for providing me with an initial copy of this very interesting article. "Letter from Roumania," *International Information—Women's Supplement* 14, no. 4 (May 1937): 34.

> the prison, the struggle begins against the Headmistress and the control organs. Cynical, daring, and arrogant in attitude, in speech, in looks, carrying in their eyes something akin to a burning flame, sparks, green with anger and hatred, their entire beings tense up when they tell you they will not execute an order.[389]

This portrayal of communist women received greater publicity in 1936, after communist Anna Pauker was sentenced to ten years in prison in the "trial of the antifascists".[390] Notably, Pauker was not detained at the Mislea prison run by governess Economu, but in the Dumbrăveni women's prison, in Transylvania.[391] There, Pauker and another one hundred antifascist women enjoyed a political detention regime. A few years earlier, Economu had spoked against the relative laxity of this type of incarceration. The governess considered the special detention regime to be a privilege the communist prisoners did not deserve and one they were likely to abuse by radicalizing the other inmates. The governor of Mislea prison described the communists as benefitting from the much too mild detention regime reserved for political prisoners, engaging in the permitted "intellectual work" by shamelessly translating communist publications and generally acting defiantly due to their detailed knowledge of their rights as prisoners. In her lecture, Economu had warned against believing the reasons for "placing themselves in the service of the soviets" condemned communist women invoked during trials, among which were "misery" and having been misled.

Besides being constructed as the veritable witches of interwar popular (and professional) cultures, communist activists did—for brief moments—pioneer (for the Romanian context) forms of grassroots, neighborhood-based political organizing and agitation. In Bucharest they did this as fulfillers (or rather improvisers around) "popular front" antifascist organizations bankrolled by the Soviet Union. The communist sympathizing Association for the Protection of Women and Children, functioning between late 1934 and early 1935, was one of several organizations

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389 Eugenia Economu, "Contribuțiuni la o mai bună organizare a sistemului nostru represiv în penitenciarele de femei–Conferință ținută la Cercul de Studii Penale la 26 februarie 1933 [Contributions for the improved organization of our repressive system in women's prisons–Lecture delivered at the Circle for Penal Studies on 26th of February 1933].," in *Femeile delincvente [Delinquent women]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Ziarului Universul, 1939), 31.

390 See Robert Levy, *Ana Pauker: The Rise and Fall of a Jewish Communist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

391 Political detention regime at Dumbrăveni meant that "[t]he [women condemned in the trial of the Antifascists] were no longer kept in separate individual cells or obliged to wear standard prison uniforms; they were allowed to cook their own meals, work in their own workshops, and correspond with the outside world; and they were permitted to receive books and newspapers and to engage in intellectual pursuits of their own choosing." Levy, *Ana Pauker*, 52.

through which communist women in Bucharest provided welfare to women and children in need while engaging in political agitation as well.

The Association aimed to fight for the "material and social protection of women and children". Although the Statutes listed a longer list of proposed activities,[392] the archives of the Bucharest Association show that they worked towards this goal mostly by opening neighborhood social centers in city sectors, providing free medical assistance and legal advice and enabling women and children to actively claim social rights.[393] Throughout the year it functioned, the Association published the *Drumul Femeii* [Woman's Road] newspaper. The first issues claimed: "we want to see women's full rights protected in all realms, we want the passage to the scientific protection of women [. . .]. To mobilize all good wills around preschool-aged children, to support through our writing any improvement of today's tragedy of women-mothers".[394]

The Association publicly problematized industrial working women's labor conditions only to a small extent. Rather, the Association focused on what could be termed "social reproduction" issues and the feminized work of providing for families. Thus, whereas upper-class and left liberal women's organizations were involved in providing public welfare, the communist Association began contesting the conditions of distribution for these entitlements.

Several street protests were organized in 1934 and 1935. As described by state socialist historians:

> Among the manifestations organized by the Association we can mention: on April 23, in front of the Capital's City Hall, against high prices, with poor women and children from all neighborhoods of the Capital; in May, in the Pieptănari neighborhood, when housewives sent the bayliff running, police forces having come to remove and sell the objects of needy people [. . .]. It was very impressive to see the manifestation of children, organized on June 2nd 1935 in Bucharest. From all neighborhoods, the children gathered in Cișmigiu gardens and then, in rows, led by their mothers, in perfect order and the admiration of the public—as told by the *Dimineața* newspaper—demonstrated on Elisabeta and Victoriei

392 Elena Georgescu and Titu Georgescu, *Mişcarea democratică şi revoluţionară a femeilor din România [The democratic and revolutionary movement of women in Romania].* (Craiova: Editura Scrisului românesc, 1975), 177.

393 Asociatia pentru Ocrotirea Mamei și Copilului, "Statut și act constitutiv al Asociației pentru Protecția Mamei și Copilului [Statute and constitutive document for the Association for the Protection of Mother and Child]," January 29, 1935, Fond 64–Asociația pentru Ocrotirea Mamei și Copilului, Microfilm 466, File 1/1935, Code 42–43, SANIC Bucharest.

394 Elena Georgescu and Titu Georgescu, *Mişcarea democratică şi revoluţionară a femeilor din România*, 178.

> Boulevards, carrying placards and shouting: 'We want bread! We want milk! We want books! We want jobs for our parents.[395]

As evidenced by the title of the Association for the Protection of Mother and Child, communist women did focus on child protection. Other organizations in Bucharest organized manifestations which included acting or singing by children, on various occasions. The social democratic *Bulletin of the Working Woman* mentions protests by women around consumption issues. For instance, the 1932 Bulletin discussed housewives' "spontaneous" protest in the city of Sibiu, against a new tax for baking homemade bread in public bakeries.[396] Still, the highly confrontational politicization of physical and social reproduction seems to have been a tactic organized communist women claimed for themselves.

The confrontational strategies extended to organizing imprisoned women expected to work in penitentiary workshops. According to governess Economu,

> [a] serious event that occurred in the prison determined me to interpret the regulations in the interest of the institution. Namely, having received an order from the management to reduce the work tariffs in accordance with the price of sale, the communist women began through the most subtle and ingenious means a propaganda among the common prisoners, who were working. One fine day, instigated by these delinquents, something which has never occurred to me since I have been at the head of this institution, the prisoners did not want to go back into the workshops until I granted them their old tariffs. I sought to persuade them that work had to be seen as a benefaction for them not as a business [*ca o binefacere nu ca o afacere*], that it is a grace from the lawmaker not a burden. I was not listened to. Or if immediately after my sermons they became convinced, the counter propaganda would occur until the morning and then they would go in the workshops and intentionally did poor work.[397]

Imprisoned communist women convincing non-political detainees at Mislea to down tools or engage in production slow-down so as to overturn changes in labor conditions points to these welfare activists' capacity to use forms of affect-infused means of persuasion ("the most subtle and ingenious means") in order to mobilize. The episode also underscores how interwar communist women's welfare activism entailed generating grassroots contestation of the same logic of "reform through labor" which was embraced by other welfare activists in Bucharest. In the case of Mislea prison, communist detainees seem to have successfully con-

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395 Georgescu and Georgescu, *Mişcarea democratică şi revoluţionară a femeilor din România*, 178.

396 Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare, "Informaţiuni [Information]."

397 Economu, "Contribuţiuni la o mai bună organizare a sistemului nostru represiv în penitenciarele de femei - Conferinţă ţinută la Cercul de Studii Penale la 26 februarie 1933 [Contributions for the improved organization of our repressive system in women's prisons – Lecture delivered at the Circle for Penal Studies on 26th of February 1933].," 32.

tested the presentation of prison labor as morally redemptive benefaction. They argued it was a form of sweated, unfree labor that could be contested and struggled against, even by prisoners.

In conclusion, social democratic and communist women in Bucharest participated in the local network of women welfare activists primarily as critics of its other members, as challengers of other organizations' assumptions and as representatives of the distinctive world of transnational left-wing women's organizing. The social democratic Union of Working Women (UFM) forged links with Austrian social democrats, the Women's Committee of the Labour and Socialist International and by extension, with the International Labor Organization. Like these organizations abroad, the UFM supported women-specific protective labor legislation and women's reproductive autonomy. They positioned themselves both against nationalists such as Alexandrina Cantacuzino and against the "catch up" development politics of the Soviet Union which influenced the communists in Romania. Women in the UFM saw the former as exclusionary in their welfare politics and the latter as insufficiently preoccupied with workers' most pressing needs. Communist women were reviled in the press and in mainstream political fora because of an assumed lack of allegiance to Romanian nationalism but also due to their radical questioning of existing welfare practices and the broader set-up of need related politics and social reform in Romania. Although not able or willing to cooperate with the state and local administration, social-democratic and communist welfare activists in Bucharest engaged in social knowledge-making and politicized welfare practices in ways which brought them visibility but not much short-term recognition and influence as cultural producers.

Women welfare activists of various persuasions and with distinct motivations were part of a network through which they could assert themselves as experts on social issues affecting children and especially women. They aimed to transform such concerns, shaped by membership in distinct international networks, into public issues in Romania, and to turn their expertise into the wellspring of greater social authority, public recognition and of course, political rights.

As we have seen, this network was socially stratified and internally bounded, with insiders and outsiders. A rich, socially conservative aristocrat like Alexandrina Cantacuzino had organized together with progressive legal experts Calypso Botez and Ella Negruzzi for women's suffrage in the 1920s, but otherwise shared little with the two, in national or international politics. Internationally, Cantacuzino was linked to the rather conservative International Council of Women (ICW) and League of Nations committees where the ICW could impose its representatives. Botez had ties to the centrist International Alliance of Women and increasingly, the International Labor Organization. Veturia Manuilă and the Superior School of Social Assistance she founded were inspired by the US American Charity

Organization Society. Like Botez and Negruzzi, she had ties to the National Peasantist Party, yet unlike them she had little interest in the women's movement and the struggle for suffrage.

Because this network was made up of women, a social category still broadly discriminated against, the insiders were marginalized in the broader field of social reform in the city. The outsiders of the network were, to an extent, willingly placing themselves closer or further away from a core where, it was clear to any woman who understood social games, they would not be allowed to create the rules. Jewish women and social democratic women's organizations maintained a limited engagement with those meeting at the Section for Feminine Studies (SSF). Communist women were radical outsiders who wanted to change the status-quo and, as of 1924, adherents of a criminalized political current. Their pointed criticism reached the ears of feminine and feminist experts, sooner or later.

Despite differences, from the middle of the 1920s to the middle of the 1930s, those closer to the center of the network met regularly at the SSF. There they discussed transformations in women (and children's) work and welfare and came up with social policy solutions that fit the definitions of social problems they constructed. The SSF was a forum which strengthened the claims to expertise of these very different groups of women, vis-a-vis male social reformers and politicians.

Members of the Cultural Association of Jewish Women in Romania were aware of the knowledge-making practices honed and promoted at the Section for Feminine Studies. However, because of increasing antisemitism and exclusionary welfare policies, they focused on welfare provision for members of the Jewish community in Bucharest and on activism within the Women's International Zionist Organization. Social democratic and communist women were critical of the take on social issues by Cantacuzino or Manuilă. Social democrats advocated for higher social spending and workers' right to an easier life in the present while communist women organized emergency welfare in Bucharest as part of a radical critique of existing social relations.

Whereas women involved in the SSF saw knowledge production as a way of participating, albeit from the margins to public policymaking, Jewish women, social democrats and communists were less invested in bending a political system and rudimentary welfare state to integrate somewhat more women and address women's problems a little more. As social democrat Eugenia (Jeni) Rădăceanu, not to mention communist Ana Pauker, criticized the government and its shambolic social policy, Cantacuzino, Botez and Manuilă worked within local government, especially during the Great Depression—welfare policymaking and direct provision to which the next chapter turns.

Chapter 3
A Grip on the Reins of Welfare in the City: Councilwomen's Reforms of Municipal Social Assistance

The welfare activists meeting at the Section for Feminine Studies wanted political rights and the power to shape public policy. For some members of this gendered social reform network, welfare activism was tightly linked to the goal of obtaining suffrage rights for women. Excluded from national politics, these women focused their activity on municipal politics. They could participate more at this level on account of compromise solutions on women's suffrage. These included an early 1920s administrative mechanism for co-optation of women welfare activists in municipal councils and in 1929, partial suffrage—the right of women who were secondary-school–educated, widowed or led charitable associations to vote and stand for elections in local councils across the country. This chapter reconstructs the workings of municipal social assistance in Bucharest from the end of the First World War to the beginning of Carol II's dictatorship in 1938. It argues that "feminine", feminist and certified experts guided reforms towards increasing the eligibility of women with caring duties for social assistance programs available, while insisting on "reform through work" and the importance of surveillance to prevent welfare fraud.

Women welfare activists acted within an unsteady bureaucratic environment. The political color of Bucharest's municipal leadership closely mirrored that of the central government. For several years after the war, municipal administration in Bucharest functioned based on temporary regulations and through provisional local commissions nominated by the government, instead of having local councils elected directly by male residents, as the law required. These provisional commissions usually enjoyed one-year mandates.[398] A General Mayor of

398 These provisional post–First World War commissions were considered necessary until the creation of modern local administration laws to fully replace the administrative laws previously governing the city. These had changed little since the 1864 laws created by a new, Romanian-designated ruler, replaced the Russian-instituted Organic Regulations of 1834–1835. *Enciclopedia României Vol. 1*, 1 Statul [The State]: 305–6; See also Primăria Orașului București, *Dare de seama asupra activității administrative a Comisiunei Interimare pe exercițiul 1 aprilie–31 decembrie 1923 [Report on the administrative activity of the Provisional Commission for the mandate 1 April–31 December 1923]* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Tiparul Românesc," 1924). As regulations for Bucharest were also part of a larger administrative unification between the several entities now constituting "Greater Romania", the process advanced slowly, resulting in multiple tempo-

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Bucharest position existed from before the First World War. From 1925, the City of Bucharest was administered through four Sectors (districts) which divided the capital radially: Sector 1 (Yellow), Sector 2 (Black), Sector 3 (Blue) and Sector 4 (Green).[399] Sectors had a degree of autonomy but coordinated their activities and were accountable to a General City Hall [*Primăria Generală*], led by the General Mayor. Sector Halls [*primării de sector*] had their own councils. Councilors were elected through direct vote; they elected a sector mayor and vice-mayor. The sector mayor and up to nine members of the council "form[ed] a permanent representative body, which took care of the budget, the setting up of the electoral lists, inspections of the communal institutions".[400] Sector and General Municipal Councils met at least once a month or whenever the General Mayor considered necessary to convoke them.[401] Technically, throughout the period, mandates lasted for six years and partial elections were meant to be organized every three years for the replacement of half of the councilors. Yet the postponement of election dates was sometimes used to disrupt opponents' electoral campaigns or to wait out moments of central government crisis. Thus, between 1918 and 1944, four rounds of local elections took place in Bucharest: in 1926, 1930, 1934, and 1937.

Women council members were almost always assigned, and made their own, the issue of social assistance for families in poor, growing, neighborhoods. In this way, councilwomen helped create iterations of a system of public municipal assistance that could provide very little help to the poorest in Bucharest. By extension, through their own badly rewarded labor, women welfare activists directly involved in Bucharest local politics helped construct a low-spending version of the early local welfare state in "Greater Romania". In this they had some political choice, but a limited one.

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rary commissions; leaders of the left opposition argued that these commissions were meant to prevent a Bucharest victory of labor-friendly parties and individuals. Cutișteanu and Ioniță, *Electoratul din Romania în anii interbelici [The Electorate in Romania during the interwar years]*.

399 See Map 1.

400 Joseph S. Roucek, *Contemporary Roumania and Her Problems*, 2nd edn., The Eastern Europe Collection (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1932), 239.

401 I opted for an anglicized version of the Romanian term rather than the less awkward "district" or "borough" after consulting with other researchers and translators working with Romanian sources. There was an agreement that "sector" captures the radial division of the city better. Also, the term underscores the replication of center-periphery spatial dynamics within districts of interwar Bucharest.

Municipal welfare work between 1920 and 1925

In 1919, a royal decree approved a plan drawn up by members of the government that allowed women involved in "charity or public assistance work" to be nominated ("co-opted") to the provisional local commissions governing Bucharest neighborhoods.[402] This was a palliative in the unsuccessful struggle for women's suffrage. In 1918, all men were enfranchised. Women were not included in the electorate, despite initial promises to the contrary. Educated women, especially those involved in local philanthropy and in Bucharest's influential "salon politics", had protested this exclusion. Still, co-optation to local politics could be, and turned out to be, a springboard for obtaining the right to elect and be elected in local elections. In England, women elected to local councils in the same period often had experience in municipal politics because they had previously served as co-opted members on various local government committees, typically those related to welfare and housing.[403]

Between 1919 and 1926, central-government-funded social assistance (often called "official assistance") relied heavily on philanthropic women's welfare work (termed "private initiative assistance").[404] The central government, through the Social Assistance Direction in the MMSOS, subsidized "private initiative assistance" societies. Overwhelmingly, such societies were managed by women. In the period from 1924 to 1927, across the country, sixteen societies for the "protection of women and girls", forty-seven societies for "assistance at home", twenty societies for the protection of children post-infancy and sixteen maternities or societies for the protection of infants, received much of what the Ministry considered to be its "limited funds" available for subsidies (30.7 million Lei).[405] The only kinds of societies receiving higher subsidies than women welfare activists' organizations from the MMSOS were the eight dealing with "social diseases" (36 million Lei in 1924–1927), including the Red Cross and a society for the profilaxis of tuberculosis. These were dominated or run by members of the medical community. Between 1924 and 1927, ten to twelve subsidized societies were considered "collab-

402 On women's suffrage vis-a-vis men's suffrage after the First World War see Cosma, *Femeile și politica în România*, 41–58.

403 Catherine Hunt, "'Success with the Ladies': An Examination of Women's Experiences as Labour Councillors in Inter War Coventry," *Midland History* 32, no. 1 (June 2007): 148.

404 An example of the "ill-functioning official assistance" being contrasted with a privately created welfare institution, can be found in the newspaper article "O binefăcătoare instituție de Asistență Socială [A welfare bringing institution for Social Assistance]," *Neamul Românesc*, January 30, 1927, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

405 Botez, "Asistența socială," 241–244.

orating societies"; their subsidies were earmarked in yearly central government budgets.[406]

The largest and best subsidized such societies were operating in the Old Kingdom, especially Bucharest. In 1930, there were 105 welfare societies in the Old Kingdom, eighty-eight of which were active in Bucharest. Notably, around half of these societies were not formally registered. The MMSOS recognized that welfare domains such as "child protection" would need to eventually be taken over by the state. In the first half of the 1920s, it was only in Transylvania that a system of protection relying on large, state-funded "children's homes" (akin to orphanages) existed; this was a system inherited from the Hungarian government that had founded them, before the First World War.[407] Meanwhile, in much of the country, particularly in the capital, the government relied on women's societies for welfare work, especially for welfare focused on women's and children's well-being. In turn, societies depended on government generosity and the regard of high-level bureaucrats.

On the background of support from the central government for women's welfare work in Bucharest, women co-opted to councils were assigned tasks exclusively related to public assistance. In 1919, a journalist reported that the women co-opted via this "new and daring attempt" would deal with "public assistance and everything related to this charitable work: aid to the poor, elderly asylums, the city hall's kindergartens, distribution of aids etc".[408] The arrangement was in fact not quite so new and daring. At least in Bucharest, women from large charities had been involved in distributing public social assistance money since the 1910s.[409]

The 1919 royal decree brought a measure of formal recognition for women volunteers' welfare work but not much decision-making power. In fact, between 1919 and 1926, far fewer women welfare activists joined local Councils than planned. After the 1919 royal decree, politicians adopted a form of strategic disinterest for the details connected to the issue of women's representation; the specifics of women's presence in local councils were not clarified for another few years. In 1919, there were supposed to be three councilwomen, one in each of the three sectors into which Bucharest was meant to be divided. However, between 1920 and 1922, only one woman, Zoe Romniceanu, was co-opted to the main "pro-

406 Botez, "Asistența socială," 242, 244.

407 Botez, "Asistența socială," 242.

408 "Femeile vor intra în consiliile noastre comunale [Women will join our local councils]," *Dimineața*, May 6, 1919, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

409 Primăria Orașului București–Serviciul Asistenței, *Asistența publică și privată în România [Public and private assistance in Romania]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Cooperativă Poporul, 1911), 9.

visional local commission", equivalent to the General City Council, governing Bucharest.[410]

Between 1923 and 1925, no woman was co-opted to the General Council (Bucharest was not yet divided into sectors), despite women's welfare organizations' cooperation with the municipality. In 1923, the new Constitution of the Kingdom of Romania reconfirmed and enshrined the existing local political practice of co-opting philanthropist women to councils, by mentioning the possibility that women "of age", and especially those who had distinguished themselves through welfare activism, could be co-opted as members of municipal councils.[411] However, this did not amount to a clear rule. It was only the 1925 Law for Administrative Unification, regulating local administration in the whole country and ending the "provisional commissions" phase, that finally formalized and regulated the presence of women in local councils.[412] This enabled women's presence in greater numbers in local governments.

In this first half-decade after the First World War, co-opted councilwomen supported a municipal politics of minimal welfare spending. In this period, public social assistance mainly consisted of a program for acquiring and distributing firewood in winter. The entire 2.7 million Lei City Hall allocated to "public assistance", of a budget of 68.4 million Lei, was used to purchase firewood.[413] Very little of the wood reached the poorest inhabitants of the city. From a total of 935 wagons of firewood purchased by City Hall, women's organizations distributed to persons in need, according to their own unclear criteria, the wood from 334 of the wagons. The municipality itself handled the direct distribution of this winter heating aid to the neediest only to a small extent, handing out the wood from forty-seven of the purchased wagons. Otherwise, City Hall sold to "interested individuals" 554 wagons of firewood, at low prices.[414]

410 See Appendix 1.

411 Parliament of Romania, "Constituția Regatului României [Constitution of the Kingdom of Romania]," Monitorul Oficial 282/29 Mar. 1923, accessed December 12, 2023, http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?idt=1517.

412 Parliament of Romania, "Legea pentru unificarea administrativă [Law for administrative unification]," Monitorul Oficial 128/14 June 1925, with modifications on 22 December 1925.

413 In 1923, one million Lei could pay for the renovation of a small public utility building, such as the public baths in the city of Iași. "Refacerea orașului Iași [The Reconstruction of the city of Iași]," *Presa*, March 24, 1923, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

414 Primăria Orașului București, *Dare de seama asupra activității administrative a Comisiunei Interimare pe exercițiul 1 aprilie–31 decembrie 1923 [Report on the administrative activity of the Provisional Commission for the mandate 1 April–31 December 1923]* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Tiparul Românesc," 1924), 14.

This period's minimalism dovetailed with a government-level policy of criminalizing poverty, through a 1921 punitive law for "curbing begging and vagrancy". The law mandated the transportation of those found loitering and begging in cities to rural colonies where they would be reformed through work.[415] This anti-vagrancy law and the four rural work colonies that it created operated until 1936, despite well-documented early criticism that the law did not criminalize work shirkers and a "floating population" of loiterers, as intended, but peasants in search of seasonal work in Bucharest and unhoused elderly and sick men (and to a much smaller extent, women).[416] In 1925, in an unusually critical and frank yearly report, Dr. Ioan Zaplachta, the head of the Triage Office for male vagrants in Bucharest—an institution of the municipal administration—advocated "modern and humane" social assistance, implying that the punitive practices of the institution he was leading were anything but that.[417] Some women welfare activists involved in local government seemed to support this politics of removing from sight some of the most vulnerable citizens of the city. For example, in 1927, Alexandrina Cantacuzino, by then a co-opted councilwoman, proposed that men who were unwilling to work in exchange for assistance be expulsed and "unreformable prostitutes" locked in institutions outside the city.[418]

Between 1919 and 1925, the municipality's priorities were infrastructure investments. Money was borrowed on the British financial market for investments in roads and schools. In 1923, Bucharest City Hall spent most of its budget (68.4 million Lei) for compensating seventeen homeowners and landowners whose properties stood in the way of planned roads and other infrastructural developments.[419] During the April 1926 electoral campaign, the Social Democratic Party judged these efforts an utter failure:

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415 Parliament of Romania, "Lege pentru înfrânarea vagabondajului şi cerşetoriei şi pentru protecţiunea copiilor [Law for the curbing of vagrancy and loitering and for the protection of children]," Monitorul Oficial 76/9 July 1921; Ministerul Muncii și Ocrotirilor Sociale. Direcțiunea Generală a Asistenței Sociale., *Lege si regulament pentru infrânarea vagabondajului si cersetoriei si pentru protectiunea copiilor: Expunerea de motive, formulare [Law and regulation for the curbing of begging and vagrancy and for the protection of children: Exposition of reasons, forms]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Reforma Socială, 1921).

416 Ion Zaplachta, "Cerșetorii și vagabonzii capitalei [The beggars and vagrants of the capital]," *Calendarul asistenței sociale*, 1924.

417 Zaplachta, 80.

418 Alexandrina Cantacuzino, "Letter. Anteproect pentru Casa de Ocrotire [Project proposal for the Protection House]," 1927, Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 103/1927, ff. 25–29, SANIC Bucharest.

419 Primăria Orașului București, *Dare de seama asupra activității administrative a Comisiunei Interimare pe exercițiul 1 aprilie–31 decembrie 1923 [Report on the administrative activity of the Provisional Commission for the mandate 1 April–31 December 1923]*, 58.

> Outside some street paving works, in the periphery, primitive and to a great extent paid for directly by the citizens, the liberal government has done nothing for the welfare and protection of the great mass of our people. [. . .] There is no policy of affordable housing, nor social assistance organized according to modern principles, nor concern for cleanliness and public hygiene. The city, outside of some central streets, lies in indescribable filth.[420]

During this period, women's "private initiative" social assistance flourished, as the municipality placed much of the burden of poor relief onto such organizations. Communist women thought such charity work was out-of-step with the times. On 25 December 1923, at the closely surveilled meeting of the communist Women's Circle, a Circle occasionally presided by Ana Pauker—young communist militant at the time, a report was read about the situation of four hundred women, arrested in Berlin for stealing potatoes from "the gardens of the bourgeois". It was concluded that so far only Russia had come to the German workers' aid and that Romanian workers were to help more. A majority of the twenty women present at the women's circle gathering in a cramped room in the city center, not far from the building of the royal palace, voted to nominate a delegate to go to all the "feminine bourgeois circles" and ask for help for the "famished of Germany".[421] Whereas the audience's vote could have been an earnest attempt to muster donations by going as far as to appeal to "the bourgeois circles" at a time when workers themselves could spare very little, considering the radical tone of other discussions of the Circle that year, it is more likely that the request was a provocation by communist women to local women's organizations, implicitly seen as provincial and unable to engage in the kind of international solidarity work the new Soviet Union could already pursue.

In general, between 1919 and 1925, rather than providing public social assistance, the "provisional commissions" leading Bucharest City Hall pursued a form of "poverty policy". Poverty policy designates the collection of unsystematic, small scale, repressive forms of assistance, in which public contributions are of similarly limited scale as private philanthropy. Most scholarship associates it with late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century settings in Europe marked by rapid industrialization and displacement.[422] However, policies of repressing poverty through displacement were present in the Hungarian side of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, for example, until at least the early twentieth century.[423] The approach was condemned by progressive civil servants like Dr. Zaplachta as

420 Const.-Titel Petrescu, *Socialismul în România 1835–6 septembrie 1940 [Socialism in Romania 1835–6 September 1940]* (Bucharest: Biblioteca Socialistă, 1945), 392.

421 "Notă [Note]," December 25, 1923, Inv. 3014–Note ale Siguranţei despre activitatea Cercului Feminin din Bucureşti, File 4530|1048/1923–1924, f. 38, SANIC Bucharest. ZARAH.

422 Midgley, "Poor Law Principles and Social Assistance in the Third World."

423 Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule*.

much as by campaigning socialists. By the 1920s, across Europe, "poverty policy" approaches were slowly being replaced with larger social assistance programs, funded by citizens' taxes. In Bucharest, the process of scaling welfare up was slower than elsewhere, even as concerns for improving welfare were similar and similarly formulated to those in neighboring countries' cities or further afield.[424] Women involved in City Hall politics were at the forefront of attempts at transformation.

"Private initiative" and public social assistance from 1925 to 1929

From 1925 to 1929, several women were—finally—nominated to city councils in Romania to serve as "co-opted councilors". The 1925 Law for Administrative Unification allowed for a maximum of seven co-opted councilors in all cities over 250,000 inhabitants, with the numbers decreasing proportionally with the population of a town. A related 1926 Law for Commune Administration in the City of Bucharest divided the capital into the four sectors mentioned above; each sector had twenty to twenty-five councilors.[425] In each sector, around half of all councilors were meant to be elected, a third were automatic members of the councils because they held supervisory positions within district administrations, four were auxiliary or reserve members [*membri supleanți*] and two councilors were to be "co-opted".[426] Women councilors occupied one or two of the designated co-opted seats in councils. The General City Council, presided over by the General Mayor of the Capital, was composed of delegated councilors from each sector. Yet because this two-level set-up only came into force fully in 1927, the first cohort of co-opted councilwomen was, confusingly, co-opted directly to the General City Council, rather than to sector councils.[427]

During this period, it was especially women with aristocratic or upper-class backgrounds who occupied the positions reserved for co-opted councilwomen.

424 On the expansion of social work in Central and Eastern Europe, see Kurt Schilde and Dagmar Schulte, eds., *Need and Care: Glimpses into the Beginnings of Eastern Europe's Professional Welfare* (Opladen: Barbara Budrich Publishers, 2005); for the French case, see Zappi, *Les visages de l'État social. Assistantes sociales et familles populaires durant l'entre-deux-guerres*, 29–60.

425 Parliament of Romania, "Legea pentru organizarea administrațiunii comunale a orașului București [Law for community administration in the city of Bucharest]," Monitorul Oficial 31/7 February 1926.

426 *Enciclopedia României [The Encyclopedia of Romania]*, 1: 309–310.

427 See Appendix 2.

For instance, in 1926, seven councilwomen were "co-opted" to the General City Council. They all had ties to the National Liberal Party or the Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women (SONFR). They were: Zoe Romniceanu (Râmniceanu) (vice-president of the SONFR, briefly lady in waiting to Queen Marie of Romania),[428] Maria Balș (founder of a children's tuberculosis sanatorium),[429] Alexandrina Cantacuzino (SONFR president), Sarmiza Alimănișteanu (jurist with ties to the National Liberal Party), Ecaterina Caragea (related to Cantacuzino, president of the "Sfânta Ecaterina" orphanage), Eleonora Gologan and Elena Popp. Alexandrina Cantacuzino, the SONFR's "stormy president" (in a close collaborator's description),[430] was the most outspoken and best travelled among the co-opted councilwomen. These co-opted councilwomen's welfare work was rooted in *noblesse oblige* notions of respectability and gendered social duty. As shown in the previous chapter, they were part of the well-connected upper-class milieu of the capital city and many had been or still were active in the local women's movement.

This first cohort of councilwomen wanted to reform public social assistance, with Cantacuzino as key visionary. Cantacuzino, and presumably her close collaborators too, believed that autonomous women's organizations could best prevent social assistance fraud and corruption. In late 1926, Cantacuzino described to fellow councilors in the Bucharest General City Council her vision for the thorough reform of both "outdoor" assistance (aid distribution to assisted persons in their homes) and "indoor" social assistance (in specialized residential institutions). It was a "welfare vision", in Linda Gordon's terms,[431] that embraced minimal social spending. It advocated "assistance through labor" and prevention of welfare fraud and pursued the moral regulation of "fallen women" in supervision-heavy institutions. Not least, but less explicitly, it was a welfare vision that directed more aid than before to women and girls.

Cantacuzino made "assistance through labor" the guiding principle of her project to reorganize outdoor municipal social assistance. By "assistance through labor" she mostly meant tasking women's societies with previous experience in

428 Delia Bălăican, ed., "Anexă: Cerchez Caterina – Biografia lui Zoe Romniceanu (1872–1926)" [transcriere document] la 'Ecaterina Cerkez despre Zoe Romniceanu – Rezonanța unei biografii' [Annex: Cerchez Caterina – Biography of Zoe Romniceanu (1872–1926)" document transcript]," *Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române* 8, no. 15 (June 2023): 98–103.

429 "Festivitatea de la sanatoriul CTC din Carmen Sylva [Festivity at CTC Sanatorium in Carmen Sylva]," *Universul*, October 25, 1936, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

430 Delia Bălăican, ed., "Ecaterina Cerkez despre Zoe Romniceanu – Rezonanța unei biografii Ecaterina Cerkez about Zoe Romniceanu – Resonance of a biography]," *Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române* 8, no. 15 (June 2023): 103.

431 Gordon, "Black and White Visions of Welfare"; Gordon, "Social Insurance and Public Assistance."

the field with the job placement of women and girls or finding work at home for women who could not work outside the home. (Granted, in the Ante-Project for the reform of public assistance Cantacuzino submitted, the benefits of the grand concept were more elaborately described than the means to achieve it.) She argued that gainful employment allowed the poor to avoid being slaves to the generosity of the rich and—drawing on her knowledge of institutions for disabled veterans she had seen in Germany, France, and the USA—suggested that work had a certain healing power, allowing even those maimed in war to remain "productive elements".[432]

According to Cantacuzino, assistance through labor mediated by women welfare activists was a way of ensuring thrift in public spending and minimize welfare fraud. It could enable the city to "cease with the help through mercy, through favors, through interventions", focusing efforts only on those in dire need. Publicly subsidized "private assistance associations in the Capital" could ensure "methodical control" of distributed aids, with the private character of these associations constituting a guarantee of their impartiality. To guard against "poor people of bad faith who find ways to take relief from multiple places", Cantacuzino proposed that those requesting aid register their address with the police and produce the proof of residence whenever collecting any type of aid from the "Assistance Societies". To this end, Societies were expected to trade information and become interconnected. For Cantacuzino, the ideal welfare scenario was that "the relief would be given in the poor person's home" so that there could be continuous control of "the true state in which this assisted person finds itself".[433]

Finally, the proposed reform would deal with unemployment as a moral issue rather than a labor issue. For Cantacuzino, unemployment was an issue to be dealt with through local social assistance rather than through the institutions of the central government or programs such as unemployment insurance. In her letter, she reported strong opposition to her project from those who argued labor placements were the domain of the Ministry of Labor and the Job Placement Offices it ran in Bucharest.

In the same vein, Cantacuzino proposed the creation of General and Sectoral Social Assistance Councils.[434] The Councils would be made up of representatives

432 Alexandrina Cantacuzino, "Alexandrina Cantacuzino to Bucharest City Councilors," 1926, Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 86/1926–1929, ff. 21–24, SANIC Bucharest.

433 Primăria Municipiului București, "Raportul Direcțiunei Asistenței în ședința Comitetului de Asistență din 13 ianuarie 1927 [Report of the Assistance Direction in the meeting of the Assistance Committee of 13 January 1927]," January 13, 1927, Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 86/1926–1929, 33–34, SANIC Bucharest.

434 Cantacuzino, "Ante-proiect pentru organizarea asistentei publice a comunei."

of women's "private initiative" societies already involved in charity in the city and would coordinate among themselves the handling of all social assistance matters. For example, the *Obolul* [The Alms] society and a Union of Benevolent Societies [*Uniunea Societăților de Binefacere*] would deal with the distribution of clothes to children and women, of food aid to anemic and convalescent children, and the distribution of vouchers for the firewood which could be picked up each year on 15 November.[435] Other women's societies were to be charged with the job placement of women and girls or finding work for women who could not work outside the home. Cantacuzino was insistent that the municipality needed to subsidize these organizations while allowing them full autonomy, arguing that in the Social Assistance department of the City Hall "we must not snuff out private activity, we need only control".[436]

In its disdain for scroungers and condemnation of mercy, as well as through its interest in the moralizing value of work and productivity, Cantacuzino's welfare vision was a socially conservative one. It resembled the widespread "Elberfelder system" of municipal poor relief which had originated in mid-nineteenth-century Germany, in the Wuppertal region. The Elberfelder system relied on face-to-face meetings between recipients and almsgivers, partly to prevent working class unrest.[437]

The second part of Cantacuzino's vision, assistance through residential institutions, was similarly focused on work and moralizing poverty. In 1927, she proposed to Bucharest's "General and Sector Mayors" the creation of a "Protection Home" for up to two hundred "fallen women", "girl mothers" and reformable sex workers.[438] Sex workers considered much too depraved and "in need of a more drastic regime" were to be interned at Mărcuța, a monastery turned reformatory, located outside Bucharest.

This proposal was inspired by the *Maison de Relèvement* she had toured while attending the congress of the International Alliance for Women's Suffrage (IWSA) in Paris, in 1926. The *Maison* had been founded by Cantacuzino's friend and occasional travel companion, Avril de Sainte Croix. De Sainte Croix was an internationally respected French feminist and welfare activist, the archetypical "feminine ex-

435 Cantacuzino, "Ante-proiect pentru organizarea asistentei publice a comunei."

436 Cantacuzino, "Ante-proiect pentru organizarea asistentei publice a comunei."

437 James Willis, "The Elberfeld System: Poor Relief and the Fluidity of German Identity in Mid-Nineteenth Century Germany" (MA Thesis, Boise, USA, Boise State University, 2016), https://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2184&context=td.

438 Cantacuzino, "Letter. Anteproect pentru Casa de Ocrotire [Project proposal for the Protection House]."

pert" of the Belle Epoque and likely a model for the younger Cantacuzino.[439] According to the Bucharest councilwoman, at the *Maison* "hundreds of girl-mothers are brought with their child, and finally find there in the workshops, labor and moral treatment by doctors and sociologists".[440]

The Protection Home Cantacuzino wanted to have in Bucharest was meant to have "mechanical workshops organized to be a productive force" which would produce "laundry items and clothes for the poor". The clothing would be acquired by the City Hall for distribution to those receiving public assistance, enabling the Home to become a self-sustaining institution. The children of the "girl-mothers" were to be placed in the SONFR-administered "Sfânta Ecaterina" Orphanage. The Protection Home was to be built right next to the orphanage, so that "the girl mother would have there her child, protected under perfect conditions, almost under her eyes, without one more expense for the State. She would nurse him by passing several times a day under surveillance by the Orphanage".[441]

In 1927, the project proposal Cantacuzino had circulated became the basis for the first official rules for municipal social assistance in Bucharest.[442] As Cantacuzino proposed, "The Regulation for Social Assistance in the City of Bucharest" turned unpaid, volunteering women welfare activists into main distributors of small financial aids and aid in kind (clothing, firewood) in Bucharest. The Assistance Committee she had called for was created, but with each sector having its own assistance committee, in addition to the general Assistance Committee.

City Hall bureaucrats were more involved in the Committee than Cantacuzino had proposed. Rather than being made up largely of "private initiative" women welfare activists from the city, the new Assistance Committee also included all the councilwomen co-opted in various sector councils in 1926 as well as several established civil servants. Committee secretaries employed by the municipality (not drawn from among volunteering welfare workers, for example) supervised the way in which the Committee handled its funds. Secretaries signed off on disbursements made by women's associations making up the Assistance Committees and reported to City Hall. Still, women welfare activists seem to have enjoyed considerable autonomy.

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439 Epstein, "Gender and the rise of the female expert during the Belle Époque," 88–89/5–6.

440 Cantacuzino, "Letter. Anteproect pentru Casa de Ocrotire [Project proposal for the Protection House]."

441 Cantacuzino, "Letter. Anteproect pentru Casa de Ocrotire [Project proposal for the Protection House]." Emphasis in the original.

442 Primăria Municipiului București, "Regulament pentru asistența socială a Primăriei Municipiului București [Regulation for social assistance in the city of Bucharest]," 1927, Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 86/1926–1929, 28–32, SANIC Bucharest.

Moreover, each of the four sector halls, in command of their budgets as of 1927, distributed some public social assistance aid without the involvement of the general Social Assistance Council. For example, between 1927 and 1929, the Sector 4 (Green) district government allotted over 400,000 Lei for families' medical care, almost 400,000 Lei for school children's expenses and subsidized clinics and maternities run by private charities with 266,000 Lei. Some 400,000 Lei was given as "financial aid to families" and approximately 300,000 Lei as "aid in kind" (firewood).[443] Notably, these were relatively small amounts. For example, the 266,000 Lei distributed over three years, amounted to less than 8,000 Lei per month to subsidize maternities and clinics in a district, close to the 7,000 Lei a well-paid skilled male worker could earn per month from 1925 to 1928.[444] However, the councilwoman co-opted to the Sector 4 council was very likely involved in deciding on and distributing these subsidies and aids, even as councilmen not assigned to deal with assistance tended to distribute aids as well, to the chagrin of the welfare activists.

Still, as envisioned by Cantacuzino in her proposal, the municipality's officially adopted program was a program of "assistance through labour" which was vigilant against work shirkers. Those struggling inhabitants who came before the Assistance Committee because they could not find employment, were to be helped to find work. They were to be recommended "to the sanitation service of the commune, to be used in cleaning of the streets", to job placement offices and "other societies whose [set] program is to procure employment for these persons".[445] If the petitioner refused the position found for her or him by the Assistance Committees or partner organizations, "then they will not receive any aid and if not originally from the capital, measures will be taken for them to be sent back to their communities of origin [*să fie trimis la urma lui*]". As can be deduced from the resort to expulsion in case of refusal to work, this new public assistance approach incorporated the anti-vagrancy ethos and practices of the Law for Curbing Vagrancy and Begging.

In addition, the new rules oriented public aid towards women as beneficiaries. Besides "those who can no longer work" (a category possibly referring to disabled men who were not considered elderly), "the ill elderly who can no longer work" and the "sickly poor", assistance was to be extended to "young girls wan-

443 Alexandru D. Matak, *Primăria sectorului IV Verde 1926–1936 [The City Hall of Sector IV Green 1926–1936]* (Bucharest: Tipografia și Zincografia ziarului Universul, 1936), 104.

444 For a brief description of the evolution of wage levels and amounts in Bucharest, see Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 444.

445 Primăria Municipiului București, "Regulament pentru asistența socială a Primăriei Municipiului București [Regulation for social assistance in the city of Bucharest]."

dering the streets without work", "poor pregnant and nursing women without a home" or "the children of poor mothers with or without a man". These were categories that had been the focus of women welfare activists' works in philanthropic organizations. That various categories of needy women were named is significant. Certainly, women and children tended to need help more often through social assistance schemes, as they were less likely to be covered by contributory social insurance schemes. However, before 1927, the municipality paid little explicit attention to needy women and their circumstances, even if most of the aids were distributed to them in practice, especially in the form of firewood for households (usually collected by women), or for schools. Cantacuzino's rules, rooted in philanthropic women's welfare practices, made the gendered character of social assistance more explicit. It likely enabled more women to receive assistance because men and boys "without work" were more easily assumed to be vagrants.

The handful of preserved letters and petitions requesting aid suggest that at least in the second half of 1927, women were indeed the main adult beneficiaries of public social assistance in Bucharest. However, they also reveal that neighbors rather than delegates of the municipality attested for petitioners' genuine need, with the neighborhood community thus becoming involved in constructing needs, often according to slightly different criteria than the municipality. In 1927, petitioners included a widow who requested "a firewood aid [*un ajutor de lemne*]" because she was "a poor woman without any help, unable to work because I am Old [sic]".[446] Her neighbors vouched for her situation and residency at the stated address. A letter from neighbors in support of the request for aid of a Miss Lucia C. mentioned she was the "daughter of Cazimir C., superior clerk with the Romanian Railways", was known in the neighborhood, was of Romanian nationality and "enjoys a good comportment in society".[447] Such letters, although frequent, were not part of the new social assistance procedures mentioned in the 1927 Regulations. Of their own judgement or perhaps with informal encouragement from representatives of the municipality, petitioners and their supporters mentioned ethnicity and signs of respectability, linking them to worthiness. However, in a nod to the focus on work in the new regulations, they likewise referenced inability to work.

As the visibility of municipal public–private social assistance grew, so did institutional skepticism about relief expenditure in the context of economic down-

446 Alicsandrina G., "Letter. Alicsandrina G. to Bucharest Sector IV City Hall," November 1927, Fond 76–Primăria Sectorului IV Verde, File 2/1927, f. 11, SMBAN Bucharest.

447 Nae D., "Letter. Nae D. to Bucharest Sector IV City Hall. Dovadă de mahala [Proof of neighborhood residency]," November 1927, Fond 76–Primăria Sectorului IV Verde, File 2/1927, f.3, SMBAN Bucharest.

turn. In 1927, the "hitherto unknown" phenomenon of unemployment became visible in Romania.[448] In February, the Mayor requested thorough checks in the city-managed elderly asylums, so that only those "truly pauper" would benefit from the city's social assistance. He also expressed his conviction that state laws enabled and mandated administrations to take such verification steps.[449] As economic problems worsened, the issue of keeping funding in check and streamlining the public provision of relief gained importance. Cantacuzino, her SONFR allies and the several women in the cohort of co-opted councilwomen stayed in office until February 1929. By that point, a majority-PNȚ government, led by Iuliu Maniu, had been in office for several months. As was typical, developments in central government politics quickly affected Bucharest municipal politics.

Elected councilwomen and the new ideal of "constructive social work"

If, with the 1926 co-optation, women linked to the SONFR and the National Liberal Party may have felt they were finally receiving well-deserved recognition, many other welfare activists in Bucharest were critical of the co-optation mechanism and its results. The perceived exclusions of some women welfare activists from local politics, implicitly on account of their very vocal suffragism and their links to political factions contesting the moment's political establishment, would impact women's electoral politics and their welfare work over the course of the next decade. At the time of the 1926 co-optation of Cantacuzino and her allies, the leaders of rival, progressive, women's organizations were focusing on suffrage. But they had themselves been involved in welfare provision before the war. In 1926, they were unhappy with the municipality's choices. For instance, writer Eugenia de Reuss-Ianculescu, from the IWSA-affiliated League for Romanian Women's Rights and Duties, director of a girls' orphanage during the war, publicly protested the "politicization of the local administration" via the co-optation mechanism.[450] The women who had associated themselves with the opposition in the 1926 elections, Reuss-Ianculescu among them,[451] appear to not have been considered for inclusion in the councils.

448 C. Stănescu, "Piața muncii [The Labor market]," in *Zece ani de politică socială în România 1920–1930* (Bucharest: Ministerul Muncii, Sănătății și Ocrotirilor Sociale, 1930), 183.

449 Primaria Municipiului Bucuresti, "Deciziune [Decision]," in *Monitorul Comunal Al Municipiului Bucuresti*, vol. 26 (7) (Bucharest, 1927), 1.

450 Cheşchebec, "Feminist Ideologies and Activism in Romania," 203.

451 "Femeile în preajma alegerilor [Women and the upcoming elections]," *Vremea*, January 16, 1930, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

Then, in 1929, national politics became more favorable to women's suffrage politics and to claims to expertise on welfare issues by certified social workers. The clashes between women associated with parties in power and those associated with opposition parties intensified as well. A PNȚ–driven new law for local administrations allowed certain women (women who graduated from secondary schooling, those involved in welfare activism, war widows) to elect and be elected for local office.[452] Socially conservative women, including Cantacuzino, feared the new law would bring politics and strife to the family home, were women to become part of political parties.[453] By contrast, many educated, progressive (but non-socialist) suffragist women embraced the new possibility of electing and being elected to municipal office. Still, in the years that followed, in meetings of organizations such as the IWSA-affiliated Association for the Civil and Political Emancipation of Women, they continued to call for "votes for all women".[454]

For their part, social democratic women from Cernăuți welcomed what their comrades abroad called a "new installment of women's suffrage in Rumania". In the Cernăuți newspaper *Vorwärts*, they argued that "if only a small number have now received the vote, these women must see to it that they are also actually placed upon the voting lists". This was because "the district" administered property and oversaw "a great part of social welfare", these being "things in which women are at least as much interested as men".[455] Lea Kissman was elected councilwoman in the city, on the social democratic party ticket. In Bucharest, Eugenia Deleanu (later Rădăceanu), secretary of the social democratic Union of Working Women (UFM), called for "voting rights for all women . . . not just for some".[456]

Progressive, center-left, suffragist women who welcomed the expansion of women's suffrage, limited as it was, aligned themselves with the National Peasantist Party (PNȚ) by 1929. Shortly before the 1930 municipal elections, the leaders

452 Parliament of Romania, "Legea pentru organizarea administrațiunii locale [Law for the organization of local administration]," Monitorul Oficial 170/3 August 1929, Monitorul Oficial 167/3 August 1929; specifically, the categories of women that could elect and be elected in the local administration were: graduates of secondary education, civil servants, war widows, women decorated for their war-time activity, women who at the time of the law's entrance into force served as leaders of cultural, assistance or philanthropic organizations. Cosma, *Femeile și politica în România*, 55.

453 Gruparea Femeilor Române, "Manifestul Grupării Femeilor Române," 111.

454 P. G., "Întrunirea feministă din sectorul III (Albastru) [The feminist meeting from sector III (Blue)]," *Curentul*, April 5, 1932, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

455 "An Instalment of Women's Suffrage in Rumania," *International Information—Women's Supplement* 6, no. 8 (October 1929): 8.

456 Deleanu, "Drept de vot pentru toate femeile dar . . . nu pentru toate [Voting rights for all women . . . but not for all of them]."

of the IWSA-affiliated AECPFR joined the PNȚ, running for the council on the party's electoral list in Bucharest. The candidates were Calypso Botez, Margareta Paximade Ghelmegeanu, Ella Negruzzi, and Ortansa Satmary.[457] They were running against some of the women who had previously served as co-opted councilwomen. These formerly co-opted councilwomen ran in the 1930 municipal elections as a women-only "citizens' bloc" (rather than as an "immoral" political party) titled the Group of Romanian Women (Gruparea Femeilor Române, GFR). Among those hoping to be (now) elected (rather than co-opted) for council were GFR leader Alexandrina Cantacuzino, her younger collaborator Ecaterina Cerkez, Margareta Hera, Maria Anastasiu, Tereza Bally, Alexandrina Floru, and Ana Filitti.[458] Women in the National Liberal Party had formed their own party sections and were fronting Zefira Voiculescu as their candidate, a Cantacuzino associate otherwise (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Photograph. "Alexandrina Cantacuzino (here as founder and leader of the Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women), Zefira Voiculescu, Dr. C. Angelescu, Iuliu Valaori and others" (n.d., archival catalog caption). Source: Foto Luvru. Alexandrina Gr. Cantacuzino la o întrunire [Alexandrina Gr. Cantacuzino in a gathering]. n.d. Photograph, 22,7 x 17,3. FII 1511, 2 (BU-F-01073-2-01511-2). SANIC, Arhivele Naționale ale României. https://descopera.arhivelenationale.ro/cota/?cid=218869.

457 Cosma, *Femeile și politica în România*, 108.

458 Gruparea Femeilor Române, "Manifestul Grupării Femeilor Române."

The 1930 electoral campaign for council seats in the Bucharest sector's councils reflected tensions that had been accumulating for several years within the local women's movement. It entrenched existing factions.[459] As was to be expected, considering the strong association between councilwomen and welfare activism, the question of municipal social assistance and its reform was central to the first women candidates' electoral campaign in 1930.

During a PNȚ electoral rally, candidate Botez explicitly attacked recently ousted co-opted councilwomen and their Group of Romanian Women:

> On the ballots you will see the names of other ladies, who were part of the council before. These women need to be asked what they have achieved while they were in city hall? What merits do they have that they may ask for your votes? What program did they accomplish? As for us [PNȚ women candidates], all four of us are women who have known only hard work and we commit to giving the rest of the life we have left to live to serving citizens.[460]

Evidently, the "ladies who were part of the council before" were the co-opted councilwomen associated with the National Society of Orthodox Women (SONFR), led by Alexandrina Cantacuzino.

At the core of the question of social assistance was the matter of social services spending. In relation to this, in the electoral campaign, there emerged two distinct welfare visions. On the one hand, the electoral manifesto launched by the GFR focused on thrift in public spending, "the organization of assistance through work". In practice, this was nevertheless a plan for locally coordinated labor exchanges, better access to healthcare and childcare, more maternities, an increase in the number of professional training institutions.[461] This was a continuation of Cantacuzino's politics, initiated in 1927. On the other hand, the women running on the PNȚ ticket promised to support higher public welfare spending in general, with Ella Negruzzi stating that "the women's program consists in easing the misery of the population".[462] This implied a greater focus on increasing welfare spending rather than the better management of existing low resources.

From among women candidates, most of the council seats were won by the women running on the PNȚ ticket. Calypso Botez and Ortansa Satmary were delegated as councilwomen to the meetings of the General City Council, whereas a PNȚ councilwoman served in each of the capital's four sector (district) councils. However, the ubiquitous Alexandrina Cantacuzino (from the GFR) served along-

459 Cosma, *Femeile și politica în România*, 59–71.

460 Fulmen, "Întrunirea femenină din sala 'Tomis'- Discursurile. Asistența. [The Feminine meeting in "Tomis" hall – The Speeches. The Public.,'" *Adeverul*, March 4, 1930, DigiBuc.

461 Gruparea Femeilor Române, "Manifestul Grupării Femeilor Române."

462 Fulmen, "Întrunirea femenină."

side Botez, in Sector 1 (Yellow), whereas Zefira Voiculescu (from the women's wing of the National Liberal Party) served alongside Ella Negruzzi in Sector 2 (Black). Most of these councilors served between October 1930 and July 1932. Thereafter, both GFR and PNȚ councilwomen were no longer on the council. National Liberal Zefira Voiculescu and several other women from the same party stayed on as councilwomen, struggling with the legacy of their former colleagues until 1937 but proposing few social assistance overhauls of their own, at least as far as I could establish at this point.

Social assistance between 1929 and 1934

With co-opted councilwomen out of office by February 1929, a new "Regulation for Public Assistance" was drawn up to replace the one Cantacuzino had spearheaded.[463] It preceded the broader, eventually hardly applied, 1930 Law for Health and Protection supported by PNȚ Minister Iuliu Moldovan. The 1929 Regulation laid out new procedures for applying for and distributing relief. The Regulation created detailed evidence-keeping practices. Aid in money, firewood (Figure 3), food or clothing was to be distributed through an Assistance Booklet: "The Assistance Booklet will be nominal, with the photograph of the assisted or of the head of the family, and will have inscribed all the aids received from the assistance [direction] and other institutions".[464] It demanded the coordination of information across the city, drastically curtailed the very autonomy of action Cantacuzino had demanded for women's "private initiative" organizations, and turned the home inquiry Cantacuzino thought advisable into a mandatory step in the process of receiving aid.

In 1930, with the backing of PNȚ General Mayor Demetru I. Dobrescu and formally armed with the new Regulations, Calypso Botez, perhaps more than her party colleagues (see Figure 4), set out to reform (or rather counter-reform) "the official assistance" in practice. Botez did not have her own detailed vision of what public social assistance was meant to be, possibly because at that point she had been less involved in the kind of philanthropic welfare activism with which Cantacuzino was familiar for years. Instead, Botez embraced and provided political backing for the approach to welfare of US-educated Veturia Manuilă. Botez was familiar with Manuilă's work from the meetings of the Section for Feminine Studies and from National Peasantist Party circles.

463 Primăria Municipiului București, *Regulament pentru asistența publică 1929*.
464 Primăria Municipiului București, *Regulament pentru asistența publică 1929*, 10.

Figure 3: Photograph. "Poor women waiting for firewood at City Hall" (1929, original caption). Source: "Femei sărace aşteptând lemne la Primărie". *Dimineaţa*. February 23, 1929. Press photograph, 9x12. Black and white reproduction, cropped. Inv. 3493–ISISP Fototeca, 3/1929. SANIC Arhivele Naţionale ale României Bucharest.

The "constructive social assistance" Manuilă taught at the Superior School of Social Assistance was portrayed as very different from Cantacuzino's. Those associated with the Superior School of Social Assistance and its post-1929 attempts at reforming relief in Bucharest viewed with disdain Cantacuzino's vision of coordinated poverty policy via autonomous but publicly subsidized "private initiatives". Without naming Cantacuzino, in 1931, Xenia Costa-Foru argued that "although we have plenty of regulations", practically the uncoordinated social assistance in the city encouraged the "dependence" of those receiving aid, instead of contributing to their becoming autonomous. In her opinion, as the aid received from one charity was insufficient, even the person in true need engaged in what she considered to be types of increasingly skillful performances of poverty at multiple societies throughout the city.[465] Like American Mary Richmond's Charity Organization Society, the Superior School of Social Assistance favored interventions by trained professionals, long-term investigation and character reform. Costa-Foru believed that welfare fraud could be prevented through sustained, systematic intervention into the home lives of those assisted.

In Sector 1 (Yellow), especially, councilwoman Botez had "full freedom" to allow Manuilă and the students of the Superior School of Social Assistance to create entirely new assistance procedures. By contrast, collaboration with the General Assistance Commission was not smooth, Manuilă claimed later, suggesting

465 Costa-Foru, "Colaborarea în asistenţă."

Figure 4: Photograph. "The Assisted from the City Hall of Sector II Black. Distribution of food for the poor people of the sector. Ella Negruzzi" (10 April 1931, original caption on verso, with signature). Councilwoman Negruzzi is the tall woman facing the camera. Source: Asistența Primăriei Sect II Negru. Distribuția de alimente pentru săracii sectorului [The Assisted from the City Hall of Sector II Black. Distribution of food for the poor people of the sector]. April 10, 1931. Photograph, 13x18. "Saint Georges" Special Collection, File 362–FSG XXXVIII/8, p. 32. Biblioteca Națională a României.

Commission-member Cantacuzino may have played a part in General City Hall's reluctance.[466] With direct assistance from Botez, in Sector 1, "it was therefore possible to realize in the first sector an organization which fit the requirements of a constructive social assistance, outside of all philanthropic habits".[467]

The home investigation technique was at the core of "constructive social assistance" procedures introduced by Manuilă in Sector 1 (Yellow). Developed by the COS's Mary Richmond, home investigations were encountered by Manuilă during her training at the Family Welfare Association in Baltimore, sometime in the 1920s.[468] Through repeated home visits, a social worker established the specific causes at the root of an adult's and her or his family's "state of dependence" on assistance. Social workers were expected to recognize environmental causes (layoffs, lack of work). However, SSAS teachers like Manuilă and Costa-Foru en-

466 Manuilă, "Le rôle de l'École Supérieure d'Assistance Sociale," 44.

467 Manuilă, "Le rôle de l'École Supérieure d'Assistance Sociale," 56.

468 Veturia Manuilă, "Asistența individualizată și tehnica ei [Individualized assistance and its technique]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 1, no. 2 (1930): 52, fn.

couraged social workers in training to consider addiction, illness, isolation or other complex but ultimately individual issues as the most important causes of "dependence". Once the "social diagnostic" was completed, the social worker proposed a suitable plan for redress. In "constructive social assistance", successful redress meant that "in the shortest possible time [the dependent] will be able to earn by himself his and his family's livelihood".[469] Ideally, in agreement with the person investigated, the social worker facilitated the family's contact with public institutions and associations which could help, initially with basic items and emergency healthcare but ultimately with finding work for the main income-earner or placing him or her in longer-term treatment. Natalia Raisky's work with Marioara I. and her family, presented in the introduction, closely followed this approach.

Manuilă presented "constructive social assistance" not only as a support for the societal ideal of wage work as virtue, but also an economical intervention method. She argued that social assistance existed in support of "the principle of social economy".[470] Therefore, the key principle of social workers' interventions in families was "maximum of aid for the dependent with minimum of sacrifice for the Assistance".[471] This meant there were few, if any, direct transfers of cash. At most, the Assistance aimed to provide a loan, "either from [the Assistance's] own funds, or by facilitating a bank loan guaranteed by [Public] Assistance". Having to return a loan provided by the Assistance, "burdened the dependent with a responsibility. He will seek to pay back even in measly instalments, and this develops his sense of responsibility".[472]

Importantly, analogous to the Mussolini-style corporatist ideology that underlay part of Cantacuzino's vision of municipal charity, the Superior School's espoused an evolving but coherent political ideology, couched in the language of professional expertise. The SSAS ideology was primarily influenced by the puritanism and liberal individualism of the COS. In the late 1920s, "left liberal" municipalism shaped the SSAS welfare vision. As the 1930s progressed, SSAS publications became infused with increasing amounts of eugenicist ideas and rhetoric. Still, in the late 1930s, Veturia Manuilă still did not publicly embrace German racial science and the notion that "dependency" was heritable and the "asocials" a biotype.[473] This did not prevent her from leading the antisemitic and anti-Roma

469 Manuilă, "Asistența individualizată și tehnica ei," 10.
470 Manuilă, 10.
471 Manuilă, 50.
472 Manuilă, 52.
473 Manuilă, "Pauperismul şi criza familială"; Gisela Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State," *Signs* 8, no. 3 (1983): 400–421.

Patronage Council for Social Works during the Second World War, as mentioned previously.

Although it wanted to distinguish itself from Cantacuzino's "philanthropy", "constructive social assistance" was similarly focused on facilitating wage work. Social workers applying the new approach referred to those who needed assistance from public funds as "dependents." In theory, "dependents" were all those who had lost all previous sources of income. Because articles on the topic equated dependence with lack of income due to loss of wage work and always used the term in the grammatically masculine form, "the constructive social assistance of dependents" could be easily assumed to be only referring to assistance for unemployed men.

In practice, social workers interacted with unemployed or underemployed women as often as they interacted with unemployed men. In fact, "dependence", as noted in social work practice in Sector 1, was caused by issues which disproportionately affected women: "widowhood, orphanhood, abandonment of the home by one of the spouses, cohabitation [*concubinaj*], illegitimacy, prostitution, begging, pauperism, unemployment, the situation of working mothers, children's work, the situation of infectious diseases, of venereal diseases, the tuberculosis situation, the problem of alcoholism".[474] The examples Manuilă used in her articles on the topic, examples seemingly drawn from social workers' practice in Bucharest and the USA, show that often social workers helped through "constructive social assistance" single women, in informal employment (so without a formally recognizable status as "unemployed"), unable to sustain young children.

SSAS social workers applied their methods fully only beginning with the winter of 1931. This is when the SSAS Demonstration Center for the Assistance of the Family, a quasi–settlement-house functioning in Sector 1's Tei neighborhood since 1929, was first asked to fully function as part of City Hall's new Service of Public Assistance. According to the 1938 report of the councilwoman who replaced Botez in Sector 1 (Yellow):

> The school was asked to investigate all those who were soliciting Christmas aids, for whom individual fiches were created. It was then, for the first time, that City Hall distributed aid based on minute home investigations. From this date on, the school stayed on to organize the service, admitting the idea that aid would be granted only after the real conditions of the petitioner become known.[475]

474 Veturia Manuilă, "Organizarea Centrului de Demonstrație pentru Asistența Familiei [The Organization of the Center for the Assistance of the Family]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 1, no. 2 (1930): 54.

475 Cornelia Zamfirescu, "Raport asupra activitătii serviciului de asistență socială din Sectorul I Galben al Capitalei [Report on the activity of the service of social assistance in Sector I Yellow of

Because of this mandate, the Superior School of Social Assistance built its collection of case files and teaching material around the work in the Tei neighborhood, enabled by the new municipal social assistance guidelines. Marioara I. case file, discussed in the introduction, resulted from this practice.

That winter, SSAS methods were used especially to limit the number of those receiving aid. Besides the distribution of Christmas aids, the Ministry of Health and Sector 1 (Yellow) City Hall asked Manuilă and her collaborators to set up a temporary Bureau for the Assistance of the Unemployed. The resulting relief system was little more than a municipal soup kitchen. Social workers distributed weekly food rations only to clerks and skilled workers who could prove their residence of at least one year in the city. In other words, relief was distributed only to those fitting a stringent definition of "unemployment." The newly arrived, unqualified workers and day-laborers—categories likely to be made up by migrants from rural areas—were excluded.[476]

In the Tei neighborhood, the new "constructive social assistance" methods were not well-received by inhabitants. "The population was at first disoriented", reported Veturia Manuilă.[477] "They were accustomed to receiving assistance in money and in kind after a summary investigation". Reactions encountered suggest that the detailed home investigations were seen as invasive: "They cannot comprehend what we might want from them to go so deeply into their familial agendas, wanting to find out everything they do, what they eat, what they spend their money on, how they divide their earnings, how they spend their leisure time".

Some women in the Tei neighborhood directly challenged the controlling aspect of the home investigations: "One of our clients told us directly: 'I, together with my children, have been living off of assistance for 23 years and no one has ever done me the displeasure of checking what's boiling in my pot'".[478] In the end, Manuilă admitted SSAS investigation methods were used for surveillance as much as for scientific and relief reasons: home investigations and frequent visits not only helped with the goal of creating a correct "social diagnostic", but also with the one of preventing welfare fraud. "The population understands relief but does not understand control", complained Manuilă.[479]

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the Capital]," Asistența socială – Buletinul Asociației pentru Progresul Asistenței Sociale 7, no. 2 (1938): 109.

476 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 439.

477 Manuilă, "Organizarea Centrului de Demonstrație," 54–55.

478 Manuilă, "Organizarea Centrului de Demonstrație," 54–55.

479 Manuilă, "Organizarea Centrului de Demonstrație."

Social assistance between 1934 and 1938

The social work practices which relied on detailed home investigations continued in Sector 1 Yellow even after the sidelining of Superior School students and methods, in 1933, in conjunction with PNȚ councilwomen's loss of influence. The director of the Assistance Service in Sector 1, Cornelia Zamfirescu, showed that although her office was understaffed after that point, the existing personnel continued to provide long-term assistance for 230 families. Each family member had a personal information fiche, and families were followed through chronological reports, as required in the protocols developed for the sector by the Superior School. Besides assistance to families, by 1937, the Bureau organized what it termed a "bazar" and dealt with the social assistance for infants.[480] The bazar consisted of "help by finding home-based work". Its creation was the mark of the replacement of the PNȚ city administration with a PNL one. Concretely, the Assistance Service of the sector had asked 230 women (practically, an adult woman from each of the assisted families) who had requested aid to knit wool socks (931 pairs) and woolen vests (1,048 pieces). The Service "assigned for artistic craft works" another thirty women.

Ostensibly an employment opportunity, the bazar seems to have served largely as a cost-cutting scheme for the municipality. The bazar only made a profit of 6,000 Lei and in any case, was meant from the beginning to help "achieve an economy for the Service". The socks and vests were distributed to the 1,200 children assisted by the Service in 1937, through its assistance program for infants and children. In addition, several hundred children from the Sector 1 neighborhoods of Tei and Floreasca received daily portions of bread and jam in specially created children's canteens.[481]

The tendency towards economy was part of the ideological baggage of the sector's social assistance program and did not correlate with trends in budgetary constraints. The global budget for social assistance in Sector 1 (including, besides the sums destined for social assistance, those for schools and healthcare), stayed fairly constant between 1931 and 1936 (Figure 5). In 1936 to 1937, when the social assistance budget saw a marked increase, the Service was still economizing on the production of clothing to be donated to children by hiring for low pay unemployed women in its homework bazar scheme.

480 Cornelia Zamfirescu, "Raport asupra activitătii serviciului de asistență socială din Sectorul I Galben al Capitalei [Report on the activity of the service of social assistance in Sector I Yellow of the Capital]," Asistența socială – *Buletinul Asociației pentru Progresul Asistenței Sociale* 7, no. 2 (1938): 109–112.

481 Zamfirescu, "Raport asupra activitătii serviciului de asistență socială."

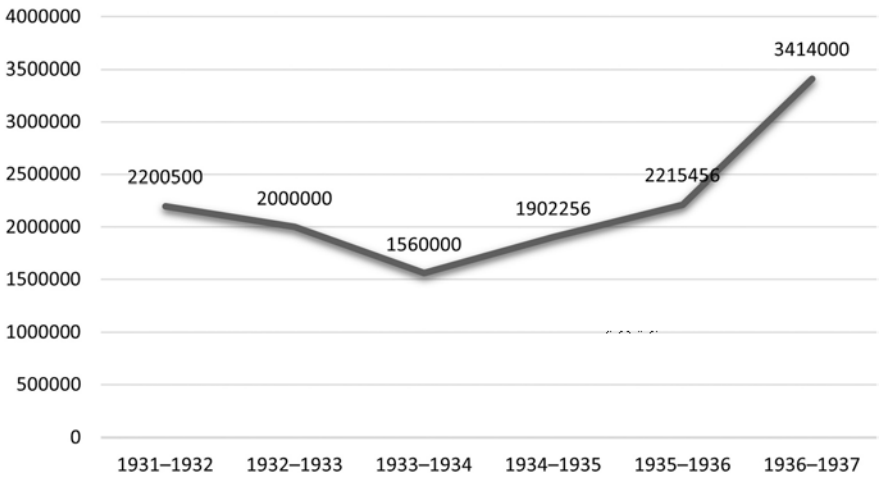

Figure 5: Evolution of Social Assistance Budgets in Bucharest Sector 1 (Yellow). Source: Zamfirescu, Cornelia. "Raport asupra activității Serviciului de Asistență Socială din Sectorul 1 Galben al capitalei [Report on the activity of the Service of Social Assistance in Sector 1 Yellow of the capital]." Asistența socială – Buletinul Asociației pentru Progresul Asistenței Sociale 7, no. 2 (1938), 110.

The programmatic underpinnings of the home-work program and the fact that it replaced a measure by which poor persons received regular aid in food was further clarified by Sector 1 mayor, National Liberal Ioan Săbăreanu, in a 1938 brochure celebrating "four years of Liberal government".[482] After calling the National Peasantist administration which governed between 1929 and 1934 "a five year eclipse of governance", the Sector 1 mayor detailed some of the most important changes made to social assistance since he took up the position in 1934. Among others, he stated that

> [w]e abolished assistance through meal tickets and free bread, because it did not bring the results we hoped for and it anyway encouraged, to a certain extent, begging. We created instead an opportunity of working from home, for pay, which consists of knitting socks and vests made of pure wool for primary school children, of different sizes. This work from home is currently carried out by over 250 poor women in the Sector, who receive the wool from the Social Assistance of city hall, who pays them: 40 Lei each pair of socks and 70 Lei each vest. The system has proven welcome. The poor women, rather hard to convince at first that it is more dignified to work something and receive payment for work, than to walk

482 Ioan Săbăreanu, "Spicuiri din Darea de Seamă asupra activității gospodărești a Sectorului I Galben [Chosen fragments from the report on the municipal management activity in Sector I Yellow]," in *Patru ani de guvernare și gospodărire național-liberală 13 noiembrie 1933–13 noiembrie 1937* (Bucharest: Gobl SA, 1938), 9–87.

> around seeking alms, present themselves today in growing numbers to ask for work. For city hall, the system has the advantage that, for the same amounts that were previously spent for food tickets and other aids truly useful clothing items are now created, which are then distributed to the poor children in the sector.[483]

Other social assistance measures functioning in the Sector were canteens for children, annual firewood distributions "to the true poor persons" and the construction of a 1,000 square meter Center for Assistance and Moral Education in the Tei neighborhood, complete with a gymnastics and lecture hall, canteen, children's clinic and a social assistance office.

In reprising the assumption that employment was necessary to prevent poverty, PNL Mayor Săbăreanu reconnected to the social assistance approaches that had characterized the 1920s period of Liberal municipal governance which had embraced Alexandrina Cantacuzino's proposals. However, by supporting a scheme of organizing and supervising women's paid work within the space of the home, Liberal mayor Săbăreanu was integrating some of the components of the SSAS approach, especially the focus on women as workers in the home. In other words, by 1937, the Cantacuzino and SSAS visions of social assistance were made explicitly compatible. By 1938, this was the vision that functioned within the corporatist set-up introduced by King Carol II through a new constitution.

Yet arbitrary and "unscientific" aid distribution also continued to exist in the city. In 1937, in Sector 1, it was local councilmen and not the Social Assistance Service proper who distributed the largest proportion of available food vouchers. Assistance Service head Zamfirescu reported:

> Distribution of aid is done from autumn to spring when relief reduces. Besides the traditional Christmas and Easter aids, for which important amounts are spent (for Christmas 1937, 390 food vouchers were granted and 70 firewood wagons, out of which only 13 wagons were distributed to homes through the assistance service, the rest of 2300 individual vouchers were distributed by the commune councilors).[484]

The fact that by 1937 the municipal social assistance distributed only about a sixth of all food vouchers, with the rest being handled by councilmen, shows that assistance systems in place could easily be subverted and instrumentalized.

It is in this context that Veturia Manuilă complained openly that not only did political interference create discontinuities in the functioning of social assistance but that political influence could be discerned in practical social activity, with

483 Săbăreanu, "Spicuiri din Darea de Seamă asupra activității gospodărești a Sectorului I Galben [Chosen fragments from the report on the municipal management activity in Sector I Yellow]," 60.

484 Zamfirescu, "Raport asupra activitătii serviciului de asistență socială."

aids granted primarily to the political partisans of an administration or another.[485] Cornelia Zamfirescu further detailed in 1937 the connection between electoral pressure (applied especially in male-headed precarious families due to existing franchise restrictions relating to women's educational levels) and access to relief in stating that: "Our service, far from being well-organized, is nevertheless in full progress. Of course, there remain in the memory of many among us those not too bygone times when the investigations of the assistants were replaced by those of the tax bayliffs or the electoral agents".[486] In other sectors, the power non-professionals had over social assistance distribution was even greater than in Sector 1. In 1934, in Sector 4 (Green), as soon as the administration changed from PNȚ to PNL hands, petitions for aid in cash—like the ones preserved for the 1920s—reappeared.

After 1934, when municipal administration was again dominated by the Liberals, categories of petitioners and procedures for being granted relief changed and generally, municipal social assistance evolved towards a different kind of public social assistance gender politics. In 1934, Sector 4 approved relief for twenty-six men and three women. (The petitioning women described themselves to authorities as "the widow of a superior civil servant without pension rights", an "elderly and sick woman" and a "poor woman with two girls to support".[487]) Even before, during the SSAS's involvement, social assistants tended to formally add to women-headed households the name of even an absent husband—this was, for example, the case of Marioara I; part of the documents filled in by social worker Raisky include her absent husband's name.[488] Still, as mentioned, much of the assistance practically went to single women and their children.

And, as in the late 1920s, petitioners once again defined their needs on their own, instead of having them defined on their behalf through home investigations. At Easter 1934, the motives male petitioners provided in their requests for aid in cash mostly referred to the "heavy burden" of large families and care duties for numerous or sick children, situations brought about by prolonged unemployment or disability. A former high school physics teacher who had migrated to Bucharest with his family complained that "for two years I have been without a [teach-

485 Manuilă, "Le rôle de l'École Supérieure d'Assistance Sociale," 55.

486 Zamfirescu, "Raport asupra activitătii serviciului de asistență socială," 112.

487 Primăria Sectorului IV–Verde, "Ajutoare acordate persoanelor sărace din cuprinsul sectorului [Aid given to poor persons from the sector]," 1935, Fond 76–Primăria Sectorului IV Verde, File 8/1935, SMBAN Bucharest.

488 "Anexă: Copia unui cazier de asistență individualizată [Appendix: Copy of a case file for individualized assistance]," *Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* 1, no. 2 (1930). See Appendix in this volume.

ing] position, enduring for days the most terrible misery". A typographer "as I have a lung sickness formerly in a Sanatorium and today without help from anywhere" petitioned for aid from the Sector's mayor.

Most of the letters bear the handwritten inscription "Verified" and are stamped with the word "Paid", suggesting that the veracity of statements was checked by an employee of the Sector Hall assigned to the task but that those doing the verifications were a lot less involved in the process of defining needs than women social workers had been only a few years before.[489] The allocation of relief mostly to men seems to have been decided based on the petitions received by the mayor. Petitioners may have been encouraged to apply or not by the persons charged with the verification and administration of amounts, based on criteria which favored men, including long-term unemployment.

Complementary to the privileging of male-headed households, certain sector halls began double checking the monthly social assistance pensions certain women received. In 1936, Sector 4 (Green) dispatched a Ms. Eliza Dimitriu, likely a Sector Hall employee, to create a list of "Women receiving pensions who exist at the [stated] address and are deserving".[490] The verifications were meant to establish who among the approximatively sixty women receiving monthly pensions of between 100 and 200 Lei was genuinely deserving.

Sector 4 (Green) Deputy Mayor officially requested in March 1936 that:

> From the list all pension receiving women registered on the list of mercies [relief rolls] will be excluded all those who do not live in the area of Sector 4 Green, those who have a home and sufficient food, those who are helped by the family, those who live in the sub-urban communities and those who could not be identified at their stated addresses.[491]

The verifications showed that thirty-one women still "existed at their address and were deserving". Out of the women who did not pass the verifications, none had her pension cut because she had enough food or help from her family. Rather, the pension was cut through the enforcement of location-based eligibility rules: six women did not live in the Sector, another six were living in asylums for the elderly, two had addresses in the suburban communes (not part of Sector 4) for which Sector 4 did not want to assume responsibility, and sixteen persons did not live at the stated address. It was decided that for the months of February

489 Primăria Sectorului IV–Verde, "Ajutoare acordate persoanelor sărace din cuprinsul sectorului [Aid given to poor persons from the sector]," 1–30.

490 Primăria Sectorului IV–Verde, "Raport verificare pensii lunare anul 1935–1936 [Report for the verification of monthly pensions 1935–1936]," 1935, Fond 76 Primăria Sectorului IV Verde, File 8/1935, SMBAN Bucharest.

491 Primăria Sectorului IV–Verde, 2.

and March 1936, a monthly pension would be granted "only to the pensioner women who live in the sector and have no shelter in the asylums or with families and no help from any part".[492]

Some of the pensioners were likely left in dire straits by these re-evaluations of pension entitlements. Hastily filled in investigation questionnaires noted such situations as "Lives with one of her daughters, is very lacking in clothing, would need a coin of her own", marking the woman's possessions as "one bed". Another woman was described as "has no one, lives in the asylum since 1932". And yet another as "lives at Mrs. T.'s without rent as she is poor and has no one". Following the new rules and Eliza Dimitriu's verifications, they lost their right to the pension.

The contribution of women welfare activists to municipal policy in Bucharest has gone unnoticed until now. However, from the 1920s to the late 1930s, women from the loose feminist network linked to the Romanian Social Institute (ISR) drove attempts at reforming the domain of public social assistance. Welfare activists leading municipal politics, like Cantacuzino or Botez, were active in the struggle for women's suffrage, in international feminist organizations and in local parties with government experience; they were interested in new ideas and research on social issues.

Men in the political establishment expected women with political ambitions like Cantacuzino, Botez and their collaborators to make social assistance their policy domain of focus. Such expectations were built on the precedents of women's charitable involvement and private-public cooperation. Ultimately, however, they were rooted in political convenience. The central government subsidized women's "private initiative" because it lowered overall public expenses and possibly, the citizens' expectations that the MMSOS would intervene more systematically to aid those who did not have an income.

For women in interwar Romania, political participation often meant knowing how to put a foot in a barely open door with a view to eventually becoming one of the most influential persons in the room in which they were not initially welcome. Politically ambitious women made social assistance their domain and sought to influence municipal policy on the matter based on particular welfare visions. Consequently, women welfare activists who were part of sector councils or delegated to the joint Bucharest General Council presided over three rounds of reform of eligibility criteria and distribution practices for aid to the poorest inhabitants of the capital.

492 Primăria Sectorului IV–Verde, 3.

Between 1920 and 1925, women welfare activists were represented in the Bucharest General City Council by "nominated councilwoman" Zoe Romniceanu. Women's societies in the city were involved in the direct distribution of aid as part of a form of urban poverty politics in which the poorest were criminalized and removed from sight. At this point, the central government funded much of the urban level welfare that could be provided through women's organizations. When cooperating directly with the local government, women welfare activists contributed as experienced volunteers to the distribution of firewood and other small forms of aid provided by the municipality. During this period, women's welfare work in "private initiative" associations received more recognition but women welfare activists did not yet steer public assistance policies.

From 1925 to 1929, councilwomen with links to the SONFR and the National Liberal Party were "co-opted" (rather than nominated like before or elected as later) to the Bucharest General City Council. Over the course of the next three years, councilwoman Cantacuzino would make several proposals for the reform of social assistance. In 1927, most of her proposals were carried over into official rules for the distribution of public assistance. Cantacuzino proposed a program of "assistance through work", in which those in need of aid would be foremost helped to find paid employment. Those found to be unwilling to work were proposed for expulsion from the city or internment into "reform" institutions. The new rules explicitly recognized single women and girls with care duties (pregnant, abandoned) as eligible for public assistance. A General Council for Assistance, and similar Sector Councils, decided on the distribution of aid. Women's societies were represented in these councils but expenses were monitored by civil servants assigned by the municipality.

After less than two years, in 1929, the recently changed Assistance rules were overturned by an administration linked to a new, National Peasantist Party government. A first cohort of councilwomen was elected, rather than co-opted, to the Bucharest sector councils and halls and delegated to the General City Council. Councilwoman Botez and her SSAS collaborator Veturia Manuilă created new, more detailed, investigation and distribution procedures for aid, relying on home investigations.

In 1933, a new local administration, of a different political color, marginalized the SSAS but left in place, at least in Sector 1, some of the working methods the School had created. The SSAS continued to function as a school, but struggled financially in those years. By 1937, the PNL administration in Sector 1 (Yellow) had overhauled the SSAS system to compel women receiving aid to knit winter socks and caps for children receiving aid from the town hall. Otherwise, despite changed rules, local councilors distributed the available forms of aid, especially the firewood sold cheaply or given as aid for heating in winter, as they saw fit, to

the chagrin of councilwomen and social workers of all stripes and party allegiances.

The women welfare activists proposing the 1927 and, respectively, the 1929 to 1931 reforms of public assistance eligibility and distribution claimed to be drastically different. In reality, they shared a focus on wage work, a preoccupation for preventing welfare fraud, a rhetoric of thrift in public spending as well as an orientation towards women and children as recipients of welfare. They were similarly vulnerable to having their efforts questioned and overturned: each new administration ordered checks on the correctness of aid already granted. Notably, in the years after the Great Depression, a social worker was dispatched to check whether elderly women who were granted small pensions could be placed in the care of families or be struck off the lists of those entitled to municipal relief because they no longer lived in the sector from whose treasury funds were granted. Over half of these women lost their small pensions, a cost-reduction strategy applied at all human cost.

Those applying for and sometimes receiving aid were aware they were expected to show willingness to work or to demonstrate incapacity to work for pay. For example, they explained they could not work because “I am Old”. Members of their immediate community, such as neighbors, were expected to vouch for the person’s poverty. Such endorsements appeared in support of women’s petitions, especially. Men applied for aid by mentioning unemployment and large families that could not be fed and did not supply additional letters, expecting to be believed. Through home investigations, seen as essential to prevent fraud and foster the reconstruction of “dependent” families, social workers closely researched women’s housework practices. Some of those investigated perceived these detailed investigations as prying and controlling.

Chapter 4
Servant Women as Welfare Workers: A Solution and a Problem for Women Welfare Activists

In the Bucharest of the 1930s, high demand for women servants occasionally led to public recognition of the complex roles maids and other domestic workers played in households. In 1936, a welfare activist in an organization dedicated to the protection of young women suggested that servant women were highly sought after because they facilitated "the organization and calm of our households".[493] She argued that: "Today, when the struggle for positions is so ardent, this occupation knows no unemployment, it is perhaps the only one where demand outstrips offer."[494]

The statements shows how women servants could be acknowledged as important contributors to what sociologist Jacklyn Cock, writing in 1980, termed the physical, psychological and "ideological maintenance" of households.[495] Frequently, however, the very access that enabled the multiform maintenance labor of servants, that is the access to employers' private spaces and to their secrets, created anxiety and suspicion for a mistress or a master.[496] In Romania, during a protracted Great Depression, this helped justify the economically convenient legal under-regulation of the profession, servants' exclusion from welfare benefits and surveillance by police.

At times, women welfare activists partnered with state authorities to make surveillance of women servants possible. More often, they encouraged and helped poorer or uneducated women to become servants. Welfare activists argued that domestic service was a suitable future occupation for orphaned girls and helped vulnerable women to avoid poverty and escape human trafficking. In this, women welfare activists in Bucharest resembled counterparts organizing on is-

493 Marga Ghițulescu, "De la asociațiile de asistență socială. Din activitatea asociației 'Amicele Tinerelor Fete'. [From the social assistance associations. From the activity of the 'Friends of Young Women' Association] (1936)," in *Din Istoria feminismului românesc 1929–1948. Studiu și antologie de texte*, ed. Ștefania Gáll Mihăilescu, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Polirom, 2006), 259–263.

494 Ghițulescu, "De la asociațiile de asistență socială." 261. Emphasis in the original.

495 Cock, *Maids & Madams*.

496 Shireen Ally, "Domestics,'Dirty Work'and the Affects of Domination," *South African Review of Sociology* 42, no. 2 (2011): 1–7.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111137162-005

sues primarily affecting women in other European countries or within the League of Nations.[497]

However, unlike welfare activists in many other contexts, welfare activists in Bucharest were active in a country in which budgetary austerity and broadly, an austerity mindset, strongly shaped authorities' daily administrative practices. Many of the women activists who were involved in organizations and initiatives dealing with domestic service were simultaneously involved with other policies and programs that helped the state manage the economic crisis, or at least create the impression that the social effects of the crisis were being addressed in Romania, even as social spending remained minimal.

In the 1930s, women's employment in domestic service became integral to managing the unemployment crisis in the city and the social reproduction crisis of struggling urban middle class families. More importantly, paid domestic service became key to the functioning of other forms of welfare that helped prop up the economic and social life of the city, including child protection institutions. Intentionally and in ways that went beyond their intentions, women welfare activists contributed to turning domestic service into a form of austerity welfare work, and servants into austerity welfare workers. This chapter unpacks how the state and its allies among welfare activists mitigated the effects of the crisis at the height of the Great Depression by helping train and control domestic servants. It sheds light on working conditions for domestic service in the 1930s and servants' own perceptions of their occupation at the time.

Welfare activists, servant women, and the challenge of male unemployment

In Great Depression Bucharest, despite reductions in everyone's budgets, women servants were still needed to maintain many of the housework-intensive households of the city. In addition, conveniently, the occupation, considered to be a low skill one, absorbed relatively quickly women migrating from villages and helped keep relief expenditure low. Therefore between 1929 and 1932, the period of highest unemployment in Romania, the municipal Job Placement Office offered primarily positions in domestic service, overwhelmingly to single women.[498]

497 Magaly Rodríguez García, "The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women," *International Review of Social History* 57, no. S20 (2012): 97–128.

498 MMSOS, "Statistica activității Oficiilor Publice de Plasare [Statistics of the activity of Public Job Placement Offices]," December 1931, MMSOS 1920–1931, Inv. 2523, File 280/1931, 2–25, SANIC Bucharest.

Whereas for men's positions as servants or laborers there were twice as many applicants as there were open positions, women willing to become servants rarely had to wait long for an offer: 621 women job seekers could apply for the 616 domestic service jobs available in February 1931.

In a feminist take on Marx, social reproduction feminists emphasize how household work, paid or unpaid, provides an unaccounted-for subsidy to states and economic actors, by ensuring the social reproduction of workers, that is the regeneration of their capacity to work. In times of crisis, the demands placed on household workers intensify, partly because as provisioning work becomes more strenuous, servants' societal contribution increases.[499] In the first half of the 1930s, with a peak in 1931 to 1932, state-backed initiatives and institutions, such as the public Social Assistance-related "office for the unemployed", the city's Job Placement Office and the very powerful Office for the Control of Servants, run by the city's police, helped ensure that women servants played such social reproduction roles in Bucharest employers' homes. These institutions helped create a setting in which servants played key roles in the management of the economic crisis underway, particularly its devastation of rural areas.

From 1929 on, the central government was reluctant to spend on relief for those who were out of work, especially in villages. Repeatedly, government representatives denied the effects of the crisis in the countryside. Even as vast numbers of peasant families struggled with the local effects of plummeting grain prices on the world market, government representatives claimed the pre-eminently industrial crisis was not felt in agrarian Romania.[500] In Bucharest, unemployment relief (that is, social assistance-like aids, rather than any insurance-related money replacing a part of the lost wages) was available for clerks, skilled workers and certain urban seasonal workers (fur-makers, house painters) who could prove residence of more than one year. The rules effectively excluded most men with peasant backgrounds, not to mention recent immigrants to the city.

In fact, public institutions repeatedly forced unemployed men and their families out of Bucharest, so that the expense of their maintenance could be taken up by relatives or communities of origin. In 1931, the Bucharest Police, at the request of the Ministry of Labor, was providing unemployed men and their families with train travel vouchers, so they could return to their cities and villages of origin. This was the case, for example, when tickets were requested for two laid off workers as "they both have no work and no other means of supporting them-

499 Asad Haider and Salar Mohandesi, "Introduction – Making a Living," *Viewpoint Magazine*, no. 5 (October 28, 2015), https://www.viewpointmag.com/2015/10/28/making-a-living/.

500 Spizu, "Das rumänische Proletariat." Article copy kindly provided by Prof. Susan Zimmermann.

selves in the capital".[501] And still, desperate families kept arriving to Bucharest from the countryside.

Welfare activists with local government positions contributed to justifying ignorance of the rural crisis and helped create ways for managing growing poverty in the city with minimal social service spending. Among these welfare activists was professional social worker and municipal social assistance policymaker Veturia Manuilă, who created the innovative "office for the unemployed [*biuroul șomajului*]" in one of the districts of Bucharest. The office was meant to provide a blueprint for reforming unemployment relief methods already in place in various cities since 1930. In explaining the organizing principles of the office for the unemployed, Manuilă argued that "under normal conditions, it was not even possible to speak in Romania about unemployment".[502] Notably, in describing this initiative, Manuilă never capitalized the name of the office, careful to not give it the appearance of a more formal and solid endeavor than it was. Unemployment was considered a strictly urban issue and, Veturia Manuilă added, the recent phenomenon took everyone by surprise.

In the Sector 1 (Yellow) "unemployment (relief) office", Manuilă and the students at the Superior School of Social Assistance led by Manuilă, applied "a scientific and controllable method" to the work of combatting unemployment in Romania, and "to find a practical solution for helping the unemployed, adaptable to our special conditions".[503] In practice, in 1931 to 1932, this meant that each of the 830 people who had qualified received for themselves and their families weekly food rations of bread, potatoes, some meat, and periodically, hygiene products (soap, linen). To qualify, the family underwent a detailed home investigation. Those helped, overwhelmingly men, needed to present themselves to the city's Job Placement Office at least once a week. They risked having food rations cut if they did not accept a job that was offered.

Through their work with the unemployed and their families, Manuilă and Superior School students observed how domestic service was a key element in peasants' migration to the city. Manuilă complained that "the influx of elements from the countryside is too great; they come to Bucharest where the wife goes into service as a servant, and the husband falls into the responsibility of the city hall as an unemployed man. They stay in this situation until they can save up some money or until they pay up their debts at home".[504] The statement shows

501 MMSOS, "Request. Ministry of Labour to Bucharest Police Prefect.," December 10, 1931, MMSOS 1920–1931, Inv. 2523, File 279/1931, 59–63, SANIC Bucharest.

502 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 437; Ghiț, "Romania," 210.

503 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 437.

504 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 439.

that Manuilă viewed the gendered arrangement of a servant woman and an unemployed partner as constituting a veritable rural-urban migration strategy. And indeed, some women went to great lengths to support partners. In the Placement Office, in 1935, a reporter recorded a woman "with gold fillings" who "spitting delinquently on the floor", demanded a salary of 900 Lei per month "and food for my man".[505]

When arriving in the city, a woman searching for work would often first head to the municipal Job Placement Office. The Bucharest Job Placement Office was created in 1921 as way of formalizing and regulating employment, inspired by policies of the International Labor Organization.[506] However, in the 1930s, because of the lack of jobs for men, it primarily facilitated unregulated bargaining for servant women's wages. Richly illustrated reportage pieces published during the crisis years describe the Office as a "small, official looking house", in which bureaucrats created order and the appearance of respectability among women job seekers.[507] For instance, women were asked to wait in a waiting room that had a neat row of benches and a "no smoking" sign, while men waited outside.

Despite the care with which the Placement Office's space was set up, much of the bargaining for the employment of servant women still seems to have occurred in front of the Office itself, in a kind of open-air market kept orderly by the Office's gendarmes. Even when occurring inside the Office's neatly prepared waiting room, bargaining did not actually benefit from the equalizing intermediation of any of Office's clerks. This is how a potential mistress could be observed by a reporter while haggling inside for the below-market wages of a "sturdy woman, dressed in city clothes, with a resigned and pained face", who had arrived "only yesterday" from the Eastern city of Iași and had not had anything to eat since.[508]

The very capacity and willingness of servant women to support partners turned servant women into targets of suspicion. In 1932, a reporter writing on "social issues", one of a cohort of women and men journalists at the time covering events on Bucharest city streets, wrote how "one night last winter a servant woman in the company of her live-in boyfriend murdered her masters with bestiality. The motive of the hideous assassination was theft mingled with a strong

505 REX, "Oficiul de Plasare [The Job Placement Office]," *Ilustrațiunea română*, May 15, 1935, DigiBuc.

506 Parliament of Romania, "Legea pentru organizarea plasării [The Law for the organization of job placement]," Monitorul Oficial 30 September 1921; Stănescu, "Piața muncii," 175–187.

507 Ion Țic, "Din lumea celor mici–Într-o zi la Biroul de Plasare [From the world of little people–One day at the Job Placement Office]," *Ilustrațiunea română*, October 24, 1929.

508 REX, "Oficiul de Plasare."

dose of vengefulness".[509] The mention of the murderers' vindictiveness underscores the existence in Bucharest of the historically common perception that servants were internal class enemies, living in masters' households but in fact harboring resentment and other negative affects.[510]

The crime wave that was alleged to follow this murder was used to publicly justify the reinvention of the police office charged with controlling servants. In 1931, an older Servants' Bureau was turned into the high-tech Office for the Control of Servants, functioning within the Administrative Police. Previously, the Servants' Bureau controlled servants by annually renewing the servant's employment booklet (her *livret*), providing "morality certificates" or helping masters punish servants. In the new Office, at the initiative of controversial Police Prefect Gabriel Marinescu, new criminology techniques such as fingerprinting and front-profile photographs were being applied to register and control all servants.[511] The new Bureau was so efficient that over two months in 1931, "over 8000 service personnel were triaged and catalogued, thus enabling rapid identification in case a crime is committed".[512] The authorities claimed the Bureau was unparalleled in Europe. In reality, similar offices for the control of servants did exist in other countries on the continent.[513] However, the institution was indeed unusual for the ease with which domestic servants were treated like potential criminals. In many states, the profession had become more formalized by the 1930s, with many countries (Poland, for instance) including domestic servants in modernized labor laws.[514]

Women servants were the ones most affected by the control procedures. They constituted the majority in the occupation and they were presumed to carry infectious diseases, particularly venereal ones. Because it was assumed that "venereal and chest diseases are propagated largely by these women, official numbers showing 12–18 percent of these are touched by these diseases",[515] servant

509 Margareta Nicolau, "Metode nuoi [New methods]," *Realitatea ilustrată*, September 22, 1932, BCU Cluj DSpace.

510 Ally, "Domestics,'Dirty Work'and the Affects of Domination."

511 Simon A Cole, ed., *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

512 Nicolau, "Metode nuoi."

513 Leo Lucassen, "Administrative into Social Control: The Aliens Police and Foreign Female Servants in the Netherlands, 1918–40," *Social History* 27, no. 3 (2002): 327–342.

514 Marta Kindler and Anna Kordasiewicz, "Maid-of-All-Work or Professional Nanny? The Changing Character of Domestic Work in Polish Households, Eighteenth Century to the Present," in *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers*, ed. Dirk Hoerder, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Silke Neunsinger (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 168.

515 Nicolau, "Metode nuoi."

women, but not servant men, were required to undergo a sanitary examination. In a city with very high rates of tuberculosis, a mandatory medical check could have had good health outcomes for the overwhelmingly uninsured domestic workers. In 1937, the police prefecture boasted that "for examinations of servants' health, since the beginning a special medical service was created, led by three doctors and provided with all the necessary devices for sanitary checks and on-the-spot medical tests."[516]

However, the insistence on having chest and gynecological examinations in the police building rather than in a hospital environment enhanced the stigma and unsavory association of domestic service with contagion and illicit sexual behavior. In reports and manifestos created by communist women from Bucharest, the issue of these medical checks was at the core of claims made in favor of women working as domestics. For instance, a 1935 report by a communist-sympathizing women's organization stated that they planned to organize "against the mandatory Dr. control, which [makes it so] that all servants are considered like prostitutes".[517] As noted by a welfare activist called Marga Ghițulescu, the suspicion and association with prostitution and contagion made many women reluctant to become servants. As part of the work of the anti-trafficking organization she helped run, Ghițulescu sought to persuade young women that domestic service was an "honorable profession, worthy of any honest working woman".[518]

Orphans into servants via municipally-funded institutions for child protection

Even before the global economic crisis turned domestic service into a more desirable occupation, municipal authorities and their collaborators saw domestic service as a suitable and convenient kind of paid work for women from poor backgrounds. This is how, already before the end of the First World War, women welfare activists made domestic service into a key component of child protection institutions they ran on behalf of the Bucharest municipality. This approach in-

516 Prefectura Poliției Municipiului Bucuresti, *Activitatea Prefecturii Poliției Municipiului București pe anul 1937 [The Activity of the Prefecture of the Bucharest Municipal Police for the year 1937]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Poliției Capitalei, 1938), 32.

517 Asociația pentru Ocrotirea Mamei si Copilului, "Raport asupra muncii printre femei, copii și tineri, pe lunile martie și aprilie în București [Report on the work with women, children and youths for the months of March and April in Bucharest]," November 23, 1935, Fond 64–Asociația pentru Ocrotirea Mamei și Copilului, Microfilm 466, Code 792–818, SANIC Bucharest.

518 Ghițulescu, "De la asociațiile de asistență socială."

volved these welfare activists and institutions in what historian Nara Milanich has termed "the societal allocation of domestic labor across social groups".[519] Essentially, in Bucharest, as in other European or South American cities, local actors channeled poor children, especially girls, into the economically crucial but underregulated and undervalued occupation of domestic servant.

One organization involved in this practice was the Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women (SONFR). Beginning with 1919, the SONFR ran the "Radu Vodă" Girls' Orphanage, with city funding. Under the management of the SONFR, and its president, the controversial Alexandrina Cantacuzino, the organization envisioned the one hundred girls it hosted at "Radu Vodă" primarily as future servants. It disciplined them to this end.

This approach to child protection, especially the protection of girls and young women, had other local supporters and could be found in other countries across the globe. Milanich's research shows that in late nineteenth century Chile charitable asylums and child fosterage practices run by private or public authorities were "actively involved in training and placing servants".[520] In Bucharest, in the early 1920s, domestic service was still the assumed future occupation for the orphaned girls placed by the city in the care of modest families through the system of *creștere la mahala* (lit. upbringing in the [suburban] neighborhoods).[521] Local politicians encouraged the occupation for marginalized children and were convinced that the mothers of most abandoned children were themselves servants.[522]

Founded shortly before 1918, the "Radu Vodă" Orphanage could host up to one hundred girls aged seven to eighteen. The Orphanage was funded by Bucharest City Hall but administered by the SONFR since 1919. It ran its own primary and upper-secondary school. As the institution was only partly financed by the Bucharest City Hall, it also sustained itself from the embroidery and sewing girls did in the school's workshop. Archival documents suggest that residence at "Radu Vodă" was considered something of a privilege reserved for promising girls as, unlike suburban foster homes, the orphanage guaranteed primary and secondary education and a minimal standard of living for residents.[523]

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519 Nara Milanich, "Women, Children, and the Social Organization of Domestic Labor in Chile," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 91, no. 1 (2011): 31.

520 Milanich, "Women, Children, and the Social Organization of Domestic Labor in Chile," 33.

521 Gheorghe Banu, "Asistența comunală a copiilor găsiți, orfani și săraci în București [The Commune sssistance for foundlings, orphans and poor children in Bucharest]," *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* 5, no. 1–2 (1924): 146.

522 "Darea de seamă asupra desbaterilor."

523 For example, one of the Radu Vodă headmistresses described a ward who proved willful and difficult to educate as a girl who did not "repay the sacrificies made by City Hall" and therefore "can be sent away [alt. removed] from the school [*s-ar putea îndepărta din școală*]."

Throughout the 1920s, the SONFR-linked administrators of the orphanage made only minimal attempts at questioning the link between class, public assistance, and housework. Statistics about the life trajectories of girls hosted at "Radu Vodă" underscore this. Of 214 girls hosted at the orphanage between 1919 and 1927, a plurality of girls (forty-seven students) made paid domestic work their occupation, under varying conditions: eleven went to a professional school that prepared girls for service, three became servants before graduation, thirteen went to housekeepers' school and another twenty were (despite protestations) given to families who promised to help set them up in life.[524]

Despite the prevailing local practices, it was not inevitable that girls in publicly funded women-administered institutions would be mainly expected to do housework and become servants. The first mistress of the "Radu Vodă" orphanage, the feminist suffragist Eugenia de Reuss-Ianculescu, appears to have had envisioned an emancipatory education for the residents.[525] Reuss-Ianculescu was likely appointed to run the institution when it was founded, around 1917. However, by 1918, she was no longer the manager of the institution. Instead, the SONFR took over the administration of the orphanage.

In February 1918, with the German army still occupying Bucharest (since 1916), Coralia Pavlu, the newly appointed headmistress of the "Radu Vodă" Orphanage, wrote an incensed letter to her supervisor, SONFR president Alexandrina Cantacuzino. In her detailed report, Pavlu described the girls' lack of discipline and the state of disrepair in the institution. In Pavlu's view, the chaos was caused by the

Coralia Pavlu, "Referat [Report]," February 28, 1922, Fond 1035–SONFR, File 27/1918, 17, SANIC Bucharest.

524 Of the 214 girls who had lived at Radu Voda between the end of the war and 1927, eleven students were sent to professional school "Protopopul Tudor", 3 were "sent into service", nine to teachers' school, nine to "Elena Doamna" professional school, thirteen to Housekeeping School, nine at the Tesatoarea [The Weaver] professional school, two to highschool, two in workshops, two in nursing school, twenty girls were given for adoption ["date în căpătuire"]. A surprising number of ninety-four girls were withdrawn from the orphanage by their relatives, eight ran away to join their relatives, twenty were expelled and twelve died. Coralia Pavlu, "Situația elevelor trecute prin Orfelinatul Radu Vodă din anul 1918–1927 [The situation of students who passed through Radu Vodă Orphanage from 1918–1927]," October 27, 1927, Primăria Municipiului București, Serviciul Administrativ, Inv. 1702, Fond 83, File 16/1926, 21–30, SMBAN Bucharest.

525 In 1919, in an enthusiastic letter to the IWSA publication Jus Sufragii, Reuss-Ianculescu began by saying "Since January 1919, I have recommenced the feminist struggle. Feminism is in full swing." Mme de Reuss-Janculescu, "Roumania. Mme. de Reuss-Janculescu Writes from Bucarest . . .," *International Women's News*, 13, no. 10 (1919): 147. The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs. It is unclear under which circumstances the feminist took over the administration of Radu Vodă, but it seems to have been a short-lived engagement conceived of as part of her wartime feminism-inflected welfare activism.

emancipatory pedagogical convictions and incompetent leadership of the former, feminist, manager:

> We found the same disorder in the bedrooms: dirty and disorderly beds. Under the bed we noticed some small chests carefully locked. We wanted to find out what was being kept in these chests, thinking we were going to find hygiene objects. After the children, with quite a bit of difficulty, decided to open them, we found them full of magazines: *Drepturile Femeei* [Woman's Rights] and the novels of [former director] Mrs. Ianculescu, gifted to the students with dedications from the author. [. . .] Many of the girls had thoughts of running away from the residence hall. Probably a desire for the unknown and wandering induced by these readings of emancipatory ideas. [. . .] Mending, sweeping, cooking they saw as beneath them, they who were used to make anglaise embroidery, Richelieu, decorative art with a special teacher, dancing, and singing; and occasionally discussing *Drepturile Femeei* or the heroines from sensational novels.[526]

In the letter, besides denouncing the situation, Pavlu was defining the types of activities she considered appropriate for the girls at "Radu Vodă": "mending, sweeping, cooking". Housework. The inappropriate pastimes Pavlu's letter dismissed were those associated with upper-class young women's salon education: fine embroidery, artistic performance, special tutors. The reading of magazines which encouraged women's independence and the girls' ownership of objects that highlighted individual distinction (locked personal chests, volumes with the author's signature) further signaled the transgression of class norms at the orphanage. As the statistics of occupations for girls who left the orphanage suggest, Pavlu made dramatic changes to the approach in the institution, switching towards teaching girls to do housework and preparing them for paid work in domestic service.

Despite naturalizing domestic service as destined profession for poor girls, administrators of the "Radu Vodă" orphanage did seek to improve the basic terms under which city wards were going to labor as servants in the future. For instance, Coralia Pavlu opposed the irregular adoption of the institutions' girls into families. This was an older practice, whereby (theoretically) well-to-do families took in a minor, most often with the expectation that the child would perform various household task. In exchange for labor as a child, the family would later help set the child up in life. In practice, this was a form of unwaged domestic service performed by children, under wildly variable, generally bad, conditions.

526 Coralia Pavlu, "General report on the situation at Radu Vodă orphanage," February 4, 1918, Fond 1035–SONFR, File 27/1918, 12–13, SANIC Bucharest.

In repeated letters to educational authorities and the City Hall, Pavlu pleaded with local politicians to stop facilitating the "taking in" of girls from the orphanage. In 1918, the mistress wrote:

> Daily I am sent from Hon. City Hall, either with special recommendations, or formal notes [*ordin de servici*], persons who wish to take in girls [*sa iee fete în căpătuire*] or potentially adopt them. [. . .] Some, such as Mr. M., emboldened by the formal note from City Hall by the order of Vice-Mayor Dr. B. requested to be presented all graduates from which he was to choose one to take her in [and] potentially adopt her. [. . .] But the exhibiting of these almost grown up and sensitive girls for choosing is hurtful for their morale. They do not even want to appear, and we are in the difficult situation of bringing them despite their will. Mr. M. chose Verona G., who has parents.[527]

In a letter from 1922 protesting the intermediation by a City Hall official of a similar adoption, Ms. Pavlu explained that of all the children in the orphanage, only six were entirely without relatives and "could be disposed of by the City Hall".[528] The others had different relatives who strongly opposed the children's removal from the school "and asked that their children form a career through the sister-institutions of the schools".

Pavlu's letters suggest that having been considered bright enough to be educated until the age of eighteen in a publicly funded institution, most girls were protected by families, or at least by administrators speaking on behalf of families, from what seems to have sounded to everyone as the prospect of years of service without pay, or worse. Notably, a similar link between adoption and service work existed in interwar Cyprus, where a 1933 report on domestic servants' employment conditions found that of the 549 registered adopted children, 91 percent were actually employed in domestic work. As in Romania, in theory, an adopter committed to creating savings for a child and later finding a suitable husband or wife. Cypriot labor inspectors found, however, that in practice the children very often worked only in exchange for food and board.[529]

At the same time, beyond ethical concerns about giving girls away in this manner, the undisrupted presence of the girls in the "Radu Vodă" orphanage was encouraged because it enabled the institution to remain partly self-sustaining by relying on students' labor. For instance, in her 1918 letter, Pavlu argued that adop-

527 Coralia Pavlu, "Coralia Pavlu to Madam School Inspector," October 24, 1918, Fond 1035–SONFR, File 27/1918, 17, SANIC Bucharest.

528 Pavlu, "Referat [Report]."

529 Dimitri Kalantzopoulos, "Domestic Work in Cyprus, 1925–1955: Motivations, Working Conditions and the Colonial Legal Framework," in *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers*, eds. Dirk Hoerder, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Silke Neunsinger (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 451–464.

tions after the school year had begun disrupting the functioning of the clothes-mending workshop as well as the upkeep of the "Radu Vodă" institution, as "we have neither servant nor cook".[530] It becomes clear that girls' housework and handiwork helped maintain the institution, supplementing the always insufficient funds provided by the municipality.

In 1931, women welfare activists who had become councilwomen began questioning the way in which the SONFR women's organization managed the "Radu Vodă" orphanage. That year, during a meeting of Bucharest's General City Council, National Peasantist Party (PNȚ) councilwoman Calypso Botez requested an inquiry into the management of the "Radu Vodă" girls' orphanage. Not unimportantly, as discussed in previous chapters, Botez and SONFR leader Cantacuzino were at odds, politically and most likely, given the seriousness of the public mutual accusations documented, personally.

In a reversal of the 1918 situation, this time it was Coralia Pavlu's own management that was questioned. In her request for a formal inquiry, Botez mentioned that one of the girls living at the orphanage had sent in a letter a lock of the hair pulled out by a teacher. The student also complained that abuses occurred while headmistress Pavlu lived in luxury.[531] The abused student's initiative suggests perhaps that even after Reuss-Ianculescu's removal, students at the school could not be entirely freed of emancipatory ideas and practices. More importantly, after the student sent her letter, the "Radu Vodă" emphasis on domestic service for the girls in its care became one of the main points of criticism. In the General City Council meeting, councilwoman Botez stated that "[the girls] are not given honest careers, the majority end up being servants and no one knows anything about them after that".[532]

After the 1931 inquiry, it was decided that the orphanage would be reformed. Calypso Botez had her own vision of what was necessary for the well-being of girls hosted in a publicly funded child protection institution. As "delegate for the solving and study of matters of public assistance" in Bucharest's General City Council, Botez drew up a plan for the reorganization of the orphanage.[533] Her vision for "Radu Vodă" was of a vocational school focused on domestic management, which would open the door of entrepreneurship for its students. This pur-

530 Letter. Coralia Pavlu to Madam School Inspector.

531 N. Batzaria, "Cinste și omenie [Honesty and humanity humaneness]," *Adeverul*, October 17, 1931.

532 "Cinste și omenie". As proven by the statistics provided by the orphanage in 1927, the statement was not accurate. The administrators did attempt to pay at least minimal attention to orphaned girls' trajectories after their leaving the institution.

533 "Cinste și omenie".

portedly novel housekeeping institute was meant to be self-sufficient "like all the orphanages of great centers from around the world" and capable of supplying other city institutions with sewing, laundry and cooking services.[534]

In 1932, headmistress Coralia Pavlu was acrimoniously dismissed from the Radu Vodă orphanage. A recent graduate of the prestigious Fribourg School of Home Economics named Marcela Pretorian was installed instead. On the occasion, the school within the Radu Vodă Orphanage was renamed the "Radu Vodă Housekeeping School".[535] Practically, by enabling certification in housekeeping, the school was restructured to enable the professionalization of girls who were nevertheless still expected to do housework. Yet even if it did not entirely break with practices that distributed the same kind of persons (poor orphaned girls) into the same kind of occupations (domestic service, housekeeping), the reform initiated by Botez did offer the girls at "Radu Vodă" a chance at a measure of upward social mobility. For example, in theory, a housekeeping diploma improved pay and labor conditions for students who became domestic servants or took up jobs in the hospitality sector.

Unfortunately, plans for professionalizing girls trained in housekeeping at Radu Vodă likely hit the wall of the economic crisis, when the public budget for social assistance was drastically cut. In that context, welfare activists looked again favorably on unskilled domestic service as a sufficiently good way out of poverty for girls and women. Methods of helping girls that did not depend on large institutional setups also became important and visible in the social assistance economy of Bucharest. In conjunction with the work of municipal and municipally funded institutions, in the 1930s, the activities of privately funded organizations that dealt with girls and women who worked as domestic servants became important for managing the effects of the Great Depression, on households and on Bucharest's labor market.

The Association Women Friends of Young Girls and servants' rural–urban labor migration

The most respected among city organizations dealing with domestic service was an association that explicitly, was involved in anti-prostitution and anti-trafficking work: the Association Women Friends of Young Girls [*Asociația Amicele Tinerelor*

534 Primăria Municipiului București, "Deciziune [Decision]," *Monitorul comunal al municipiului București* 56, no. 39 (September 27, 1931): 4–5.

535 Primaria Municipiului Bucuresti, "Deciziune [Decision]," in *Monitorul Comunal al Municipiului București*, vol. 57 (52) (Bucharest, 1932), 3.

Fete, ATF]. The leaders of the ATF were several women associated with the medical profession (gynecologist Dr. Elena Manicatide-Venert or a Mrs. Dr. Hurmuzescu). The above-quoted Marga Ghițulescu helped run the organization.

Because of its anti-prostitution work, the Association garnered supporters from all nodes of the otherwise internally tense network of women involved in social reform in the city at the time. Many in the cohort of women elected to serve as councilors in Bucharest sectors between 1929 and 1933 were listed among the members or donors to the ATF, as were members of the socially conservative Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women. Princess Elena of Romania was the honorary president of the association. In 1932, the "Ladies from the Israelite hostel (home)" figure among the most important small donors in support of a shelter destined for former "fallen girls" released from hospitals following treatment for venereal disease.[536] The work of the ATF in Bucharest was shaped by the interwar-specific intersection of transnational social reformers' concerns for women's work, on the one hand, and women's protection from sexual violence, on the other.

Internationally, after the First World War, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the League of Nations produced expertise rather than regulations concerning domestic service. The scant attention garnered by domestic work qua waged work internationally before the Great Depression can be linked to a by-then institutionalized political unwillingness to conceptualize forms of social reproduction work as fully tied to labor policy. As Susan Zimmermann has shown, in the 1920s, the ILO "carefully avoided referring to women's 'family responsibilities' as work" when dealing with maternity and family policies to be applied in the Global North, with such evasion explicitly tied to the goal of not increasing social expenditure in ILO member countries.[537]

Research on domestic service commissioned by the ILO was conducted in 1933 to 1934 by women's work expert Erna Magnus, a German labor organizer facing increasing repression in Germany.[538] Magnus argued that the profession was

536 Asociația Tinerelor Fete, *Dare de seamă pe anul 1932 [Annual report for the year 1932]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Carmen Sylva, 1933), Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 90/1926–1927, SANIC Bucharest, 48.

537 Susan Zimmermann, "The International Labor Organization, Transnational Women's Networks, and the Question of Unpaid Work in the Interwar World," in *Women in Transnational History: Connecting the Local and the Global*, ed. Clare Midgley, et al. (London: Routledge, 2016), 40.

538 Kirsten Scheiwe and Lucia Artner, "International Networking in the Interwar Years: Gertrud Hanna, Alice Salomon and Erna Magnus," in *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards, and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present*, ed. Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker, and Susan Zimmermann (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 92–94.

governed by "outdated norms" and excluded workers from most of the social protection innovations of the time.[539] Because a servant was "living under her employer's roof" (and other specific "material conditions of employment"), the "position of the domestic servant is often one of both personal and social isolation".[540]

By contrast, in the League of Nations, the influential Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, active between 1921 and 1939, strengthened an existing association between domestic work and the risk of "moral endangerment" and cross-border trafficking.[541] The Committee endorsed measures that would benefit young women who traveled for employment as servants in cities, such as a women's police force and receiving posts in rail stations and ports.[542] Yet unlike Magnus's ILO study, the Committee's research over the years did not make clear recommendations for improved social protection of servants in various countries.

Additional conceptual blurring of domestic service's character as precarious labour occurred through the joint work of multiple League of Nations organizations on the *mui tsai* system of transferring children (especially girls) from less affluent to better-off households, practiced under that name in China, Hong Kong and Malaya. ILO representatives involved in these joint commissions pleaded for treating *mui tsai* as a problem of poor working conditions and potential forced labour, while two anti-slavery committees considered it a form of child slavery. By contrast, the Advisory Committee on Traffic in Women and Children saw *mui tsai* as a suitable system of quasi-adoption into families which by and large protected girls from sexual exploitation and trafficking. The Advisory Committee's adopted stance on *mui tsai*, although very likely one reached after much internal debate, clearly subordinated labor standards to the goals of a large transnational social purity campaign underway.[543]

Within this context, the ATF, founded in Romania in 1927, was part of a network of organizations established in Neuchâtel (Switzerland) which advocated for the abolition of prostitution.[544] Titled *L'Union Internationale des Amies de la Jeune Fille* (AJF), the Neuchâtel-based network was practically the francophone

539 Erna Magnus, "The Social, Economic, and Legal Conditions of Domestic Servants: I," *International Labour Review* 30 (1934): 197. See also Erna Magnus, "The Social, Economic, and Legal Conditions of Domestic Servants: II," *International Labour Review* 30 (1934): 336–364.

540 Magnus, "The Social, Economic, and Legal Conditions of Domestic Servants: I," 197.

541 Rodríguez García, "The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women."

542 Rodríguez García, "The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women," 119–125.

543 Magaly Rodríguez García, "Child Slavery, Sex Trafficking or Domestic Work? The League of Nations and Its Analysis of the Mui Tsai System," in *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 428–450.

544 Asociația Tinerelor Fete, *Dare de seamă pe anul 1932*.

wing of the anglo-saxon World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA).[545] The former was a transnational organization which became a major player in League of Nations prostitution abolitionism through membership in the Advisory Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children.[546]

Through involvement in the international anti-prostitution movement, the AJF/YWCA espoused a complex understanding of the labor issues characterizing domestic service. Due to its preoccupation with labor issues (from a Christian standpoint, critical of the morally deleterious effects of unfettered industrialization), the YWCA developed some of the "most progressive [among] women's organizations" stances and practical assistance methods for domestic service, unionization, and women's labor migration.[547]

The Bucharest version of the AJF, the ATF, ran a welcome booth in the city's main train station. By maintaining this "receiving post", the ATF aimed to guide young women freshly arrived from the countryside and protect them from "falling into prostitution".[548] The organization managed a strict hostel and a private, free-of-charge, job placement office focusing on domestic service as well. At its founding, the ATF functioned within an anti-human trafficking discourse, identifying as a non-denominational Christian organization whose goal was to "help and support any young girl isolated in life or given bad counsel".[549]

Like the YWCA, the Bucharest ATF developed a range of original, local, practices to deal with labor issues, while drawing inspiration for its anti-trafficking modes of intervention from the international AJF network. As a result, over at least fifteen years of activity, the ATF worked to fulfill its abolitionist mission by

545 The International AJF was formally absorbed into the YWCA in 1960; historically, it more strictly defined itself as an anti-prostitution organization than the YWCA. Elisabeth Joris, "Amies de la jeune fille," Dictionnaire historique de la Suisse, November 15, 2005, http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F16501.php. "The International AJF Union was founded in 1877 [. . .] following the first international abolitionist congress held in Geneva. the Swiss section of the International AJF Union, founded in 1886, dedicated itself to the prevention of prostitution. The AJFs assisted young women arriving in cities looking for work by helping them find work and offering them affordable lodging in hostels ('maisons Martha')."

546 Rodríguez García, "The League of Nations and the Moral Recruitment of Women", 121–122.

547 Eileen Boris and Jennifer N. Fish, "Decent Work for Domestics: Feminist Organizing, Worker Empowerment, and the ILO," in *Towards a Global History of Domestic and Caregiving Workers*, ed. Dirk Hoerder, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Silke Neunsinger (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 530–552.

548 Asociația Tinerelor Fete, *Dare de seamă pe anul 1932*.

549 Asociația Tinerelor Fete.

providing travel-related assistance to young women or contributing to what they saw as the rehabilitation of sex workers through shelters and workshops.[550]

However, the Association also worked to (re)define domestic service and its functions in Bucharest in its work as a provider of emergency assistance to domestic servants and as both an ad hoc and systematic facilitator of domestic service employment. Even as welfare activists shaped the ATF into an organization increasingly skilled at providing quick, pragmatic responses to various issues affecting young women, they equally turned it into an organization that showed great comfort in aiding local authorities' control of migration to Bucharest during the Great Depression.

The ATF in Bucharest conceived of domestic service as strongly linked to internal, rural-urban migration. A magazine report from 1931 depicted the activities of the ATF information center in Bucharest's main train station, the *Gara de Nord*. According to the reporter, the agents of the Association would wait for the arrival of trains while walking back and forth on the station's landing, wearing brooches and bandanas with the insignia of the Association.[551]

The ATF activists working in the receiving post of Bucharest's Gara de Nord train station helped young, largely unaccompanied women, with a great variety of issues: temporary hosting, medical assistance, legal assistance, and occasionally financial assistance. In 1939 to 1942, the median age of assisted young women was fourteen, but over the years the ATF assisted girls as young as six and as old as twenty-one. A manuscript of ATF's "Special cases for the year 1931" discusses the assistance provided to eight young women (out of a total of 331 recorded cases of assistance, 116 of which consisted of providing basic travel and safety information) during that year.[552]

In most of the "special cases" solved by ATF activists, young women had been placed in danger by lurid men. A high school student due to switch trains in Bucharest was promised by a young man that he could arrange cheaper tickets to the city of Brașov. He then dragged the girl "through a labyrinth of people" into the basement of a building several streets away. The ATF reported that the girl had almost been abducted there but managed to escape and sought the help of

550 Asociația Tinerelor Fete.

551 Tonia H., "Fetele, în Gara de Nord [Girls, in the North Train Station]," *Ilustrațiunea română*, September 23, 1931.

552 Asociația Amicele Tinerelor Fete, *Dare de seamă 1942/1943 [Report 1942/1943]* (Bucharest: Rotativa SAR, 1943), 13; "Cazuri Speciale 1931. Asoc. Amicele Tinerelor Fete Gara de Nord [Special Cases 1931. Assoc. Friends of Young Women North Train Station]," 1931, Fond 1830–Cantacuzino Familial, File 103/1927, 1–9, SANIC Bucharest.

the ATF office. The woman volunteering in the ATF office at the train station facilitated police assistance and bought her part of a return ticket.

The rarer but more demanding cases of the ATF concerned young girls working as servants. Most of these girls had migrated to the city (and were thus unaccompanied young persons) but their arrival in Bucharest was not necessarily recent. In 1931, the ATF volunteer at the Gara de Nord receiving post described the case of Linica T., a twelve-year-old servant in the house and store of a Mr. K. A neighbor of the girl, familiar with her difficult situation, had brought her to the post in the station, hoping the ATF might be able to assist.

The draft description of Linica T.'s case, drawn up for one of the ATF's yearbooks, illuminates not only the dire working conditions children in domestic service could encounter, but also the limits of the ATF's view of human trafficking:

> She has been serving there for six months, there are 8 persons, she is sent out late, during the night, around one o'clock, for all sorts of errands. The child delivered bread daily to Mrs. L., who lives across the street, the child cried every day asking her to save her from the hard work [. . .]. She declared that she had been brought to Bucharest, by a lady who had requested her from her parents when she was 9 years old. This lady gave her to a certain Mrs. B., where she served for 2 years, during which she was not paid anything, she was kept hungry and to get rid of her gave her off to Mr. K for 100 Lei monthly pay and clothing.[553]

As they were asked by the concerned neighbor, the ATF intervened in the situation. After investigating the veracity of claims made by Linica T. among her employer's neighbors, ATF agents removed her from the home of Mr. K. The report does not mention whether any local authorities were involved. The girl was then placed in domestic service with a family where she "enjoyed better conditions" and double the monthly pay. The report did not refer to the source or nature of the girl's exploitation in the terms of social policy or politics: her case was not named as one of human trafficking, neither of labor coercion nor of child abandonment. Although ATF activists clearly saw the situation as wrong, the nonconstruction of Linica T.'s case as one instance of a broader phenomenon meant that domestic service employment could still be the preferred solution for the protection of Linica T., while the deregulated character of domestic service in Romania remained beyond questioning.

Domestic service's basic legal and social setup was left unquestioned by the ATF partly because easy placement into private homes was an essential component of its child protection methods and a way to fulfill its abolitionist mission. A girl who needed to be urgently moved from the home of her employer was helped by being placed in what the ATF claimed was better domestic service employ-

553 "Cazuri Speciale 1931."

ment.[554] Several young women treated in the Venereal Disease section of Colentina hospital and then hosted in a temporary shelter the ATF initiated in 1932 were placed with various families. ATF members complained that optimal placements for these women could not be achieved in all cases, resulting in the defection of several women who could not become accustomed with life in service.[555]

For all its insistence on its religiously motivated social assistance work, the ATF became increasingly involved in the labor market, as an economic actor, and in the regulation of the same market, as social reform actor allied to the state. To a certain extent, this feature was already present in the purest social assistance activities of the organization, through the publicization of employment conditions for women working in domestic service, the largest occupational group helped by the ATF in the train station.[556] But, to a much greater degree this was visible in the ATF's running of a job placement office, its participation in the city's efforts at controlling rural-urban migration and unemployment, and its consistent promotion of the professionalization of domestic service.

The job placement office run by ATF functioned in the same building as its hostel. By 1934, for the small amount of 30 Lei per day, young women who checked in received "room and board, a job and good company", for as long as the hostel's rules, "severe and moral", were rigorously observed.[557] Although the services of the employment office were free of additional charges for residents, the ATF sought to shape the labor force supply so that it would more closely match demand. Primarily, this meant that the Association encouraged the women it hosted to embrace domestic work. In 1932, a representative of the Association wrote that: "we are sought out mostly by girls who, obligated to temporarily abandon their professional or university studies, see themselves as unsuitable for domestic service".[558] But, she argued, there was simply no demand for factory workers or shop assistants, and that in these circumstances the Association only managed "with great difficulty to persuade the girls who graduate from a few of the middle school years to become live-in servants or child nannies. Nevertheless,

554 "Cazuri Speciale 1931."

555 Asociația Tinerelor Fete, *Dare de seamă pe anul 1932*.

556 In 1931, the station office in Bucharest assisted 95 servant girls. The second largest occupational group the ATF interacted with—and recorded—was primary school teachers (42), followed by pupils (40). "Cazuri Speciale 1931."

557 Lc., "Protecția tinerelor fete [The Protection of young women]," *Ilustrațiunea română*, October 24, 1934.

558 Asociația Tinerelor Fete, *Dare de seamă pe anul 1932*, 7.

we are obtaining some very satisfactory results whose examples are useful in the campaign we are waging to change the mentality of our feminine youth".[559]

In promoting unemployed women's adaptation to the demand for household workers on the labor market, by 1936, the ATF portrayed the Bucharest labor market and the city's households as interdependent realms. The balance between labor market and household work—and the social peace emerging from it—hinged on the figure of the domestic servant. In this context, the Association committed itself to monitoring both employment conditions and levels of customer satisfaction. As stated in one of the ATF yearbooks, the Association "understands the importance of this labor in the life of the modern home, as well as the purpose of good rapports between one social category and another [so that] the association has systematically organized the continuous evidence-keeping of the situation of all placed elements and of all the families in which they work".[560] Here, the Association cast itself as a responsible arbiter, able to quickly correct demand-supply mismatches, and thus keep the local labor market dynamic and efficient.

The ATF acted as social reform actor allied to the state by contributing to the control of labor migration. Through its actions on behalf of travelling girls, especially in 1932, the Association contributed to controlling women's rural to urban migration. It also participated in the city's measures for the alleviation (or rather the masking) of unemployment in Bucharest, through the expulsion of jobless workers towards the countryside or their cities of origin.

The squarely eugenicist *Revista de igienă socială* [The Journal for Social Hygiene] praised the collaboration between the ATF and the Orthodox Church, "for stemming the tide of rural youth's migration towards cities, a social phenomenon that has taken worrisome proportions".[561] The primary objective was the "moral defense of the rural element, uprooted from its natural environment". As a part of this collaboration, priests were meant to advise villagers not to send their children off as servants and to instead practice home industry and crafts to be sold in cities. Where villagers were too poor, priests were supposed to ask for information, so that the young people migrating to cities for domestic work could be found a position in advance, through the Association.

In addition to participation in measures for "stemming the tide" of young people's migration to cities, in 1932, the ATF made use of the one-way train travel vouchers ("the unemployment tickets") created by the Bucharest Police. In this

559 Asociația Tinerelor Fete, *Dare de seamă pe anul 1932*, 7.

560 Ghițulescu, "De la asociațiile de asistență socială," 260.

561 "Diverse [Various Items]," *Revista de igienă socială*, 1932, 186.

way, the ATF helped push back to the countryside tens of jobless young women for whom they seem to not have been able to find domestic service employment:

> Our missionaries helped to repatriate 40 girls, arrived from the province to look for work in the Capital, without any special training and without sense. Thanks to the unemployment tickets, granted by the city, these girls could be persuaded to return to their homes and [were] therefore prevented from slipping on the slope of vice on the streets of Bucharest.[562]

At the same time as pushing unskilled women job seekers back to the countryside, the ATF did try to increase rural women's chances of finding employment as servants and to improve their experience of the job. In a report submitted to the League of Nations Advisory Committee on Social Questions sometime in the late 1930s, the Association argued that there existed a great demand in Romania for a "training school for general servants". This was because "peasant girls coming from the country often know nothing at all of housework", a lack of skill which greatly hampered the activity of the ATF's own job placement office.[563] The answers provided to the League of Nations inquiry may have had an echo in Romania. For instance, the 1938 *Encyclopedia of Romania* mentions that "such a hostel for the training of domestic personnel opened its gates recently in Bucharest".[564]

Through its work in the 1930s, the voluntary-work and donation-based ATF became a competent ally to the local administration's handling of unemployment and a friend not only to young women but also to persons considered to be morally upstanding potential employers of domestic servants. The Association and its welfare activists thought of their work as dedicated to the protection of young women at risk, leaving their involvement with the local labor market largely unarticulated, and their contribution to the suppression of unemployment largely unspoken. Like other women welfare activists in Bucharest, women involved in the ATF played larger and more complex parts in the management of the economic crisis than more powerful contemporaries were willing to admit publicly or than historians were willing to see. Successful at communicating the association between domestic service and increased risk of sexual violence, the ATF was less critical of and therefore less able to articulate the association between domestic service and labor exploitation.

562 Asociația Tinerelor Fete, *Dare de seamă pe anul 1932*, 5.

563 League of Nations–Advisory Committee on Social Questions, *Enquiry into Measures of Rehabilitation of Prostitutes–Part III and IV: Methods of Rehabilitation of Adult Prostitutes. Recommendations and Conclusions* (Geneva: League of Nations, 1939), 75, https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.223606.

564 *Enciclopedia României [The Encyclopedia of Romania]*, 1:602.

The ATF's work and approach became quietly incorporated into mainstreamed eugenicist discourses circulating in the country during the Second World War. The 1944 *Treatise on Social Medicine*, by social hygiene doctor Gheorge Banu, has a fourth volume dedicated to tuberculosis and venereal disease.[565] In the book's ample discussion on "prostitution", Banu reviews the results of inquiries into sex work, studies conducted in specific countries or internationally, through the League of Nations, up until the late 1930s. Repeatedly, Banu mentioned the demonstrated high incidence of servants among sex workers.[566] Also, the author pointed out that returning servant women carried syphilis into rural areas in Romania,[567] that servants were a category of women "totally deficient from the point of view of bodily hygiene",[568] and that domestic service was the suitable occupation for the "mentally feeble".[569] However, under the influence of the conclusions of a League of Nations questionnaire-based inquiry,[570] he recognized that, "[i]n addition, servants, washerwomen, etc are not protected legally to the same extent as other working women; they depend more tightly on the employer than the other categories of waged women. All these represent factors which favor prostitution".[571]

Yet as much as these stances were linked to the influential transnational discourses on domestic service, and in an unrecognized way to the ATF's work, Banu's pathologization of domestic service as occupation was also tied to the marginalization and criminalization of servants enacted by Romanian state laws since the late nineteenth century and intensified through Bucharest-specific institutions, such as the Job Placement Office and the Office for the Control of Servants, during the 1930s.

565 Gheorghe Banu, *Tratat de medicină socială [Treatise on social medicine]*, vol. 4 Tuberculosis. Venereal Disease. (Bucharest: Casa Școalelor, 1944).

566 Banu, 4 Tuberculosis. Venereal Disease, 1.

567 Banu, 4 Tuberculosis. Venereal Disease, 427.

568 Banu, 4 Tuberculosis. Venereal Disease, 377.

569 Banu, 4 Tuberculosis. Venereal Disease, 241.

570 League of Nations–Advisory Committee on Social Questions, *Enquiry into Measures of Rehabilitation of Prostitutes–Part III and IV*; League of Nations–Advisory Committee on Social Questions.

571 Banu, *Tratat de medicină socială*, vol. 4, Tuberculosis. Venereal Disease, 522.

Domestic service as experienced by servant women in Bucharest

Police in Bucharest criminalized and pathologized servants, while local welfare activists sought to portray domestic service as an "honorable occupation" necessary to the calm of households, and as a potential avenue for upward social mobility for orphan girls. As research conducted by Erna Magnus for the International Labor Office suggested, such portrayals and their attendant restrictions were linked to employers' (positive and negative) perceptions that servants' home-based work entailed unavoidable proximity with someone from a (usually) different class background. To what extent can the assessments created by people considered to be authoritative voices about domestic service during the interwar period be countered or supplemented by narratives which discuss service work from the perspective of the workers? What kind of sources exist to shed light on this issue and in what contexts were they produced?

In the 1920s and 1930s, journalists captured details about servants' (non-murderous) activities almost invariably through descriptions of interactions between maids and mistresses. In 1929, maids were presented interrogating their future employers in front of the Job Placement Office:

> Among others, the servant asked the following questions: where she lived, what was her name, her husband's profession, how old she is, how many children there are in the house and of what ages each, how many stairs between floors, how many stairs to the attic, if the firewood is brought up by hand or elevator, how often the lady receives visits per week, if the house has electric light and how many visitors there are in total.[572]

By 1932, the same magazines that had depicted maids as the true masters of their employers' households admitted that "the crisis has mellowed the expectations from yonder. They are now happy to know how many rooms you have, if you have children and if you take her in for laundry as well".[573]

A 1933 set of interviews of (mostly) male servants sought to capture servants' subversive power. The men explained that "a servant must be smart, handy and remember everything".[574] They shared that whereas a servant could not talk back to a master, a good servant could quietly do what he wanted. Resistance could be found in polishing a demanding master's boots with the master's sitting room plush curtains, pretending to simply convey insults spoken by a third party (a

572 Țic, "Din lumea celor mici."

573 M. Ursu, "Brațe de închiriat–chivuțe, servitoare, coșari [Hands for hire–charwomen, servants, chimneysweeps]," *Ilustrațiunea română*, September 7, 1932.

574 Alex F. Mihail, "Slugi și stăpâni [Servants and masters]," *Realitatea ilustrată*, December 1933.

butcher, a neighbor), intentionally misplacing a masters' glove or a shoe and then later, recovering the other from the trash bin in order to keep the entire pair, or simply in sharing these methods with fellow servants in public gardens and pubs.[575] Servant women were suspected of purposefully misplacing objects and of frequently borrowing their mistresses' clothes.

It is only by the end of the 1930s that the illusion of servants' power over masters was pierced in the popular press. In 1937, journalist Nicolae Papatanasiu wrote a piece on the process of interviewing a maid-of-all-work occurring in the house of a friend of his. Rather than focusing on petulant servants, the author depicted the lady of the house as demanding to the point of absurdity. The article described how the interviewed women were called to the employers' house rather than at the Job Placement Office—considered "boring". He described the prospective servant women as hopeless rather than simply as poor: "How impressive a group of women together. And these faces with only one drop of hope in their eyes, with the human emptiness they express".[576]

In Papatanasiu's reportage, the job applicants' narratives revolved around their search for domestic work as an alternative to the increasingly onerous employment to be found in small industrial establishments or as a second, live-out job, to be complemented by night work in a factory. Most of the eleven applicants were "disqualified for minor issues" by the mistress: the women had small children, they wanted Sundays off, they requested that some of the day's cooked food could be set aside for husbands, an appearance of illness on the face of a "thin, horribly thin" young woman, twins that the servant woman would not leave in an orphanage.

The balance of power shifted after the Second World War, after what appears like decades of ignorance of domestic personnel. In 1952, Munich-based Radio Free Europe collected a report from Bucharest on the state of relations between maids and mistresses in the new popular democracy regime:

> Another source of displeasure for the women of Bucharest is the maid situation. Only State employees may have maids and only in case the woman of the house works. Through these maids the Miliția (Police) and Securitatea (Secret Services) know all about the families where these maids work. Maids are organized in unions and are regularly interrogated by police about what the families say and do, what they eat, whom they receive, etc. Most women, even if they have the right to a maid, prefer not to have one and do the housework themselves. If a maid is illiterate, which is often the case, the family employing her must

575 Mihail, "Slugi și stăpâni [Servants and masters]."

576 N Papatanasiu, "Caut post [Looking for a job]," *Realitatea ilustrată*, February 17, 1937, DigiBuc.

> send her to a night school, and the family is fined if the maid, instead of going to school, goes out to enjoy herself.[577]

Besides the improvement in working conditions for the decidedly smaller numbers of domestic workers, it is interesting to note the travelling of tropes about maids' political unreliability and moral dubiousness into Free Europe's Cold War discourses on dissidence. The newly acquired rights (or privileges, in the eyes of some) of a professional group previously controlled, ignored or made invisible became the measure of the radicalness of transformations in postwar Romania.

It is in this new context that Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția,[578] one of the women marginalized in the Bucharest Sociological School,[579] published in one of the 1957 issues of the Romanian scholarly journal *Revista de folclor* [The Folkore Journal] an article titled "A folk poetess: Veronica Găbudean".[580] The article was based on conversation notes and the contents of two notebooks, with over 1,300 verse lines which Golopenția had collected in 1939 from the nineteen-year-old Găbudean, the maid-of-all-work in the Bucharest house where the sociologist was lodging with a family. The article dwelled on the themes present in Găbudean's work and her creative process.

In letters to neighbors and friends from her Transylvanian village, the literate but orphaned and poor Găbudean sent news (in prose) and wrote her feelings about being orphaned, life as a servant in a master's house and love (in rhyming sentences). From Găbudean's "songs" and narrations, Golopenția found that the woman had migrated to Bucharest from a combination of what Selina Todd has termed "poverty and aspiration".[581] On the one hand, she had become a servant at the age of fourteen because her remaining relatives could no longer support her, her life story thus enforcing the notion that orphan children were channeled

577 Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute, "Modes and Maids: Bucharest Headaches [Electronic Record]," May 14, 1952, HU OSA 300-1-2-19693, Open Society Archive, http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:9430613c-6316-4484-82f1-84bfc3d08d3a.

578 See short biography in Appendix 3.

579 Văcărescu, "Coopter et écarter," 136–137. As mentioned previously, Cristescu-Golopenția complained (privately) that the topic of her research – magical practices – was appropriated by a male colleague who demanded, in a loud personal argument, that she instead turn to topics such as linguistics and philosophy – the former, especially, coded strongly as "feminine" in the interwar period. Cristescu-Golopenția's work on magical practices was therefore not published until a chapter appeared in an edited volume, in 1940. As in Costa-Foru's case, a full monograph of her research on women's magical rites appeared only in 1944. See footnote 87 for details.

580 Ștefania Golopenția, "O poetă populară: Veronica Găbudean [A folk poetess: Veonica Găbudean]," *Revista de folclor* 2, no. 1–2 (1957): 99–122.

581 Selina Todd, "Poverty and Aspiration: Young Women's Entry to Employment in Inter-War England," *Twentieth Century British History* 15, no. 2 (2004): 119–142.

into domestic service. On the other hand, she had come to Bucharest to raise money for her dowry—especially for the fine fabric clothing, "dresses in silk and crêpe-de-chine", that "women around our places" wore for their weddings. She also confessed to have used her savings to buy land in her native village, a place to which she returned each summer during the height of the agricultural work season. In Golopenția's formulation, "[h]er songs fix her economic and social situation. They speak to us about a wage worker who has remained only a seasonal peasant woman, but who hopes to return to her village entering–perhaps–in the fold of middling peasants, so that she may be able to work for herself".[582]

In the young servant woman's poems, the employer is described as stingy about her food and clothing and careless about her unwillingness to work during religious holidays. The ethnographer noted Găbudean's means of countering her employers' perceived lack of humanity, by pointing to the theme of dissimulation in the woman's poems (laughing while one's heart was sad, not letting the master see her sorrow) and the frequently expressed ambition of one day working for herself rather than in strangers' houses.

Golopenția's study built an argument that effected a break with the assumptions of interwar sociologists. Thus, Golopenția stated that the time she had spent with Găbudean had taught her that "certain theoretical beliefs concerning folk literature are false".[583] Among these was the idea that once peasants left their villages, they broke their ties with rural spirituality and its folk-lyrical expression. By analyzing the experiences of Găbudean, a young woman who had left her Transylvanian village five years before, Golopenția noted how even in the city folklore played a social function for the young woman, helping her express her emotions through the folkloric forms of her region. Notably, Găbudean's folk production was interpreted as developing in relation to the quotidian rather than in line with the long durations of village traditions, as conservative Romanian ethnographers had previously assumed. Interestingly, with land collectivization beginning in 1949 and reprised eagerly in 1957,[584] Golopenția's article could not have fit too well within the intellectual setting of the new regime either, considering the emphasis the article placed on land ownership as a key to the peasant woman's sense of self and politics of resilience.

Another life story, an oral history interview recorded in the late 1980s by a sociologist developing an interest in urban history, reveals similar experiences to

582 Golopenția, "O poetă populară," 108.

583 Golopenția, 100–101.

584 Dorin Dobrincu and Constantin Iordachi, *Transforming Peasants, Property and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949–1962* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009).

those of Găbudean. Sociologist Zoltán Rostás interviewed the Hungarian-speaking Vilma Kovács as the latter was representative of the Szekler servants who had been "a common category in the Bucharest of the Interwar".[585] Like Găbudean, Kovács was a Transylvanian woman whose mother had died young. She too crossed into the "Old Kingdom" region of Romania, in Bucharest, to raise money for land in her own village. After serving in Bucharest from 1923 to 1937, during which time she claimed to have refrained from "buying even a brezel" and sent all her money to her village's doctor who bought land for her, Vilma Kovács amassed an enviable peasant fortune in her native village. Unlike Găbudean, Kovács could not speak Romanian at first, and had to rely on a fellow Szekler servant to learn the language. Kovács narrated her employment in her first master's house in the following way:

> Mornings, after I woke up, I went out for bread, I served breakfast, took care of the children, then came the cooking, because there was an old lady in the house too. When she asked me for a plate, I brought a lid. They used to laugh at me. This is how I started to learn [Romanian], alone. And then I spoke. I didn't know after the rule, but I could manage with the household things. I helped around, did the dishes, cleaned took the children out for walks. They would find work for me all the time. In the afternoon the seamstress of the house came round, and after she left I had to cut up the scraps of fabric. [. . .] [Sundays] I did have off. I used to go with the people from the same village, or that other servant man came and we used to go to Carol Park.[586]

Besides her memory of the multiple tasks to be fulfilled and the way in which work was found for her all the time, Kovács also recalled being uneasy with the tactile character of her work. Her first service position in Bucharest was made difficult by the skin condition that affected the entire family she worked with. This meant she not only had to wash sheets frequently but also to touch a sick child often. In an inversion of the trope of the diseased servant, the woman claimed it was the master's family who suffered from a hereditary, contagious venereal disease. Furthermore, in her position as servant she was made privy to her mistress's infidelities and was "made to swear to keep the secret".[587] After leaving and switching several workplaces, Kovács was badly burned while cleaning floors with gasoline, obtained very little medical care and as she was pregnant with her first child, finally returned to her native village.

585 Vilma Kovács, "M-au dat unui bărbat pe care nu-l văzusem niciodată . . . [They married me off to a man I had never seen before . . .]," in *Chipurile orașului–Istorii de viață în București secolul XX [Faces of the city–Life histories in Bucharest in the 20th century]*, ed. Zoltán Rostás (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002), 183.

586 Kovács, 186.

587 Kovács, 187.

Significantly, neither Kovács nor Găbudean expressed much use for politicized solidarities with fellow workers. Both women met with fellow servants from their villages often. In the case of the poetess, attending dances organized in a tavern in Bucharest constituted an occasion to hear and pass on news, a way to remain accountable and respectable in the eyes of her multi-sited community and as Golopenția pointed out, for her to remain steeped in the melodies and lyricism of her region.[588] Vilma Kovács mentioned meeting other servants on Sundays but boasted of never having attended a dance, the cinema or the Hungarian association on Zalomit street that her interviewer brought up.[589] Both women remained connected to their ambitions of rural upward social mobility and concerned about the specter of poverty in their villages, rather than fully invested in their service in Bucharest—a period they narrated as marked by material and emotional self-denial and loss of independence.

In interwar Bucharest, especially during the Great Depression, one of the most widespread but also most precarious occupations was thus essential for the social reproduction of households in the city and less directly, for survival in the countryside. The Romanian government left domestic servants out of most social protection arrangements, while local authorities in Bucharest pathologized and criminalized servant women, assuming a direct and frequent link between domestic service and sex work. Women welfare activists in Bucharest did not confront this set up and at times even helped maintain it (as in the ATF's contribution to controlling rural–urban migration). At the same time, through their involvement in local level indoor and outdoor assistance for young women and girls, these activists (whose stances were shaped by their various engagements in transnational reform networks) did try to modulate the terms according to which recently migrated and orphaned young women helped "maintain the calm" of "our modern households". In other words, servants, sometimes with the intermediation of welfare activists, were key austerity welfare workers in Romania's capital city: their under-regulated, underpaid work contributed to well-being in middle class households and made the absence of work and unemployment relief in Bucharest somewhat more tolerable. As shown in the next chapter, welfare activists had an equally important contribution to defining the role of poor women's unpaid housework, for the benefit of the latter's own families and in the economy of the city.

588 Golopenția, "O poetă populară," 101.

589 Kovács, "M-au dat unui bărbat pe care nu-l văzusem niciodată . . . 186.

Chapter 5
Overwork as Welfare Work: Research on Working Women's Households in the 1930s

During the Great Depression of 1929 to 1932, the few certified social workers active in Bucharest noticed that women overworked to support their families. "Marioara has taught herself her [former] husband's craft so she may ensure her existence; she worked as hard as she could [*din răsputeri*], damaging her health", reads an entry in the social work case file of Marioara I.,[590] introduced in the beginning of this book. In Bucharest, the line separating the working poor from the destitute paupers vanished easily. In the case file, the social worker in charge of Marioara I. noted that because she was ill, unable to work and therefore in increasing debt, Marioara had begged from door to door during the harshest days of the winter before the social worker had become aware of her situation. The "case file", the "meeting diary" part of which is transcribed and appended to this book, illustrates in convincing human detail an instance of overwork coupled with dire need. This was the kind of overwork that SSAS students were trained to observe and had ample opportunity to see in Bucharest.

In writing about the overwork of women like Marioara, SSAS students were writing about the local toll of the kind of informalized, often home-based, income-generating work women in urban settings were engaging in, with little recognition, since the nineteenth century in Romania and elsewhere—work such as seasonal work in factories and workshops, "live-out" domestic service, doing laundry for others, baking for sale, taking in boarders,[591] making mud bricks for a few days on a construction site, or like Marioara, engaging in piece-rate semi-industrial production by sewing in the family's one room. The spread of "contributory social insurance" in the interwar period and the focus of programs like the New Deal on tackling male unemployment further obscured for mainstream public policy the already devalued household as an (over)workplace for many women.[592] In Romania, as elsewhere, with the standard of living plummeting during the economic crisis, and remaining low well after the mid-1930s,[593] women's paid work outside the home, care for children and elderly, combined with badly-paid, informalized,

590 "Anexă: Copia unui cazier." See Annex 1.

591 Boris and Lewis, "Caregiving and Wage-Earning," 81.

592 Boris and Lewis, 81; Hickey, *Hope and Danger in the New South City*, 82.

593 Constantinescu, *Situaţia clasei muncitoare*, 316–317.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111137162-006

home-based work was essential for the subsistence of a growing number of increasingly poor families. Marioara was a different kind of austerity welfare worker than the social assistant who helped her manage the dire situation she was in, but an austerity welfare worker nonetheless.

By the second half of the 1930s, once the crisis abated, in a more conservative context, the issue of women's work came under increased scrutiny across Europe and in Romania specifically.[594] Social workers and social hygienists in Bucharest researched working class women's waged and unwaged work, their living conditions and the state of their families more systematically than before. Both categories of experts posed questions others had asked or were asking across Europe, since the end of the First World War: How did families in Bucharest's poorest neighborhoods live? If more women worked in factories and offices, did this have negative effects on men workers' wage levels and in particular, did this trend affect families' well-being? Would working class families disintegrate under the pressures of capitalism if women did less of the care work required to hold these families together?

Such research on women's work was carried out by women welfare activists as well as by healthcare providers —two distinct yet connected categories of professionals. The former, women welfare activists, studying and working at the Superior School of Social Assistance (SSAS) as social workers, had collected quantitative and qualitative data on women's work since the late 1920s. By 1934, the School's teachers and students did more social research and less direct welfare provision than in the period 1929 to 1932, because they were excluded from municipal welfare provision once suffragist councilwomen with links to the National Peasantist Party were marginalized.[595] The latter, public hygiene doctors and visiting nurses, were involved in public healthcare provision, linked to the international eugenicist movement, and had ties to the government throughout the 1930s. They too collected data for research, through public health inquiries. For example, physician Dr. Gheorghe Banu, who directed a 1937 study on working women, was the founder of the eugenicist *Revista de igienă socială* [Journal for Social Hygiene], had been Undersecretary in the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Protection (MMSOS) in 1930 and 1931.[596] When said study was published, he

594 Susan Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft. Internationale Geschlechterpolitik, IGB-Gewerkschafterinnen und die Arbeiter- und Frauenbewegungen der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2021), 427–64; "Întrunirea funcționarelor de stat [The Gathering of women civil servants]," *Universul*, February 6, 1933, Arcanum Digiteca Online Database.

595 See Chapter 3 in this volume, especially the section on "Social assistance between 1934 and 1938."

596 See short biography in Appendix 3.

was serving as Minister of Health and Social Protection in the antisemitic Octavian Goga government (1937–1938).[597]

Both social workers and hygienists concluded that traditional, "patriarchal" families were destabilized by the crisis, rather than by a growing tendency towards women's emancipation through wage labor. For SSAS women researchers it was clear that although gender relations were indeed changing in cities like Bucharest, most women in low-income neighborhoods did not work for the sake of independence or to escape an existence not tied to their families. Rather, seemingly paradoxically, they worked, whether at home or outside the home, to stabilize what was left of "patriarchal families". SSAS research revealed that men were absenting themselves increasingly frequently from traditional positions as family patriarchs, through family desertion or refusals to formalize partnerships. Women were picking up the burden of providing for low-income families, of single parenthood or of care for elderly family members.

This chapter analyzes urban-setting research on working women's families by social workers and social hygienists and places it in the broader context of 1930s international preoccupation for women's paid work outside the family home and its effects. It highlights how data collected contemporaneously revealed that many women had become main providers for their families because of the recent economic crisis, not because of an alleged or presumed longer-term trend towards the destabilization of gender roles. My analysis underscores how SSAS researchers and even strongly eugenicist physicians, the latter quite reluctantly, admitted the heavy toll of austerity welfare work on women in working class neighborhoods in Bucharest. This heavy toll is very clear when data they present is read partly "against the grain" of its intentions. At the end, I discuss in the chapter how the connection between research and social assistance provision could have negative outcomes for the researched.

Women's work in and outside the home: Public debates and the 1930s conservative turn

In discussions on interwar sociology and medical research in Romania, inquiry into urban women's work and its social and sanitary toll for families and domestic life has not been identified as a strong, distinctive trend.[598] However, at least

597 Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization*, 198, 206; Turda, "Romania: Overview," 291. See entry in Biographies section in this volume.

598 In path-breaking research, Eliza-Theodora Văcărescu has made visible and analyzed publications by women sociologists associated with the interwar "Bucharest sociological school" led

four studies drew on data collected in Bucharest neighborhoods by welfare activists, especially from people receiving aid through public social assistance programs such as emergency relief for the unemployed or support through the Demonstration Center for the Assistance of the Family the SSAS ran in the Tei neighborhood in Sector 1 (Yellow).[599] In addition, at least two "sanitary inquiries" [*anchete sanitare*] were carried out by health professionals, including by visiting nurses focusing on preventative health, in similar neighborhoods, in 1932 and 1937.[600]

Romanian social and public health professionals' research on women's employment reflected international trends as well as developments in national labor politics. Since the early nineteenth century, in Europe, conservatives, many self-identified "moderates", and some unions feared the negative effects on labour markets and households if masses of women joined industry in peace time.[601] Among others, in the 1920s, pioneering progressive social research on the "housing question" carried out in England implicitly linked the quality of working class women's household work to the entire family's level of well-being.[602] By the late 1930s, in Germany and Italy, fascist governments had fully appropriated and radicalized older takes on the negative effects of women's work outside the home. Despite this rhetoric, the Italian fascist state "promoted the formation of a largely female submerged economy of unprotected, underemployed, and ill-paid home

by Dimitrie Gusti (discussed in this book's Chapter 2). Văcărescu mentions women's research in urban settings but focuses on the larger scale, better funded and more prestigious research in rural areas in which some of these women were involved and where they were actively marginalized. Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu, "Studiu introductiv – Femei în cercetarea sociologică din România interbelică [Introductory study – Women in sociological research in interwar Romania]," in *"Personajele acestea de a doua mână". Din publicațiile membrelor Școlii sociologice de la București* (Bucharest: Eikon, 2018), 9–72; Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu, "Coopter et écarter. Les Femmes dans la recherche sociologique et l'intervention sociale dans la Roumanie de l'entre-deux-guerres," *Les Etudes Sociales*, no. 1 (2011): 109–142.

599 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor"; Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei"; Botez, "Réponse au questionnaire du BIT"; Manuilă, "Pauperismul şi criza familială."

600 Ștefania Negrescu, "Date și concluzii din ancheta internațională asupra cauzelor mortalității infantile la copiii născuți vii, între 0–1 an, precum și asupra mortalității în circumscripția medicală X (periferică) din București pe anul 1931 [Data and conclusions from the international inquiry into the causes of infantile mortality among children born alive, 0–1 years of age, as well as mortality in the X (peripheral) medical district of Bucharest for the year 1931]," *Revista de igienă socială* 2, no. 3 (1932): 279–90; Gheorghe Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation de la femme ouvrière en Roumanie," *Revista de igienă socială*, 1937, 351–389.

601 Sandra Salin, *Women and Trade Unions in France* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 99; Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, 215; Sarah Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), 140–143.

602 Riley, *Am I That Name?*, 57.

workers".[603] Meanwhile, in the Soviet Union, women's wage work was encouraged and the number of women in industry grew rapidly.[604]

In Romania, women's and children's working conditions and the impact of women's wage work on families gained brief public attention in 1928. From labor activists,[605] from labor inspection reports, and as a matter of common knowledge,[606] politicians knew that working conditions for women working in industry were bad. But workplace health and safety issues were not a matter of public discussion. However, in 1928, politicians spoke more about women's working conditions than before, because the International Labor Office had begun to insist on "the urgency of passing legislation in conformity with these [already ratified] conventions".[607] Through the 1928 omnibus "Law for the Protection of Minors' and Women's Work and the Duration of the Work Day" (Law 85/13 April 1928),[608] the Parliament of Romania belatedly translated into national law the ILO conventions on the eight-hour work day (C001), maternity leave (C003), the ban on women's night work in industry (C004), minimum age for employment in industry (C005), and the limiting of "young persons'" nighttime work (C006).[609]

Labor protection legislation (especially when it covered adults) was not a genuine political priority. During the 1928 parliamentary debate on the proposed

603 Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 168.

604 For the Soviet experience, see Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

605 Ghiț, "The Treacherous Trade Unionist."

606 Constantinescu, *Situația clasei muncitoare*, 191–192.

607 International Labor Organization, "Report of the Committee of Experts Appointed to Examine the Annual Reports Made under Article 408 of the Treaty of Peace of Versailles," Report of the Director Presented to the Conference (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 1927), 406, http://www.ilo.org/public/libdoc/ilo/P/09605/09605(1927-10).pdf; Setlacec, "Din activitatea Ministerului Muncii în raport cu Biuroul Internațional al Muncii," 104–108.

608 Parliament of Romania, "Lege pentru ocrotirea muncii minorilor și femeilor și durata muncii [Law for the protection of minors' and women's work and for the duration of the workday]," Monitorul Oficial 85/13 April 1928.

609 International Labor Organization, "Convention Limiting the Hours of Work in Industrial Undertakings to Eight in the Day and Forty-Eight in the Week," C001 – Hours of Work (Industry) Convention § (1919); International Labour Organization, "Convention Concerning the Employment of Women before and after Childbirth," – Convention § (1919); International Labor Organization, "Night Work (Women) Convention, 1919 (No. 4)," – Work (Women) Convention § (1919), Normlex; International Labor Organization, "Convention Fixing the Minimum Age for Admission of Children to Industrial Employment," – Age (Industry) Convention § (1921); International Labor Organization, "Convention Concerning the Night Work of Young Persons Employed in Industry," – of Young Persons (Industry) Convention § (1921).

law, National Liberal Party politicians espoused a convenient amount of concern for the issue of bad employment conditions for women in industry.[610] The MP introducing the bill argued that "modern industrialization" had "called into the field of work [. . .] the woman and the child". The development could be dangerous for "the health and vigor of the population" and for "maintaining and consolidating the family home" in case the phenomenon took too great proportions ("in the case when abuses become habit"). He concluded that "the woman, forced to join the field of labor must not be completely taken away from the home and the family, where she still has great obligations to fulfill".[611] The most important audience for the Exposition of Reasons justifying the bill were employers and their associations, not workers and their handful of representatives in Parliament.[612] The Exposition argued that the act was by no means meant to ignore the needs of the national economy and was not blind to the need to "intimately adapt [ILO-inspired rules] to our social realities." It congratulated employers' associations for their support for protective legislation (if not the eight-hour workday).[613]

Notably, in 1928, on the July day when the law was voted, the debates in the plenary of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies did not focus on adult women workers or their employers but on implications for local industry of the section of the Law which regulated the work of minors. The articles dealing with minors' work created concerns because it was feared that the provisions could prove extremely disruptive for the important sector of small craft industry, which relied heavily on exploiting the labor of apprenticed children.[614]

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610 Labor protection legislation covering only women had been the object of tense debates in the British and German parliaments in the nineteenth century, in Denmark or Greece in the beginning of the twentieth. See Sonya O. Rose, "'From Behind the Women's Petticoats': The English Factory Act of 1874 as a Cultural Production," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 4, no. 1 (1991): 32–51; Efi Avdela, "'To the Most Weak and Needy': Women's Protective Labor Legislation in Greece," in *Protecting Women – Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia* (Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 290–317.

611 Parliament of Romania, "Legea pentru ocrotirea muncii minorilor și femeilor și durata muncii [Law for the protection of minors' and women's work and for the duration of the workday]," *Buletinul muncii, cooperatiei și asigurarilor sociale* 9, no. 3 (1928): 93.

612 The representation of socialist and social-democratic parties in the Romanian Parliament decreased steadily, from a high of 19 Socialist Party [Lower Chamber] Deputies (and three Senators) in 1921, to a spell without left-wing MPs for the following seven years, to between seven and nine Social Democratic MPs from 1928 to 1937. Scurtu et al., *Enciclopedia de istorie a României [The Encyclopedia of Romanian history]*, 65–67.

613 Parliament of Romania, "Legea pentru ocrotirea muncii minorilor și femeilor și durata muncii [Law for the protection of minors' and women's work and for the duration of the workday]," 94.

614 Parliament of Romania, 97.

In the years after the 1928 Law passed, women-specific labor protection legislation was rarely enforced. Working long hours, being laid off because of pregnancy, lack of rest, night work in industrial establishments remained part of the quotidian experience of paid work for growing numbers of women employed in factories, offices, and workshops. Irregularities were so frequent they surprised no one. "The laws for the protection of women workers exist only on paper" social democratic women reported dryly in a 1937 issue of the *Women's Supplement* to the *International Information* monthly published by the Labor and Socialist International.[615]

Despite limited effects in factories and workshops, the 1928 law did direct the attention of local social reformers to the experiences of women working in industry. Before 1928, working conditions for women workers and gender-specific labor protection laws were a subject of occasional discussion among the key social reformers of the 1920s, but not a central concern. In 1926 and 1927, the "protection of women and children" had been discussed in meetings and conferences of the Section for Feminine Studies.[616] However, "protection" referred only to the social assistance of marginalized categories (such as young mothers with illegitimate children) rather than employment. A PhD thesis published in 1927 and claiming to focus on "The Protection of Working Women and Children" largely lacked content to match its title; it mostly reviewed social insurance legislation affecting working men.[617]

In the 1910s, socialist activists such as Ecaterina Arbore had written compellingly about poor labor conditions for working women in large and small industrial establishments, as well as in home industries, and called for better protection.[618] After the First World War and with Arbore in revolutionary Russia,[619] the socialists' split into communist and social democratic groups, and governments' unease towards the left, abuses in industries employing mostly women continued

615 "Letter from Roumania," *International Information—Women's Supplement* 14, no. 4 (May 1937): 34.

616 Calypso Botez, "Dare de seamă a Secției de Studii Feminine [Report of the Section for Feminine Studies]," *Arhiva pentru știință și reformă socială* 6, no. 3–4 (1927): 525–526. See discussion in chapter 2.

617 Emil Bălteanu, *Ocrotirea femeilor și copiilor muncitori [The protection of working women and children]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Antonescu, 1927).

618 Ecaterina Arbore, *Femeia în lupta pentru emancipare [Woman in the fight for emancipation]* (Bucharest: Biblioteca Socialistă, 1911).

619 Alexandra Ghiț, "Biography and Context – Ecaterina Arbore: The Working Woman in the Struggle Towards Emancipation," in *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights. East Central Europe, Second Half of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Zsófia Lóránd et al. (Budapest and Vienna: CEU Press, 2024), 23–34.

to be chronicled in the labor press, but few of those reports were as intellectually compelling or as original as Arbore's publications. Perhaps as a result, they were not circulated widely enough to shape the opinion of elites interested in social reform, who tended to be anticommunist. The labor question reached the Bucharest social reform milieu rather via non-socialist national and international networks.

After the Law for the Protection of Minors' and Women's Work passed, in a meeting of the Section for Feminine Studies, teacher Ecaterina Cerkez (an associate of Alexandrina Cantacuzino) lectured about working women in both urban and rural environments.[620] The ominous title of the lecture, "Woman's work and its consequences for family and society", is deceptive.[621] The lecture (later published by Cerkez in a separate volume) provided at least twenty validly constructed arguments about the categorically positive effects of women's wage work for women themselves, their families and society at large.

The arguments provided by Cerkez read like rebuttals of frequently expressed concerns about women's work outside the home. She argued that women's paid employment was beneficial for marriages and all interactions between women and men, pointing out that statistics showed an increase in the number of marriages involving an employed woman; that families where both spouses worked were no less cohesive than male-breadwinner families; that men were not actually opposed to women working, despite occasional complaints; that men had more respect for women who did wage work; that in case of a family conflict concerning wage work, women would be the ones giving up their jobs. Cerkez also invoked economic necessity: women could not marry without dowries, but as dowries could no longer be offered by families, young women were forced to work; often, it was men who pushed women towards employment, rather than women choosing employment as a selfish act. And she pointed to economic convenience or societal benefits: some employers did say women were slower workers yet others claimed the opposite. She argued that women belonged in politics as well—international experience had shown women created excellent legislation; women were thus qualified for positions of great responsibility and more women had to be allowed to demonstrate their abilities long-term. Finally, she insisted that mothers' wage work was good for children (kindergarten prepared them better for adult life, working mothers never neglected their children, work-

620 See entry in this volume's Biographies section. Caterina Cerkez, "Section Française. Roumanie," *International Women's News*, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs, 23, no. 4 (1929): 62; Caterina Cerkez, "Législation industrielle pour les femmes–Roumanie," *International Women's News*, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs, 29, no. 6 (1935): 48–49.

621 Cerkez, "Munca femeii și consecințele ei."

ing women cherished family life and housework more), had clear health benefits (more time spent out of doors), and was not going to have a negative impact on workplace morality—unless men behaved in unserious ways.

Although employing the general term "women", Cerkez's lecture rebutted mostly arguments against (aspiring) middle-class, city women's entering white collar work. At the same time, the published lecture is striking, displaying the welfare activist's understanding that women's experience of wage work was shaped by class. Cerkez demonstrated attention and appreciation for the work of women employed in all sectors, advocating for better social protection for factory women, land ownership for peasant women, and an end to the association of peasant and working-class women with promiscuity or unstable common law marriages.

Abroad, in 1931, the ILO Committee on Industrial Hygiene, dealing with how labor conditions affected workers' health, suggested it would begin to inquire into "the employment of married women".[622] Social democratic women and feminists of most political nuances wanted to make sure that the ILO and the League of Nations upheld, rather than began to condemn or discourage, women's work outside the household. At the same time, non-socialist "legal equality" feminists (who wanted laws that were formulated in strictly non-gendered ways) were strongly lobbying the ILO and the League to denounce women-specific labor laws. By contrast, most women linked to labor movements from continental Europe, be they social democratic or Catholic, remained strongly in favor of this type of measures (sometimes referred to in scholarship as "gendered protective labor legislation").[623]

In this political context, with the economic crisis as background, the ILO collected and compiled internationally comparable information and statistics on women's employment. A new Correspondence Committee on Women's Work of the International Labor Office (the Office), the technical and advisory body of the ILO, and its main employee (officer), Marguerite Thibert, did much of this work. The modestly funded Correspondence Committee was created in 1932, at the insis-

622 Françoise Thébaud, "Difficult Inroads, Unexpected Results: The Correspondence Committee on Women's Work in the 1930s," in *Women's ILO: Transnational Networks, Global Labour Standards, and Gender Equity, 1919 to Present*, eds. Eileen Boris, Dorothea Hoehtker, and Susan Zimmermann (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 56.

623 Susan Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft. Internationale Geschlechterpolitik, IGB-Gewerkschafterinnen und die Arbeiter- und Frauenbewegungen der Zwischenkriegszeit* (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2021), 347–426; Ulla Wikander, "Some Kept the Flag of Feminist Demands Waving :Debates at International Congresses on Protecting Women Workers," in *Protecting Women-Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

tence of representatives of women workers and feminist organizations, and worked from offices in Geneva.[624] Through its research and diplomacy, the Correspondence Committee positioned the Office and thus the ILO in favor of women's employment and women-specific labor protection measures, including the increasingly contested but ILO-supported ban on women's night work.[625]

In 1935, the International Labor Organization included considerations of working women's familial obligations in planned large-scale research on women's work. That year, the League of Nations required the ILO to investigate "the question of equality under labor legislation" as well as "possible gender-specific discrimination in the world of work".[626] The International Labor Office, through its Correspondence Committee on Women's Work, initiated a comprehensive international inquiry whose topics of interest "significantly transgressed the inherited scope of interest prevailing in the Office".[627] Questionnaires sent out by Thibert and her team to experts in various ILO-member countries included not only questions about women's employment, unemployment, gendered wage differentials and vocational training but also about "the family circumstances of gainfully employed women and their responsibility if any for dependents".[628]

Because urban social research in Bucharest had strong links with Progressive era social reform institutions from the USA and not least with some eugenicists, the survey research on women's wage work which multiplied in Romania's capital in the 1930s tended to mirror the concerns expressed by actors in these international networks about the growing trend in women's wage work. At the same time, the ILO's push for transnational social research on women's work and familial responsibilities contributed to researchers recognizing that women workers in Bucharest carried a heavy work burden during the economic crisis.

624 Thébaud, "Difficult Inroads," 56.

625 Marguerite Thibert, "The Economic Depression and the Employment of Women: I Special Article (Part I)," *International Labour Review* 27, no. 4 (1933): 443–70; Marguerite Thibert, "The Economic Depression and the Employment of Woman: II Special Article (Part II)," *International Labour Review* 27, no. 5 (1933): 620–630; Susan Zimmermann, "Equality of Women's Economic Status? A Major Bone of Contention in the International Gender Politics Emerging During the Interwar Period," *The International History Review* 41, no. 1 (2018): 18.

626 Zimmermann, "Equality of Women's Economic Status?," 18.

627 Zimmermann, 18.

628 Zimmermann, 18.

Survey-makers' views on women's wage work and role in social reproduction

In the 1930s, researchers associated with the Romanian eugenicist movement interpreted data gathered through social and especially through sanitary investigations beginning from quite rigid assumptions concerning the historical function of the family and women's role within it.[629] By contrast, researchers trained by the Superior School of Social Assistance and associates of the Section for Feminine Studies of the Romanian Social Institute produced studies with more diverse interpretations of women's social roles and contributions, even if relying on similar data.

Both social workers and medical professionals were critical of "the disorganization of the family" and most would have preferred women did not work outside the home. Social workers trained at the SSAS thought men needed to take more responsibility for families and that women workers were making do by exploiting themselves in economic crisis. Hygienist doctors, especially the influential Banu, admitted economic and working conditions were bad, but advocated a return to a "natural order" in which women were not heavily involved in public life, be it through involvement in the civil service or through work in factories.

In the concluding part of "Études concernant la situation de la femme ouvrière en Roumanie", a 1937 study on the social and medical situation of 145 workers in Bucharest, Dr. Gheorghe Banu and his co-authors claimed that women's presence in the domestic space was crucial for the survival of Romanians as an ethnic group. According to them, during the Romanian people's "heroic phase", marked by war and economic oppression by foreign rulers and local boyars, before the constitution of the independent Romanian state, women helped preserve ethnic identity.[630] By contrast, they opined, women "installing themselves in government" was evidence of civilizational decline.[631]

Like fascists and conservatives across Europe at the time, Banu wanted the state to do more about keeping women in the home. For working women, adequate labor protection and welfare legislation already existed in Romania, the study claimed. A "genuine social politics, in the framework of social hygiene" was now needed. According to the authors, such politics was meant to restore the

629 Maria Bucur, "Mișcarea eugenistă și rolurile de gen [The Eugenicist movement and gender roles]," in *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești*, ed. Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002), 107–142.

630 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 385.

631 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 385.

working woman to her key moral and biological role in the family.[632] By proposing this version of a "genuine social politics", Banu and his co-authors did not explicitly call for formally discouraging women's wage work. However, the formulation does suggest advocacy for a shift of attention from labor conditions to the quality and intensity of what Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas termed "intimacy work" within families.[633]

Social work students from the SSAS had a less absolute, albeit still mostly critical, take on the issue of women's work. In an insightful and well-researched 1932 study on social assistance in Cernăuți, Bukovina (today Chernivtsi, in Ukraine), SSAS student Rodica Luția summed up the long international disputes for and against women's work:

> It is the moment to mention a problem that is being discussed for several decades: is it advisable for the woman to work outside the home? Those who answer *no* are confronted with the cases where the woman is forced to support herself together with her children, whereas those who answer *yes* are confronted with the reality of neglected homes due to fatigue and lack of time of professional mothers.[634]

In a 1935 study on assistance in the Tei neighborhood in Bucharest, Luția's colleague, Natalia Popoviciu (sometimes signing as Natalia Raisky) faulted feminism for women's "extreme individualization." Yet she conceded that "the fact of women's waged work is now a general phenomenon, confirmed by years of struggle for its normalization".[635]

Dr. Gheorghe Banu had taught at the Superior School. However, SSAS student's research on women's work was influenced by the social knowledge making practices of the American Charity Organization Society (COS). Whereas Bucur claims that the social work movement from Romania was integrated into the Romanian eugenicist movement, and espoused conservative takes on gender roles and gender relations,[636] the claim is not fully borne out when the research that social workers and eugenicists produced is analyzed more closely. In 1930, when Banu taught at the Superior School, so did a priest, a statistician, and a philosopher involved in the local social reform milieu. However, the handful of course hours on "social pathology" (two hours in Semester I) or "social hygiene" (one hour in Semester III) Banu would have taught students each semester were

632 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 389.
633 Boris and Salazar Parreñas, "Introduction."
634 Luția, "Raportul dintre problemele de muncă și problemele de dependența familiei [The connection between work problems and family dependence issues]," 670.
635 Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei," 653.
636 Bucur, "Mișcarea eugenistă și rolurile de gen [The Eugenicist movement and gender roles]," 129–131.

far less influential than the tens of hours of "practical work" for "family assistance" (ten to twety hours in Semesters I–IV) or "the hospital social service" (five hours in Semester IV) during which students applied "constructive social assistance" methods developed by the COS in Baltimore.[637] In surveys and case files, women welfare activists underscored the burden of subsistence work on working women who were doing the best they could for their families. By comparison, research by explicitly eugenicist medical professionals tended to place greater blame on women's failures.

Taken together, the social surveys of the 1930s argued that the working-class family was undergoing quantitative decline and deterioration. In 1932, SSAS director Veturia Manuilă argued that the small number of children born in the families of the unemployed men she assisted in Sector 1 (Yellow) represented a "phenomenon contrary to the Romanian type of the family with many children".[638] In 1935, Natalia Popoviciu concluded from her social survey in the Tei neighborhood of Bucharest that the area was "traversing a muddled period of transformation of the patriarchal family". She categorized the one hundred families she studied as "strictly patriarchal", "disorganized", and "completely disorganized".[639]

Along and against the grain of surveys: "[D]isorganized families", overwork, and their causes

The most frequently noted sign that the working-class family was becoming "disorganized" was the perceived growth of cohabitation without marriage. The 1937 study by Banu et al. mentions that of the one hundred working women's families included in their social and sanitary survey, thirty-five lived together with partners in "illegitimate marriages".[640] These "illegitimate marriages" were not associated with the frequent and functional common-law partnerships of rural areas, as they had been in the Cerkez lecture a decade before.[641] Rather, in 1937, Banu's research considered cohabitation as "promiscuous". Importantly, "promiscuity" connoted concrete domestic practices not an abstract relationship to the law:

637 "Programul didactic al Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială [The Teaching schedule of the Superior School of Social Assistance]," *Asistența socială - Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"* I, no. 2 (1930): 88–90.

638 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 443.

639 Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei," 653. The author of the text is listed first as "Natașa Dr. Popoviciu" (p. 653) then as "Natalia Dr. Popoviciu" (p. 663).

640 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 369.

641 Cerkez, "Munca femeii și consecințele ei."

other noted instances of "promiscuity" were parents' and children's habitation of the same single room or several persons' sharing one bed.

More moderately, SSAS student Popoviciu affirmed that young working women, especially if they had been born in the city and had learned a craft, were part of a generation transitioning away from forms of familial organization dominated by a male patriarch: "The ease with which these women take hold of their fate is remarkable: they get married easily and they break their marriage just as easily; they are not tied to it, they know they can be freed at the first inconvenience, because they would not die of hunger without the support of the man".[642] She also described the attitude of older women from the Tei neighborhood as unfree from patriarchal mentalities, despite long-term waged work:

> A day laborer, a maid, even a seamstress, who has been working for some ten years and is in fact the head of the family, will have a strictly patriarchal conception concerning family life. For her, her man's authority is an indisputable fact, planted through education and the example of her parents' family, religious and social tradition and through an unconscious admission of woman's inferiority.[643]

Popoviciu thus noticed that traditional forms of familial organization were subordinating women. She also provided evidence that things were not changing quite as urgently as alarmist rhetoric suggested. For example, she mentioned that the older generation of women often had as their sole aspiration to be allowed to administer the finances of their households—suggesting that despite their wage earning, allocative decisions within the family economy were often taken by men. This maintenance of the status quo in women's attitudes and daily life did not prevent Popoviciu from arguing that deviation from the norm of the patriarchal family led to moral societal decline.

The quality and propriety of working women's marriages were the object of the eugenicist researchers' detailed attention. The "Analytical Exposition of Observations" in the Banu and co-authors' survey consisted of schematic portraits of interviewed women:

> Nicolina C. Age 29. Lives in common law marriage (partner has a minimal, inconsistent income); weaver works in "Bumbacul [The Cotton]" factory on Iancului Road, 90; hours of work: 8, without breaks; works standing up; wages 40 Lei per day; lodgings = 1 room, 400 Lei rent per month; one child (one year old), cared for by a stranger; good conjugal atmosphere.[644]

642 Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei," 660.

643 Popoviciu, 660.

644 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 362. Anonymized surnames in the original.

> Ruzina B. Not married, maid. Rest period before giving birth: one hour. 10 pregnancies, 3 births. Duration of labor before birthing = 5 hours; series of normal pregnancies; kilograms of the newborn=3800 gr.; double overwork [*double surmenage*]= homework + pregnancies; gave birth to term; 7 self-induced abortions; nurses her child herself; children healthy; supervised by the mother.[645]

Most portraits contained a categorization of a woman's marriage, using one of the following labels: "perfect conjugal harmony", "conjugal harmony", "good relations among spouses", "profound conjugal disharmony". The latter category was usually accompanied by brief remarks on the causes: "alcoholism and husbands' infidelity", "constant fighting among cohabitating (alt. common law) partners, promiscuity, alcoholism".[646] Domestic violence was noted with greater attention still: "profound conjugal disharmony (live-in boyfriend is lazy, alcoholic, mistreats members of the family)"; "woman is completely unhappy in conjugal life (live-in boyfriend [*concubinul*] is lazy, alcoholic, and abuses her)".[647]

SSAS survey research problematized men's behavior to a far greater degree than the Banu survey. Manuilă ascribed men's behavior to the "demoralization" caused by economic crisis, attendant unemployment, and the consequent inability of an assumed breadwinner to provide for his family.[648] In a 1939 study reviewing the social assistance case files of 765 "pauperized" families (2,782 persons) assisted in previous years by the Tei Demonstration Center for the Assistance of the Family and the Central Bureau for Social Assistance of the city of Bucharest, Manuilă noted a high number of partners cohabitating without formal marriage. She pointed out that rather than women seeking men to support them—as, she believed, had been the case before the economic crisis—"we can now find men who come to live in with women who have a salary or a profession which earns well. In these cases, it is the woman who refuses to marry the man, because she does not want to keep on supporting him all her life".[649]

645 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 375.

646 Banu et al., 359.

647 Banu et al., 360. The sole term "concubinul" (approximately translated as "male concubine") was used to denote a male partner in a longer-term not formalized relationship. The institution of "common law marriage" was not part of Romanian legal practice. The "concubinage" concept stemmed from French legal practice. On the French legal approach, see Jenny Gesley, "Concubinage and the Law in France," Library of Congress, September 20, 2018, https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2018/09/concubinage-and-the-law-in-france/.

648 Manuilă, "Pauperismul şi criza familială."

649 Manuilă, "Pauperismul şi criza familială."

SSAS surveys conducted in 1932 among unemployed men assisted in Sector 1 (Yellow) revealed some of the reasons men offered for avoiding formalized marriages:

> For 470 marriages we have 118 common law ones, which makes them 25%. More than half of these illegitimate marriages do not last more than 3–4 years. Asked if they do not consent to having their marriages legitimized, especially where there are children, they almost always give the same answer: They are afraid of responsibility, these are hard times, they do not comprehend to make a commitment, when they do not know what tomorrow brings.[650]

In providing such reasons, the unemployed men assisted by the municipality's Social Assistance Office in 1932, most of whom were petty clerks and craftsmen, affirmed the primacy of economic factors in creating familial strategies (or postponing to create them). Unfortunately, in the context of high unemployment unalleviated by unemployment insurance or many other forms of relief,[651] such reluctance to commit fully shifted the weight of families' or dependents' social reproduction onto adult women (usually wives and mothers).

In her 1939 study, Manuilă was careful to dispel the notion that common law partnerships could have genuine advantages for women. After mentioning the case of a seamstress who preferred to take in a different lover every year, the researcher emphasized that in fact, cohabitation [*instituția concubinajului*] "creates an incomparably more difficult and unfavorable situation for women than for men".[652] This was because if the men deserted the family, the children would remain in the care of the mother, without the men "feeling the slightest material and moral obligation towards the children".[653] More seriously, women's fear of being left to care for children on their own greatly enhanced their workload and their subordination: "The lovers keep terrorizing their women that they are going to leave them, exploiting them in an inhuman way. The women do any kind of work, are forced to do wage work and keep house for fear of being deserted".[654]

The extent to which women did end up taking over the care for other family members was clearly revealed by a 1937 survey on income levels and responsibility for dependents among 130 women working in factories and as hairdressers and manicurists in Bucharest.[655] The results of this study, conducted by the SSAS under Manuilă's leadership, were included in the reply provided by Botez to the

650 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 442.
651 See Chapter 1 of this book; Ghiț, "Romania: Serving Fewer by Design", 210–213.
652 Manuilă, "Pauperismul şi criza familială."
653 Manuilă, "Pauperismul şi criza familială."
654 Manuilă, "Pauperismul şi criza familială."
655 Botez, "Réponse au questionnaire du BIT."

questionnaire drawn up by the International Labor Office's Correspondence Committee on Women's Work. The survey showed that among the 130 women, the largest group was women deserted by husbands (thirty-seven), followed by women who were married (thirty-four), widowed (twenty-two) or divorced (eight). Most of the women's income came exclusively from their profession (107), but a number also did handicraft for sale on the side (twenty-one). From their work, seventy-six women supported their "personal families", twenty-one supported their parents, another twenty-one "supported their children and their parents" and only twelve women kept their salaries for themselves.[656]

After receiving Botez's report, a surprised Marguerite Thibert wrote to request more information. She politely asked Botez and Manuilă to provide more information about the sampling method used in the inquiry whose results they had detailed in their response to the International Labor Office. The researcher excused herself for further importuning the corresponding member for Romania but explained that "the results of the investigation you have shared bring such a striking example of heavy familial responsibilities born by women workers that it appears to me particularly interesting to be able to bring attention to such a result by displaying it with all the desirable level of precision".[657]

Participation in the International Labor Office inquiry directed the SSAS towards a fuller, quantifiable assessment of the contribution of women's wages to the maintenance of family members that included not only children, but also parents or (not fully discernible in the report for Thibert) unemployed partners. Before 1937, SSAS surveys considered working-class women with more empathy and concern than they did men, while still questioning working-class women's ability (not just their availability), to properly care for their children. For example, in 1935, before the SSAS's stronger association with the ILO's Correspondence Committee, Popoviciu's survey described the general condition of the working-class family as emotionally damaged, especially through the loss of "sentimental ties" between mother and child.[658] Also, according to her "the typical house of the working woman presents a disorganized household", which did not fulfill the requirements of the "intimate, pleasant, homely [*casnic*] spirit".[659]

Despite pointing frequently to inadequate care of children, both social workers' and eugenicist medical professionals' surveys did document the diversity of methods through which women ensured the care or at least the surveillance of their children. In the Banu study of more than 100 women working outside the

656 Botez, "Réponse au questionnaire du BIT," 300.
657 Botez, 302.
658 Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei," 655.
659 Popoviciu, 655.

home, children were supervised "by the mother (so long as she lives close to the factory)" (five cases); by the father (four cases); by grandparents (twenty-six cases), by other members of the family (three cases); by "strangers" (twenty-four cases).[660] More than a third of children remained unsupervised, joining the bands of children roaming around the streets of Bucharest and whom Natalia Popoviciu considered likely to become "thieves, delinquents and prostitutes".[661]

An explanation for the great number of apparently unsupervised children can be found in the cost of care: 71 percent of those who cared for the children of women surveyed by Banu's team received some form of payment for the service.[662] The high percentage indicates that even relatives were paid in one way or the other for their work. Like the cases of working-class families from the English and French settings studied by Louise Tilly and Joan W. Scott, even in economic crises, childcare work continued to be performed by women (be they mothers, wives, grandmothers or neighbors), despite the breakdown of the male-provider-model caused by men's unemployment.[663]

All the surveys conducted in the 1930s recognized that most women worked because they had been pushed by dire economic need. SSAS student Rodica Luția identified through her survey of over 700 families assisted in the northeastern Romanian city of Cernăuți that the main characteristic of women's paid work in what Tilly and Scott later termed the "family wage economy":

> When the woman feels that her family can support itself without her working, she will stop work only to recommence when it is again necessary. So that the woman, from a professional point of view, is content to be the family's reserve army of labor, who gives help only in the case of great need. This work performed only in need and without it being part of any craft, is an inferior and badly paid work.[664]

The function of women as "reserve army of labor" for their families is typical for laboring families from the end of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century. Women focused on household work due to its labor-intensive and time-consuming character. As shown by Ellen Ross with reference to London working class communities from around the same period, the way in which the

660 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 368.

661 Natalia Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei," 655.

662 Banu et al., 368.

663 Louise A. Tilly and Joan W. Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1987).

664 Luția, "Raportul dintre problemele de muncă și problemele de dependența familiei [The connection between work problems and family dependence issues]," 669.

mother in a family managed to administer the extremely limited resources she had at her disposal could save or push into destitution the entire family.[665] Women's employment in industrial settings, which had long workdays, prevented them from juggling household tasks and paid work due to industrial discipline and paid half a man's wages regardless of the type of labor, was thus by no means an economically rational let alone otherwise desirable choice if there were any able men or teenagers in the family.[666]

If women worked frequently in Bucharest, to certain researchers' dismay, it was because the survival of families in the city depended on women's employment outside the home. SSAS researcher Natalia Popoviciu mentioned that "for [the older generation of women], work was not a determinate purpose in itself" but that divorce, widowhood or illness of a partner forced them to become heads of families, a situation they saw as a "painful necessity".[667]

Working class women's waged work increased because acute poverty had become frequent, at least in Bucharest, already from the middle of the 1920s.[668] In 1937, a year of apparent redress for the world economy, living standards for Bucharest families who depended on the labor market had not considerably improved. As the Banu survey noted, the wage level for the main employed person in a family was extremely low and work in industrial establishments had maintained a seasonal character, with long periods of unemployment due to a lack of orders for the factory or workshop. The Banu survey argued that women in poor families more often had paid work than men because "their great professional adaptability" and "the lower expectations regarding wages" guaranteed them employment throughout the year.[669] And indeed, as opposed to 10 percent of surveyed men, none of the surveyed women reported to have been entirely workless during the previous year. This suggests women participated more frequently in occasional, unskilled work. In terms of earnings, 46 of the 100 women surveyed in the Banu study gained between 30 and 40 Lei per day, as opposed to only 19 of the men. Despite the Banu study's explanation that women were simply more adaptable, the concentration of women in work considered to be unskilled and in low-paying positions indicates not as much adaptability as the lack of any other choice but for anyone in the household to accept even the lowest wages available. As indicated by Botez in her report to the International Labor Office, wage differ-

665 Ross, *Love and Toil*, 22, 44.
666 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work, and Family*, 199.
667 Natalia Popoviciu, "Munca femeii și repercusiunile ei asupra familiei," 660.
668 Manuilă, "Principii de organizarea ajutorării șomeourilor," 445.
669 Moisuc, "Unele date noi"; Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 371.

entials of at least 50 percent between women and men were the norm in most sectors.[670] Because of the economic crisis and in its aftermath, women (especially the poorest ones) worked more but obtained less income for families than before.

The 1937 study by Banu and his coauthors was prepared for the second edition of a conference called "La Mère au Foyer–Ouvrière de Progrès Humain", organized in Paris by European collaborators of the American Charity Organization Society (COS).[671] Conference organizers required participants to "collect the experience and opinions of the social and family casework movement in [their] country".[672] For still unclear reasons, Romania was represented by Banu, rather than by anyone from the SSAS. The Banu survey, conducted for the conference, contextualized for the public of the "Mere au Foyer", the seriousness of the situation for working-class families:

> It is to be remembered than in more than half of these cases, the sum available for each person in the working-class household is derisory (5 Lei up to maximum 20 Lei). [. . .] It is self-understood that with such material resources it is impossible to ensure the existence of the family, no matter how low the living standards of this category.[673]

Also,

> [e]conomic life is, without discussion, at the root of the majority of these deficiencies, both individual and familial, of the woman who works outside the home. It appears, according to all evidences (and without having at all the intention to exaggerate—as much as possible—the aspects of the real situation) that in our country the labor force is being exploited by the employers.[674]

Thus, without sympathy for pro-labor arguments, the social and sanitary survey presented in Paris by the eugenicist Banu recognized, forced by evidence, that the realities of waged labor in Romania were constraining men and women workers' and their families' choices to a very high degree.

670 Botez, "Réponse au questionnaire du BIT," 300.

671 E.C. Mosedale and T.C. Witherby, "La mère au foyer ouvrière de progrès humain," *Charity Organisation Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (1937): 1–12. The title of the conference could be translated as "The Housemother–Artisan of Human Progress."

672 Mosedale and Witherby, 1.

673 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 372. Emphasis in the original.

674 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 369.

The flip side of investigative assistance

If social research is a "complex, recursive negotiation between researcher and researched", as Igo claims,[675] what did the participants in the survey-making research process in Bucharest get out of their cooperation? The small scope of social and sanitary assistance programs and the relative rarity of surveys made it so that social workers or visiting nurses did not importune too much on the daily life of Bucharest's poorer families. When such professionals were present, they were often met with reluctance and distrust, even if their help was needed in a household.

In a sense, social research complicated receipt of aid. Participation in survey research conducted by professionals who were also welfare providers enhanced the already-present "quid pro quo" features of the interactions between those who needed assistance and those who were able to provide it following home investigations. The requirements of data collection meant respondents acquiesced to more intense observation, evaluation and counseling than normally. If a survey was being conducted, case documents were not to be filled in by the social worker in an abbreviated, even perfunctory manner—as social workers in the capital's Hospital Social Service seem to have done for regular investigations. Based on the more detailed data, a household's sanitary and social situation could be evaluated more strictly, and the receipt of welfare conditioned more stringently by certain kinds of behavior.

In 1932, Dr. Ștefania Negrescu described the living conditions of families from the "Xth medical (peripheral) district", observed during an international survey on infant mortality:

> Living conditions were in 46 percent of cases of the most miserable. [. . .] Floors were made of dirt. Water was procured most often from a fountain situated in the street, or in the neighbors' yard, carrying it in a bucket, in which all sorts of cups were introduced. Great promiscuity: some 3–4 persons sleeping in a single bed. The latrine, primitive and dirty, is situated close to the dwelling and emits, especially during the summer, an unbearable smell.[676]

We can imagine the observant presence of Dr. Negrescu in the homes of the Xth medical (sanitary) district, examining water buckets, weighing children and re-

675 Sarah E Igo, "Subjects of Persuasion: Survey Research as a Solicitous Science," in *Social Knowledge in the Making*, eds. Charles Camic and Michele Lamont (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 285–306.

676 Negrescu, "Date și concluzii din ancheta internațională asupra cauzelor mortalității infantile," 279.

questing information on infants' health (or the death of certain of them) for her tables. Visiting nurse Jeana Kogălniceanu, co-author in the Banu survey, must have felt obligated to offer advice on improving the state of the interviewed women's homes, as required of her profession and as appeared to be demanded by the stuffy and unheated rooms she noted in a majority of cases.[677]

The women whose overwork was diligently noted in the 1937 Banu survey must have listed the births and the abortions they had with a certain detachment. Most women experienced both, multiple times throughout their lives, the report revealed. The respondents may have complained in some detail about husbands, boyfriends and landlords to the young women who wrote down the information about the quality of their marriages.[678] Most likely the surveyed women hoped that access to their homes and information offered would bring medical assistance or aid in cash, or prevent it being made unavailable. For instance, for the Banu investigation, the level of detail concerning living and working conditions, the recorded medical and personal histories of the more than one hundred employed women surveyed makes one wonder about the full circumstances in which such access was granted.

In 1929, when the Superior School of Social Assistance opened the Demonstration Center for the Assistance of the Family in the Tei neighborhood, the Center was initially met with "violent reactions" and a "stubborn resistance against the system of constructive assistance the Center introduced".[679] According to Veturia Manuilă, initiator of the Center, most of those who opposed the new Center's role in the distribution of public relief (firewood, aid in cash, other aid in kind) would have preferred a system which surveilled them less.[680]

In the Bucharest context, welfare investigations through home visits could sometimes have unequivocally negative effects. In 1932, Sector 3 (Black) councilwoman Zefira Voiculescu sent a concerned letter to the office of the Bucharest Jewish Community [*Comunitatea Evreilor București*, CEB], the official body intermediating between the large Jewish community in the city and local authorities:[681]

677 Mihail Zolog, "Sora de ocrotire [The Visiting nurse]," *Revista de igienă socială*, 1933, 123–229; Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation."

678 Banu et al., "Études concernant la situation," 373–377.

679 Manuilă, "Le rôle de l'École Supérieure d'Assistance Sociale," 34.

680 Costa-Foru, "Colaborarea în asistență."

681 In 1930, Bucharest's Jewish population was almost 75,000, around 10 to 11 percent of the whole. See Rotman, "Bucharest."

> Mr President,
>
> It has been brought to my attention by several unemployed men of Jewish faith that following the list I relayed to the Honor. Community containing their names so they could request unleavened bread on the occasion of the Holly Passover, with I do not know which purpose they were investigated at home which caused them great harm namely that many of them were masking their misery as best they could, [. . .], and because of these investigations [*cercetări*] that were carried out in their homes the landlords found out they were unemployed and revoked their contracts. I am pointedly asking you to investigate the situation and that these people be left alone to carry on with their life difficult as it is already.
>
> Delegated Councilwoman Zefira Voiculescu[682]

Councilwoman Voiculescu's letter to the office of the Jewish Community condemned the same home investigation procedures that were being applied with enthusiasm in Sector 1 (Yellow) beginning with 1930 and which provided data for some of the SSAS's studies. Councilwoman Voiculescu served in a different sector, was an associate of Cantacuzino and had been elected on the National Liberal Party lists. In writing about the consequences of what she seems to portray as excess of zeal on behalf of representatives of the Jewish Community in dealing with unemployed men, she was also questioning the "constructive social assistance" approach introduced by Veturia Manuilă and National Peasantist councilwoman Botez. And indeed, in the context of Great Depression Bucharest, and considering unemployed tenants' lack of protection against evictions, home investigations appear to have had great potential for backfiring. Archival evidence about similar situations in other neighborhoods, for instance in Tei, is missing. Yet the quick and grave ripple effects of the welfare-related home investigations conducted in the Jewish community could plausibly have happened in neighborhoods and sectors of the city where home investigations were part of the procedure for access to social assistance. If archival evidence shows that social workers could not help with much in Bucharest, situations such as that noted by Voiculescu raise questions about the instances in which social workers really did not help at all, instead causing harm.

In this chapter I argued that survey research on women's work in Bucharest overlapped with welfare provision, due to the involvement of social workers and visiting nurses in data collection. These surveys shed light on how women, through paid and unpaid work, were responsible to ensure the survival of dependents and the maintenance of households. This phenomenon led to women's

682 Zefira Voiculescu, "Sector I Yellow City Hall to Bucharest Jewish Community," Registered letter, April 14, 1932, File II 271/1920–1947, 112, CSIER Bucharest.

overwork, as male unemployment and women's subordination to men pushed women towards badly paid, deregulated wage work. These small-scale studies conducted in Bucharest's poorest neighborhoods, especially, underscored how welfare was ensured and families' needs provided for through an increase in women's paid and unpaid work. I have also shown how findings were interpreted in different ways by researchers connected to the International Labor Office of the ILO and those heavily influenced by eugenics. Whereas both groups focused on the effects of women's wage work on the "disorganization of the family", the social workers associated with the SSAS were less willing to advocate a return of women to the home as a solution. The coming of royal dictatorship and of the Second World War likely curbed the influence of small-scale studies on women's work on welfare policy, as the welfare system was scaled up and reorganized to exclude large categories of people, on explicitly antisemitic and anti-Roma principles. In the short term, survey-based research and intervention could be disruptive if not disastrous for the researched.

Conclusion

This book argued that women welfare activists, wage workers and homemakers in Bucharest absorbed the shock of economic transformation and crisis by engaging in various kinds of "austerity welfare work." I have claimed that some forms of women's austerity welfare work contributed to propping up a low-capacity state, through knowledge production which helped reform a disjointed, stingy municipal system of poverty relief. In the book I analyzed how other forms of austerity welfare work, especially as performed by low-income women, absorbed economic shocks, as women overworked to deal with the effects of rural poverty and male unemployment.

In many ways, this narrative goes against the established history of social politics in interwar Romania. Rather than claiming that in creating new laws, politicians expanded the state's capacity to enable citizens to survive even when they could not work,[683] I argued that these laws displaced much of the burden of managing need onto what appears to be an older, "poverty policy", framework. After the First World War, Bucharest was a capital city with limited budgetary sources, even if of key significance for national political games. In the 1920s, the municipal bureaucracy and elected representatives at city level innovated little in terms of social policy. The "Assistance Service" of the City Hall helped tackle poverty through distribution of firewood, food and sometimes small cash aids, based on changing, unclear criteria. Otherwise, police rounded up male beggars and vagrants and took them to the city's triage bureau, where it was often discovered that they were not the work-shirkers the police assumed them to be. Still, one of the more significant changes in municipal welfare was the intensified cooperation with women's organizations. Before the First World War, municipal authorities placed found children, for example, in the care of women living outside Bucharest.[684] After the First World War, the municipality funded two institutions for such "found children", the "Radu Vodă" school and orphanage and the "Sfânta Ecaterina" crèche for abandoned children.[685] Both institutions were run by the Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women (SONFR).

Simultaneously, in this monograph I have written to an extent critically about the interwar feminist and women's movement in Bucharest and about pio-

683 Most recently and explicitly, an argument made in Delcea, "A Nation of Bureaucrats or a Nation of Workers."

684 Banu, "Asistența comunală a copiilor găsiți," 146.

685 See Chapter 2, section "From *noblesse oblige* . . .," and Chapter 5, section "Orphans into servants . . .."

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neering professional women in the city. Instead of celebrating the achievements of a marginalized category of political actors, I sought to discuss women welfare activists as welfare policymakers. After the First World War, women were undeniably left out of a new postwar political compact through which peasant men became small plot owners and voters. After obtaining suffrage in local elections in 1929, educated women from privileged backgrounds carved a space for themselves as councilors in the local administration, likely in the hope of expanding their rights and influence, to reach national politics. For about a decade, from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s, they sought to reform municipal social assistance in accordance with different welfare visions. In doing so, they formed complex relationships with state power, helping devise new practices for handling social need and vulnerability in urban contexts.

In sum: Austerity welfare work as politics, labor, and transnational construct

I argued that the work of women welfare activists was a form of "austerity welfare work". By working for social assistance, volunteers such as the aristocratic Alexandrina Catancuzino, the comfortably middle-class Calypso Botez, the badly paid teacher Ecaterina Cerkez or the social worker in training Natalia Popoviciu contributed to the construction of ungenerous local social assistance policies and practices. They supported local social assistance policies which emphasized work and character reform in exchange for modest financial and practical support. Volunteers of the Association Women Friends of Young Girls (ATF) cooperated with state authorities in managing young women's migration to the city and largely left unquestioned the lack of legal protection and social rights for servants.

At the same time, these women's austerity welfare work was geared towards increasing the visibility and eligibility of women and girls within social assistance, as when, in 1927, Cantacuzino specifically mentioned young mothers when she proposed new social assistance rules for Bucharest City Hall.[686] Until the late 1930s, in their research, women welfare activists often insisted that low-income women were doing the best they could for their families, in unfavorable economic circumstances. In making such claims, they were staking moderate positions in a European environment where fascists and fascist-sympathizers increasingly pushed for the exclusion of women from paid work, for the sake of families' well-being—as discussed in Chapter 5.

686 See Chapter 3, section "'Private initiative' and public social assistance."

Was the vision of social assistance policy of these women welfare activists the most inclusive and ambitious ones possible, in their historical circumstances? Unlikely. Politically, their space for maneuver was limited. Councilwomen and their social work allies had less power than councilmen—this was a world of male politicians, where councilmen's actions were less likely to be questioned than councilwomen's. Ideologically, they tended to make the same stark separations that men politicians in Romania made, between deserving and undeserving poor, or between honest workers, perhaps down on their luck, and welfare beggars. Like American social workers, they believed that to be out of work as an adult was to lose autonomy and become not "entitled to welfare" but "dependent on social assistance". These assumptions were questioned by women further to the left on the political spectrum, compared to the women who took office in the Bucharest sector councils. Researchers from the International Labor Office like Marguerite Thibert and Erna Magnus, the former known to social reformers in Bucharest, thought and wrote about women's exclusion from established and emerging social rights as a labor issue, with economic and social causes, not individual morality ones. Social democratic women in Bucharest wrote about Red Vienna, communists pointed towards Moscow. Many Jewish women in the city worked for the founding of "Erez Israel" in Palestine, partly as an alternative to exclusionary "Greater Romania".

Welfare history is labor history. Drawing on the work of social reproduction feminists,[687] in this monograph I sought to keep in the same narrative about labor for the sake of others both the work of social reformers and of individual women facing economically precarious personal circumstances. Most of the women who sought to access welfare aid did so for the sake of their children or other members of their families. As social surveys showed, in the Bucharest of the 1930s, low-income women worked in their homes or outside their homes to avoid not the ubiquitous poverty of their neighborhoods but absolute destitution. By the late 1930s, the effects on health of such work were becoming increasingly visible to social reformers, even as comprehensive policy solutions did not arrive. Young women from impoverished rural areas migrated to cities to work, most often as servants. Their care work supported parents and siblings back home, unemployed partners in the city, and of course, the households in which they labored. Through grit and self-sacrifice, their work sometimes supported their dreams—both Vilma Kovács and Veronica Găbudean, mentioned in Chapter 4, dreamt of owning land. In Bucharest, women like Kovács and Găbudean were deemed suspect by dint of their profession and surveilled.

687 Haider and Mohandesi, "Introduction – Making a Living."

Welfare's labor history is a transnational history. The inhabitants of Bucharest, especially women, lived in a city whose approach to poverty had echoes in historical approaches to welfare Manchester, in Germany's Wuppertal region, in neighboring Budapest and contemporaneous practices in far-away Buenos Aires or Baltimore. When women welfare activists sought and fought for public office as councilwomen, they were pursuing a brand of feminist politics being enacted at the time in England and in various other countries where the International Alliance of Women (IWSA/IAW) had affiliates.[688] Their politics was influenced as much by the American COS's emphasis on autonomizing "welfare clients" as by the ILO's insistence on social rights for workers. Transnational social movements, and the fear of such movements—especially communism—shaped discussions on social reform in Romania, a country where politicians employed the stick of political repression as often as they promised reform.[689] Chronically low social spending and budget cuts to healthcare and social assistance were local reactions to geopolitical economic constraint. They were influenced by international organizations' "technical assistance missions" and often embraced the austere vision of society and individual responsibility that characterized the liberal imagination globally.[690]

An epilogue: State social assistance after the Second World War

Writing in 1954, a woman who identified herself only as someone who "was [had been] a social worker" wrote to the venerable publication of the feminist IAW, the *International Women's News*. In her letter, she described how women in the Popular Republic of Romania were overworked, and no one had time to properly care for children. According to the writer, women's time was being taken up by paid work, unpaid work and political work. Wage labor was necessary as a single-earner family could no longer make do. Housework was taxing because food provisioning continued to be difficult because of food rationalization. Political participation was intensive as it entailed activities such as "Russian friendship hour [. . .] or

688 Hunt, "'Success with the Ladies.'"

689 Ghiț, "The Treacherous Trade Unionist," 261–263.

690 Torre and Tosi, "Charles Rist and the French Missions in Romania 1929–1933."; Plata-Stenger, *Social Reform, Modernization and Technical Diplomacy*, 206; Brown, "The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory."

a special indoctrination session".[691] Children were being "constantly indoctrinated". According to the correspondent, one of the greatest worries for many women was that the authorities prohibited the teaching of religious ideas to minors: "I was a social worker, and had known many worried mothers, some of whom still came to me for counsel. What to do when children came home with all sorts of false ideas". The letter not only describes the extent of postwar transformations but also suggests that some women turned to social workers from "the old regime" for counsel in navigating these changes.

According to this anonymous former social worker, who must have been a member of the broad interwar network of women welfare activists at the core of this book, the world had turned upside down, with dire results. Mothers worked for and worried about children even more than before. In the same year when the former social worker wrote her letter, someone who had been to Romania (a "defector" or perhaps a "Western traveler") in 1952, offered information on women's situation to researchers from the Munich-based Radio Free Europe. According to the informant, women were joining the Union of Democratic Women of Romania [*Uniunea Democrată a Femeilor din România*, UFDR], the communist mass women's organization, because the UFDR's recommendation was valuable in obtaining a good job.[692] Women's intensive political participation was directly tied to families' survival in postwar Romania, the eyewitness implied.

Yet the "true" history of welfare work in Romania after 23 August 1944, when the Red Army entered Bucharest, is still, largely, in the eye of the beholder. The preamble ("exposition of reasons") of a 1946 law on a "transitional regime for State social assistance" claimed social assistance, as all other parts of welfare provision, would improve. The preamble ("exposition of reasons") explained that political regimes in the past had not been concerned with "organizing State-supported social assistance" and had left this domain "only in the care of the private initiative".[693] The former Patronage Council of Social Works [*Consiliul de Patronaj al Operelor Sociale*, CPOS] "had concentrated in its hands this work [*această operă*], which however was exploited for reprehensible interests".

691 XYZ, "Roumania," *International Women's News.*, The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs, 49, no. 2 (1954): 311. XYZ as author name in the original.

692 "The Union of Democratic Romanian Women," March 25, 1954, HU OSA 300–1-2-44964, Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: General Records: Information Items [Electronic record; 26 November 2023], OSA Budapest, http://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:806a7d9e-cc56-48f7-b682-32d90d2dc98b.

693 "Proect de lege pentru reglementarea unui regim transitoriu al asistenței sociale de Stat [Law project for regulating a transitional regime for State social assistance]," 1946, MMSOS–Oficiul pentru Studii Sociale, File 385/1946–1947, SANIC Bucharest.

The "reprehensible interests" mentioned in the 1946 transitional law most likely referred to the CPOS involvement in the confiscation of Jewish property during the Marshall Antonescu regime (1940–1944), likely to CPOS involvement in the deportation and murder of Jews and Roma from Romania in Transdniestria, in Southern Ukraine—a territory occupied and administered by the Romanian army between 1941 and 1944 and used by the government as "a dumping ground for all kinds of undesirable ethnicities from Romania", to use Holocaust scholar's Vladimir Solonari's terms. The "romanianization" of Jewish property, through the National Center for Romanianization (CNR), during the Second World War, was to the benefit of some from the interwar network of women welfare activists. Between 1941 and 1943, the CPOS had urged its national branches to insist on being assigned confiscated Jewish properties to use in their work for the welfare of invalids, widows and orphans.[694] Taking a cue from the CPOS, various women's organizations cooperating with the CPOS—including the SONFR—had insisted, beyond the framework provided by the CPOS, on being assigned some of the properties: "We asked to buy this house but since the law does not allow yet to buy [CNR houses], we beseech you to evict the Jew and rent us the house, because [. . .] we must extend our [girls'] school," pleaded the SONFR.[695]

Veturia Manuilă, founder of the SSAS, had been in the leadership committee of the CPOS throughout this governmental body's existence between 1941 and 1943. In 1945, she was heard as a witness in the war crimes trial of Maria Antonescu,[696] president of the CPOS and wife to Marshall Ion Antonescu. Ion Antonescu was Romania's leader during the Second World War, executed for treason in 1946. By 1948, Veturia Manuilă and her husband, statistician Sabin Manuilă, had emigrated to the USA. There she founded the National Council of Romanian Women in Exile and helped organize assistance for anticommunist refugees from Romania.

The 1946 "transitional law" outlined in its exposition of reasons that "to satisfy the urgent needs for increased assistance after the war and in the absence of State bodies to correspond to these needs, assistance was done by mass organizations with such purposes",[697] with government agencies such as the General Direction of Social Assistance acting only in a supporting role. The "mass organiza-

694 Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to 'Romanianization', 1940–1944*, 106. Quote above from Solonari, *Purificarea naţiunii*, 17.

695 Qtd. in Ionescu, *Jewish Resistance to 'Romanianization', 1940*–1944, 96.

696 "Activitatea Curții și Tribunalul special–Autoritățile fac tot ce pot pentru a împiedica activitatea acuzatorilor publici [The activity of the Court and the Special tribunal–Authorities do everything they can to hinder the activity of public prosecutors]," *Scânteia*, March 5, 1945. Arcanum

697 "Proect de lege pentru reglementarea unui regim transitoriu."

tions with such purposes" meant in particular the Union of Antifascist Women of Romania [*Uniunea Femeilor Antifasciste din România*, UFAR] and possibly the Committees for Aid to Drought-stricken Regions [*Comitetul de Ajutorare a Regiunilor Secetoase*, CARS] founded for relief in Eastern Romania in 1946.

Founded in 1945, the UFAR was an affiliate of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF); its aims were welfare provision for women and children as much as political education for women.[698] The UFAR had Ana Pauker as its president. By 1945, Pauker, of international fame since the 1936 "trial of the antifascists" and a heroine in the USSR, was a key political organizer and Soviet emissary in Bucharest; she would become Romania's powerful Foreign Minister in 1947.[699] The UFAR included in its leadership committee several non-communist women with trusted democratic pasts, such as Ella Negruzzi. In 1936, National Peasantist lawyer and one-time councilwoman Negruzzi had defended Pauker during her trial. Other UFAR leaders were colleagues of Negruzzi's from her councilwoman days, including fellow PNȚ-members Ortansa Satmary and Margareta Ghelmegeanu. They were joined by erstwhile critic of feminist suffrage politics social democrat Eugenia (Jeni) Deleanu-Rădăceanu. As a postwar coalition of democratic women, the UFAR mirrored the increasingly tense democratic front arrangements governing Romania between late 1944 and 1948. In 1948, the UFAR was replaced with the Union of Democratic Women of Romania (UFDR), an organization in which National Peasantist women did not play a visible role. The tottering constitutional monarchy became the Popular Republic of Romania that year.

Despite being a short-lived entity, the UFAR and its thousands of local level activists across the country enabled a cheap transition to a higher spending postwar welfare state. For example, the UFAR and later the UFDR were tasked with creating kindergartens. Such childcare facilities are essential if women are expected to work full time, sometime in night shifts—and women were indeed expected to join the paid workforce after the Second World War. In this task of scaling up childcare for working women, women's mass organizations, made up of some paid organizers but largely of unpaid volunteers, were quite successful. If in 1936, there were less than forty nurseries in Romania, by 1950 "the number of places in nurseries had increased to about ten thousand."[700]

698 Luciana M. Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare în România comunistă: 1944–1989 [Gender and representation in communist Romania: 1944–1989]* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2015), 66–67.

699 Levy, *Ana Pauker*, 69–70.

700 Tomasz Inglot, Dorottya Szikra, and Cristina Raț, *Mothers, Families or Children? Family Policy in Poland, Hungary, and Romania, 1945–2020* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022), 150.

After the Second World War, the government clearly spent more money on health and welfare. However, the country preserved a certain skepticism towards redistribution through welfare provision and simple social transfers. For instance, in 1946 to 1947, expenses for healthcare in a government dominated by the left-wing were three times those of 1927 and more than eight times what they had been in 1931.[701] Yet spending on welfare policies in state socialist Romania, especially those meant to alleviate tensions between paid and unpaid work, lagged behind that in Poland and Hungary, especially in the first decade after the Second World War.[702] This approach dovetailed with an industrial policy Adrian Grama has termed "growth without investments" which drew on workers' "inner reserves of productivity" without the appropriate "social wages" (bonuses and benefits, access to subsidized goods, factory-based daycare) that would enable the replenishing of those reserves.[703] Whereas the state socialist regime made rapid progress from the 1960s to the 1980s both in terms of industrialization and a politics of full employment with minimum wages above subsistence levels,[704] securing childcare or provisioning for households remained complicated and housework continued to be intensive. Abortion and contraception were made illegal again in 1966 (after liberalization in 1956), placing the additional burden and responsibility for not-always-wanted children especially on the shoulders of adult women. Women's organizations such as the National Council of Women [*Consiliul Național al Femeilor*, CNF] promoted societal discussion about unequal gendered responsibilities for social reproduction work but were also involved in enforcing the ban on abortion.[705]

In the 1980s, to pay off high-interest public debt to external creditors, the Ceaușescu regime embarked on a stringent austerity program which squeezed

701 Victor Axenciuc, *Evoluţia economică a României. Cercetări statistico-istorice 1859–1947 [Economic development of Romania. Historical-statistical researches 1859–1947]*, vol. 3 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2000), tbl. 256. Between September 1946 and December 1947, the Minister of Health was Dr. Florica Bagdasar, the country's first woman minister and among the first, worldwide, at the time.

702 Inglot, Szikra, and Raț, *Mothers, Families or Children?*, 149.

703 Grama, *Laboring Along*, 160, 198–199, 205, 226.

704 Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 54.

705 Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare*; Jill Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions: Gender, the State, and Everyday Life in Socialist and Postsocialist Romania* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019), chap. 4, especially; see also Raluca Maria Popa, "'We Opposed It': The National Council of Women and the Ban on Abortion in Romania (1966). Section in Francisca de Haan et al. 'Ten Years After . . .,'" *Aspasia: The International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern European Women's and Gender History* 10 (April 2016): 152–159.

consumption and social spending and promoted industrialization at all costs.[706] Supplies of basic food stuffs halved over the course of the decade[707] and food rationing was reintroduced. During this period, investments in a new, coal-based thermoelectric plant, for instance, amounted to three times the level of investments in healthcare and social protection.[708] For adult women, this policy meant an intensification of housework—laundry or cooking needed to be adjusted to the low and oddly-scheduled electricity supplied.[709] By the late 1980s, many residential welfare institutions (the "indoor assistance" of earlier periods) were ethically reprehensible and materially miserable places. At this point, the breakdown of the "socialist social compact"[710] was staved off by extracting growing amounts of social reproduction work from women and by ignoring or hiding from view the weakest members of society. Postwar regimes in Romania had prided themselves on a radical improvement of working and living conditions for women and girls, compared to the interwar period and its deprivations. After two decades of real changes in some domains, and backlash in others (especially reproductive rights), the 1980s saw a return of harsh austerity, one that rivaled that of the 1930s and the late 1940s.

Reflection: Austerity and austerity welfare work in the past and current century

As the "Second World" was vanishing from the geopolitical stage, in historical accounts that would become foundational, the twentieth century became the century of the expanded state and of welfare politics as class compromise prone to authoritarianism.[711] By the turn of the millennium, narratives inflected by critical accounts of "the social" had firmly displaced social history narratives on "the social question", especially in post-socialist contexts. From within what Dennis Sweeney termed "the modernity paradigm",[712] such accounts discussed "the social" as product of experts' worldviews or attempts at disciplining polities or specific so-

706 Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 55.
707 Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 68.
708 Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 75.
709 Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 231–232.
710 Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 77.
711 Most famously Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Picador, 2010); Jacques. Donzelot, *The Policing of Families* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).
712 Dennis Sweeney, "Reconsidering the Modernity Paradigm: Reform Movements, the Social and the State in Wilhelmine Germany*," *Social History* 31, no. 4 (2006): 405–34; Dennis Sweeney,

cial groups. Increasingly, the realm of welfare, of "social provision", was constructed as the realm of social regulation.[713]

For the Romanian context, pioneering post-socialist historians focused on the promise and peril of elites' search for progress, modernity, and the well-being of the people, writ large.[714] They dealt with how policies affected workers or peasants to a smaller degree. The bread-and-butter topics of social history—urbanization, industrialization, professionalization,[715] social movements and social politics, labor—were considered the privileged topics of a bygone time and of discredited historical production.[716] Post-socialist women's history focused on research into non-socialist, feminist women's activism.[717] To an extent, this focus was warranted, as these women were actors state socialist historiography had sidelined.

Narratives of undue state power and valiant non-governmental actors contributed to understanding the process (and lurking perils) of state expansion which characterized much of the twentieth century. However, such narratives had little to say on the history of austerity and its political champions, even if this history is bound to redefinitions of state power.[718] As post-socialist Eastern European countries transitioned to market economies, after an alleged existence outside the capitalist system, technocrats presented cuts to the state as a new, neoliberal solution to the peculiar problems of post-socialism.[719] In the early 1990s, austerity as economic doctrine returned to Romania—having never really left. The by-then absent public memory of interwar austerity no doubt contributed to the idea that the dream of future prosperity entailed "euthanizing the state as owner and investor"[720] and slashing all public spending.

"'Modernity' and the Making of Social Order in Twentieth-Century Europe," *Contemporary European History* 23, no. 02 (May 2014): 209–224.

713 Ann Shola Orloff, "Social Provision and Regulation: Theories of States, Social Policies and Modernity," in *Remaking Modernity: Politics, History, and Sociology*, eds. Julia Adams, et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 190–224.

714 Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization*; Marius Turda and Paul Weindling, *"Blood and Homeland": Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940* (Central European University Press, 2007); Plosceanu, "Coopération en milieu rural."

715 Christoph Conrad, "Social History," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2001), 310.

716 Ghiț, "Professionals' and Amateurs' Pasts: A Decolonizing Reading of Post-War Romanian Histories of Gendered Interwar Activism."

717 Maria Bucur, "An Archipelago of Stories: Gender History in Eastern Europe," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (December 2008): 1375–1389.

718 Blyth, *Austerity*, 178.

719 Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 84–85.

720 Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 86.

In the 1990s, meaningful welfare programs vanished from the country. Although in the mid-1990s, Romania's governments deviated from the full-privatization policy applied in much of East-Central Europe, social spending stayed among the lowest in the region. In 1989, 2.6 percent of gross domestic product was spent on the (modest) universal cash transfer program for families with children [*alocații pentru copii*] and on social assistance for the poorest. By 1994, in the midst of an extensive social crisis, this proportion was only 0.4 percent of the gross domestic product.[721] As in the 1930s, at various points between 1998 and 2004, research by social workers was considered in policymaking processes but in the face of austerity, did not decisively shape these welfare politics.[722]

Families, and within families, women, continued to absorb the costs of retrenchment through austerity welfare work. One of the clearest indicators that women today still bear the brunt of caring for "dependents" in Romania is the stark increase over the past decade in the number of women who no longer work (at least not in full-time, formal employment) because of familial care obligations: around 32 percent of "economically inactive" women, one third of employment-age but not (formally) employed women, reported familial caring duties as the reason for their absence from the workforce, a 9.4 percentage points increase compared to 2010 and a much higher proportion than the one fifth of women reporting similar reasons in the rest of the EU.[723] Furthermore, in a transnational twist to the rural–urban migration phenomenon of the interwar period, women from Romania have migrated abroad to do especially paid care work in order to support their families through remittances.

Austerity remains the "economic instruction sheet" for the country, even as austerity's benefits for growth have been refuted by research during the past decade.[724] Public welfare provision, especially the non-contributory "second track" of social assistance, has not had a chance to develop. A chilling 2015 End-of-Mission statement by a Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, noted that "Romania spends only about one quarter of the EU average on such [social] services. The results, which reflect a

721 Ban, *Dependență și dezvoltare*, 143.

722 Elena Zamfir, "Asistența socială pentru familie și copil în perioada de austeritate [Social assistance for family and child during the austerity period]," in *Asistența socială în România după 25 de ani: răspuns la problemele tranziției: texte selectate*, ed. Elena Zamfir, Simona Maria Stănescu, and Daniel Arpinte (Cluj Napoca: Eikon, 2015), 277–278.

723 Ștefan Guga and Alexandra Sindreștean, "Inegalități economice de gen în România [Gendered economic inequalities in Romania]," Analysis, Muncă și justiție socială (Bucharest: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2022), 11, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bukarest/18613.pdf.

724 Blyth, *Austerity*, 212–216.

combination of austerity and decentralization, are truly grim in many places".[725] The Special Rapporteur emphasized that means-tested policies implicitly operated with notions about the "deserving" and "undeserving poor", while government representatives tended to deny that Roma in Romania were poor because of a history of discrimination and exclusion. As some ninety years before, public sector reforms placed much of the responsibility for service provision on municipalities and rural communities, while chronically under-funding them.

Throughout the monograph, I sought to reconstruct the link between gendered activism, policymaking and care work, in a city where the life of the majority was marked by economic instability. To this end, I sought to build on the existing valuable research on the development of social policy and social reform, on women's activism and women's work. The welfare history of interwar Romania, and East–Central Europe in general, is deserving of further research. Feminist politics after 1935 and the functioning of urban public assistance between 1938 and 1944 in Romania are among the topics that should receive detailed treatment. The history of anti-Roma racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia is embedded in Romania's, and Europe's, welfare histories, even when sources might not be explicit on the matter (although they often were). The challenges of our time are unique but critically historizing the gendered work of coping with crisis may help foster better recognition of those bearing the brunt of such work, whether it be done in the name of love, for understanding the world, out of fear, for a paycheck or on account of obstinate hope for a better world.

725 Alston, "End-of-Mission Statement on Romania, by Professor Philip Alston, United Nations Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights," OHCHR Official Webpage, November 11, 2015, https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2015/11/end-mission-statement-romania-professor-philip-alston-united-nations-human.

Appendices

Appendix 1: "Copy of a case file for individualized assistance" (1930)

Transcript and translation of "Anexă: Copia unui cazier de asistență individualizată [Appendix: Copy of a casework file for individualized assistance]", ***Asistența socială–Buletinul Școalei Superioare de Asistență Socială "Principesa Ileana"*** **1, no. 2 (1930).** The Appendix to this journal issue included several other documents related to this case, including a table with Marioara I.'s personal information and key details about herself and her relatives and a household budget. The translation below is only for one of the documents, a narrative document, the longest one included in the appendix of this journal issue.[726] The anonymization of surnames and private addresses is by the author of this volume.

14-XI-929

Case brought to the attention of the Assistance by the parish priest of Holly Trinity Church in Tei neighborhood.

Marioara I., 32 years old, of Romanian Orthodox religion, cannot support her family, composed of 2 sick children [sic]:

4-year-old Nicușor.

1 1/2 years old Ioana.

Orphan niece Lenuța, 13 years old.

[Marioara] Asks parish priest for help, [priest] has come to the house for the communion of the sick child.

15-XI-929

Sick children. In urgent need of help, the family is visited by the [Social] Assistance [social worker] on the very evening of 15-XI in the small house located on an ill-lit dirty street, at the end of a narrow courtyard; the family shelters in a small room, with a door straight out,[727] two small narrow windows, with a dirt floor and a plank ceiling; when the Assistance arrived, the room was barely lit by a small gas lamp. In a heavy, dark air, sitting on an iron bed without a mattress, the mother was holding Nicușor, fresh from a bout of severe pneumonia; the

726 A first English-language version of the transcribed text was produced via DeepL, an automatic translation software. The translation was then checked and corrected by the volume's author.

727 The room did not have a hallway (AG). Orig. "cu ușa drept în afară."

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111137162-008

child is weak and extremely anaemic. The mother, herself exhausted from several sleepless nights, recounts in her weak voice the story of the child's illness; frightened by his desperate condition, she had pawned her only shawl in order to pay for the consultation of Dr P., a private doctor in the neighborhood; the Electrargol injections, having produced a strong reaction, had a decisive and beneficial influence. The little girl, Ioana, also called Oița ["Little Sheep"] by her mother, is a sweet child with blond hair, extremely pale; though ill with measles, she keeps her good humor and jumps in and out of the wooden washtub with infected rags which serves as her bed.

Current family situation. There are too few items in the small room, 2 beds, a cooker, 2 sewing machines and a coffee table—yet everywhere is a mess, mainly because of the amount of dirty rags, which serve as mattress and blanket. The mother's own clothes bear the stamp of despair, after days of strain she finds herself in a deep state of apathy and exhaustion. In the course of the conversation, one of the neighbors intervenes, who sympathizes with and helps Marioara; appearing very benevolent, she claims that Marioara is a hard-working woman, abandoned by her common law husband, left completely alone in Bucharest; she says that she is a devoted mother whose zeal has brought her into a state of anaemia, causing her to suffer a series of prolonged fainting spells.

2 sewing machines in the house prove the client's job as a shoe-part sewer [*rihtuitoare*]; her work, however, is interrupted by her children's illness. As the health condition of the children is worrying, the doctor who examined the children is visited [by the mother] (Dr. P. Sos. S., 200). The client is left with encouragement and money for milk for the children.

Doctor P. knows the family. The doctor is immediately visited [by the social worker]. The doctor seems very surprised by the family's state of misery, which seems news to him, because the client, for fear that the urgently requested help will not come, has hidden her inability to pay. The doctor is willing to continue the consultations, cooperating with the Assistance. The medical consultation fixed for the next day at 8 a.m.

16-XI-929

Dr. P. paid by the Assistance. Improvement in the health condition of the children is noted, but they need medical care and super-nourishment. The doctor gives some information on the family; Georgeta is the client's sister; she is a good woman, a housewife and is lucky to have [as a partner] a good young man [*un băiat bun*], a professional shoemaker, who helps his wife's relatives, taking in a 19 year old electrician grandson and always helping Marioara. The bond between these two families is tight, because of the love between the sisters and because the

shoemaker has no children. About Mariora’s husband, the doctor says, that he was a drunkard and a syphilitic, always running away from home, leaving her with children and without means. The whole family fell under the responsibility of Marioara, who supported it through hard work. The client enjoys the sympathy of the neighborhood, says the doctor. She is considered worthy of support, industrious and good-natured; she has always been helped by her neighbors, especially the landladies where she lived, this has helped her survive [*să se mențină*] until today.

The Assistance buys the medicine. The very benevolent doctor introduces the Assistance to Ms N.’s neighborhood pharmacy, which admits discounts for the assisted.

The Mother. Visited, the client is found very agitated due to the new events. Marioara is of medium height, thin, anemic, remarkably mild-mannered. She gives the impression of an overworked, dejected but naive being unable to concentrate on anything, but she is pleasant to talk to and open. From what she tells us, the following emerge:

Family history. Marioara was born in Curtea de Argeș to peasant parents, where they also had some houses. There were 10 children; in Bucharest the first one to arrive was Georgeta at the age of 8; she was lucky to marry well and brought Marioara at the age of 14 to the Capital. They stayed in Bucharest because all their parents’ wealth disppeared following the war. Of all the children, only these 2 sisters are in Bucharest; the other children died, others stayed in the countryside. The parents are both alive, in their house, with little land; they are 75–80 years old and are cared for by a son of theirs, with whose wife almost no one else in the family gets along. Since she was 17, Marioara has lived with Ion G., a shoe sewer by trade; at the beginning things went quite well, the family lived in a better house with 900 Lei rent (on F. Street No. 5 and C. Street No. 12.) But being a drunkard and a completely demoralized man, Ion treated his wife badly, made her work, systematically leaving her when she needed his support the most and ruining the family more and more. Marioara alone learned her husband’s trade to make a living; she worked hard, and her health failed. The fact that she gave birth to two stillborn children and three others so debilitated that they died within weeks of birth caused Marioara to undergo antisyphilitic treatment in 1925. During her pregnancy, however, she worked without interruption, continuing to get up for work a few days after the birth, even suffering terrible beatings at the hands of her husband; after all, he left her for good in 1928, settling with a new family at 7 B. St. Left alone, without means, in poor health with two children, Marioara continued her work, struggling to get by with the debts and sometimes ending up in a desperate situation. She recounts a typical episode in her life last year: In the depths of winter, desperate because of debts she considered impossible to pay, she went out in a bitter frost with the tiny Oița, wrapped in a

neighbor's shawl to beg from door to door. The memory of the cold alone makes her shiver. Then came an illness that prevented her from working all spring.

The only thing that terrifies the client is the fate of her children, for whom she has an absolute love. It's the children she's interested in, everything she says, everything she wants. The children really are very sweet.

Nicușor is a real master in the house, a great lover of order, cleanliness and drawing. He enjoys the sympathy of everyone, from the priest to the landlady and his playmates. He is averagely developed, anaemic, weak, a little nervous. His teeth are very decayed. The child is of a lively and active character. Very attached to his mother and aunt.

The Sheep [*Oița*] is one year and two months old; she has two teeth, is starting to walk, does not yet speak and is not weaned. She is normally developed, but very anemic after illness.

The children between them are very good and show a touching love for each other. This feeling is strongly felt, binding all family members together.

Niece. The client's biggest helper is her niece Lenuța, who has been looked after by her aunts since the age of 4. She is an abnormal child, suffering from Basedov's disease; she speaks with difficulty, does not hear well, gives the impression of a physically and mentally underdeveloped child from a physical and psychic point of view; she works all the time, without having known childhood. In the client's home she takes care of the children and helps in the shoe sewing job. She is attentive and loving towards the children and tries to make them trust her. She has all the good will but sometimes she is not able to fulfil what she would have to do. She is always very obedient and persistent; she is entrusted with the simpler things of the craft.

Current debts. The client works at home, taking piece-rate material from various craftsmen in the neighborhood. The interruption of work for more than two weeks due to the children's illness caused the family's permanent financial imbalance. This situation is made worse by several urgent debts to the Singer company for the two sewing machines. She has been badly indebted for two months, apart from the expenses for the quarantining processes, which took place in September this year. The client always lives under the threat of having the machines taken away, her only means of earning. There is also the unpaid rent for two months, small debts to craftsmen, 400 Lei owed to the baker, 3000 Lei owed to Georgeta. Apart from Singer, the other creditors are very lenient and don't force her to pay, but Marioara feels embarrassed and obliged to pay as soon as possible.

Client member of the Corporation. The client has been a member of the Workers' Corporation for 4 years, so has the respective rights and, being considered a worker without luck, from time to time receives small allowances from the

President of the Corporation, Mr P. domiciled at 25 V. Street, apart from the 500 Lei allowance due to needy members.

The client states that she has received twice before help in cash from the Society of Romanian Clergy (Societatea Clerului Român) in the amount of 800 Lei, the client cannot give any information about any person in this society.

"Prince Mircea [*Principele Mircea*]" [Society] helps too. Permanent medical help for children is provided by Soc. Principele Mircea, Tei branch.

Help of City Hall. Through the Mașina de Pâine dispensary the client receives 200 Lei monthly for underage children.

Neighbors. Relations with neighbors are friendly, and among Marioara's closest acquaintances are mostly widowed needy women, who seek to help each other.

17-XI-929

Debt issue managed. After research at the Calea Moșilor Singer branch, the situation of the client towards the company is as follows: the client is well-regarded, according to the documents kept at the branch, it can be seen that she pays regularly, working as much as possible on two machines. The total debt is up to 6,146 Lei, but the branch management assures of:

1) The safety of the sewing machines, which will not be lifted and 2) the maximum tolerance for the payment, which can be as low as 200 Lei per week or even less.

The client, informed of this result, is reassured about the fate of the machines and goes round to the craftsmen's for the raw materials [she needs for her home-based work].

18-XI-929

Looking for clothes. Mrs. V. was seen [visited by the Assistance], at home on S.V. street, Military Sanatorium, Dr. M.'s house, looking for the means to equip the family for winter. Mrs. V. is willing to collaborate with the Assistance and starts looking for the necessary things.

19-XI-929

The following items are brought to the client: a woollen mattress, a sack for a second straw mattress, a blanket, more worn things to wear, warm little things for the children, linen and necessary food like 1 kg. semolina, 1 kg. rice, 1 kg. sugar.

Weekly food aid. It is decided to take 1 kg of milk every day, paid at the end of the week by the Assistance. Until firewood is bought, the client receives Georgeta's offer to borrow the firewood from her.

To all these measures, the client reacts quite vividly, with joy and curiosity.

21-XI-929

The Corporation collaborates. The assistance meets Mr C. He is a good cobbler with a good workshop; very good-natured, has a good opinion of the client and has a lot of sympathy for her. Unfortunately, no official mutual aid house [*casă de ajutorare*] is able to help her, as the corporation has no funds. What is very much lacking, in Mr C.'s opinion, is solidarity among the workers in the corporation. It is because of this lack of solidarity that neither the cooperatives nor the aid societies have succeeded. The only means of help is medical aid and summer camps in Solca (Bucovina) and Techirghiol for the children of the insured. For Marioara, he proposes a pension of 500 Lei per month and a Christmas allowance through a donations' list at the Corporation Centre (Amzei Square No.3). Mr. C. expresses his willingness to serve the Assistance with the necessary information and to collaborate in everything concerning the Corporation.

The Assistance finds help in Georgeta. The social worker comes to the client with 6 1/2 mtr. of sheet cloth. Marioara is out after work. The children are doing well, both are lively and cute in their woollen things. Georgeta, very pleasantly surprised at the sight of the sheets, becomes communicative, more intimate, and loses the shadow of reserve one could feel in everything she said. She speaks little about her parents, with a feeling of alienation and indifference: "What can we expect from them, they're very old". One can see that the children have been left early on their own responsibility and are not bound to their parents either by habit or by a sense of duty. On the other hand, she is still bound to other members of the family, especially Marioara, for whom she shows an almost paternal care; the bond is an old one, formed in childhood, when Georgeta was the sole carer of twin sisters, of whom only Marioara is left alive. In her youth she says she watched over her and she was obedient. "Only once she wouldn't listen to me, when she took up with Ion anyway, but she cared for him so much there was nothing I could do". Later not once did she leave her out of her sight and helped her especially when the children were born, when her husband usually left her. Georgeta has an air of superiority and considers her sister impractical. She is always helping her in kind and takes on the whole responsibility of the house, expressing a desire to help the family recover.

24-XI-929

Marioara wants to start her own household. The client is found to be a bit agitated because of a small family incident with her brother-in-law, who wouldn’t allow her to take any of the hot bread Georgeta had bought. Marioara feels a strong desire to become independent of everyone, expressing the view that this is possible with hard work on her part and support from the Assistance. She aims for many nice things for the arrangement of her room, which she would like to change, but only after she has paid at least part of her debts.

While talking, the children’s washing is done together [with the social worker] and the room is relatively tidy. On the same day, the milk for the previous week is paid for, 1 1/2 kg. per day, and the good nutrition of the client herself is insisted upon. It is decided firewood will be supplied and a weekly help in bread by the Assistance [as well].

25-XI-929

Supply of firewood. Early morning the client, together with Nicușor, who does not want to let her go alone, goes out to get wood, proving that she is not entirely lacking in practical spirit. What she lacks is strength, for after a short journey she is tired.

100 kg of chopped wood are bought from the Assistance. The whole family, led by Nicușor, worked to clean the woodshed and when the wood arrived the room was presented with real pride.

The landlady will wait for the rent a bit longer. On the occasion of the firewood delivery, the landlady Maria S., a good and kind woman, is introduced, who promises to wait with the rent until the client’s income is restored to normal.

Order in the house. The room is cleanly painted, the mattresses, sheets and blankets neatly laid out. 1 kg of sugar for the children and a second blanket are brought from the Assistance and Mrs V. brings linen cloth for the bedsheets. Marioara has managed to secure 60 Lei a day and hopes to earn more. It is decided all the surplus will be saved for her debts, which can then be paid in small weekly instalments. The whole atmosphere is very friendly and welcoming. The client is satisfied and gives the social worker a photo of the boy as a present.

Georgeta’s contribution. Georgeta comes to share her boredom [sic] with her eldest nephew, who does not listen to her; she also seems to have problems with her husband, for according to Marioara she helps her relatives secretly, from the pension left to her as a war widow from husband I. However, as it is a question of supplying the family with vegetables, she alone proposes to lend Marioara 125 Lei for 50 kg. of potatoes, as the working week has not been used in full.

30-XI-929

Georgeta buys 50 kg. of potatoes, which she keeps in her own room, for fear of the mess the children might make. The children are fine, they've both put on weight. Oița, weighed at the clinic of the Children's Home [*Casa Copilului*], weighs 7,700 kg.

1-XII-929

Paid the milkmaid and baker for the past week, for 9 1/2 kg. milk 133 Lei and for 7 1/2 kg. bread 60 Lei.

2-XII-929

Marioara has syphilis. Marioara is very agitated, she leaves home without eating and is moved to tears by the sight of the sick. From Brâncovenesc hospital consultations, it results she has syphilis and has had a number of injections before, which were interrupted due to family problems and boredom. She has a scarred lesion in her right lung, which requires special treatment. There is no danger to herself or to those around her; she is able to work, observing the basic hygiene conditions. The client, who had been very agitated, calmed down and immediately went home, where the nurse came to fetch her with tapioca and sugar for the children and found her at work in a very good mood, determined to start cooking at home to form a household "like everyone's" [*"ca la oameni"*].

6-XII-929

Marioara feels sick. Feeling worse and worse, she is taken to start anti-syphilis treatment at the Mașina de Pâine [street] clinic.

9-XII-929

Nicușor is examined at the Mașina de Pâine [street] by Dr. V. who finds him healthy and normal in all respects except for the decayed teeth.

Marioara's illness worsens. Following the anti-syphilis treatment, Marioara's health condition becomes worse due to strong reactions, which produce nervous disorders, with violent headaches and fits of rage. Her anaemia progresses and her ability to work is reduced to almost nothing.

22-XII-929

Family fully supported. In order to give the sick client the opportunity to recover in peace, the Assistance takes the family entirely into her care. Marioara is

forbidden any work and is provided with sufficient food. The budget drawn up provides for the maintenance of the family in a normal state of normal earning time, to the extent of 672 Lei per week.

At the same time, Marioara is consulted by Dr. S., who finds her neurasthenic and prescribes a calming treatment.

For the Christmas holidays the family gets a surplus of food and in addition to the usual budget, 250 Lei a week. There is a quiet, contented atmosphere in the home. The whole room bears the stamp of cleanliness and care, Lenuța has made some paper flowers and Marioara has put clean little curtains on the windows. Nicușor is beaming with holiday cheer.

13-I-930

Attempted begging. The old habit of begging comes to the surface during this time of plenty. Father M. learns of Marioara's attempts at obtaining help at the Central Seminary. There follows a serious conversation with Marioara, who confesses her attempt; she left with Nicușor by the hand, the cold wind was blowing and they both froze while waiting for the tram, in search of the Seminary; after all that, they received nothing. Then she tried to go to the ONEF but there she had only a mediocre outcome. After many attempts at persuasion, Marioara confesses her mistake; she is so attached to the idea that the Assistance is helping her that the possibility of losing this help scares her to death; she is clearly reminded of her obligations to the Assistance and is asked not to do anything without the consent of the Assistance. Marioara seems to promise very sincerely, is nervous, cries and admits that "it's a great shame to go and ask from people like that".

16-I-930

Marioara is doing well. Marioara is taken to Filaret Hospital; the diagnosis establishes fibrous infiltration of the lungs without presenting any danger to herself or those around her. After resting and overeating, Marioara's body has visibly strengthened to the point that one can even assume the possibility of earning.

Earnings guaranteed. Through the acquaintance made with Mr. P., the owner of the shoe shop on L. Street, orders of 2–3 dozen boots per week are assured. By re-establishing ties with her old employers, Marioara becomes able to earn about 450 Lei a week, without overwork [. . .].

Contribution by Assistance reduced. The family budget is reduced to 400 Lei per week, given the decrease in debt. The method of economic education in the family is as follows; money is entrusted to Marioara who must distribute it in such a way as to rationally satisfy all the household needs and leave enough for

her debts, and Lenuta is obliged to follow the distribution of the money and bring the supporting documents (receipts from the shops).

20-I-930

Lenuța draws attention. A phenomenon within the family calls for more work with Lenuța; it is noticed that nephew Petru I., an 18 year old electrical worker who had a fight with his boss and lost his job, is always in Marioara's room when she is away. They are good friends with Lenuța. From the acquaintance with Petru it emerges that he feels persecuted by Georgeta since he has been left without earnings and tries to avoid her house; until now he has been staying with her, paying a monthly board of 1000 lei; she took care of him quite well, especially during his illness (rheumatic fever), which lasted for a couple of months in the winter of 1929; but now there are always disagreements in the family because of his uncle's insufficient earnings. Petru has a sick mother in Curtea de Argeș, who should be operated on; he has no other relatives besides aunts in the capital; he is very fond of books and would like to continue his education. The social worker offers him her assistance but obliges him to collaborate in the restoration of the I. family, promising him that he will not do anything without the nurse and taking responsibility for his attitude towards Lenuța.

21-I-930

Collaboration with the neighborhood dentist. Nicușor needing to have teeth repaired Dr. D., S. V. [street], offers his free assistance.

27-I-930

Lenuța must be treated. Lenuța's health condition leaves much to be desired, and the decision is made to take her for a medical examination. The day of the consultation is fixed at Colțea Hospital, and Lenuța is happy to go, given the pleasant journey by car.

The opposition of uncle G. But before Lenuța is taken to the hospital, uncle G. intervenes; with an indignant air, with an authoritarian tone that does not allow any contradiction, he states that doctors can't help with anything and treating her with incantations is more logical; otherwise he has no right to leave the orphan girl, entrusted to him, in the hospital, for which he is responsible to God and people; this theory he develops at length and eloquently with borrowed and inappropriate expressions. After draining all his sources of inspiration, he says that the doctor in the hospital, if he wants, can "come to his house" and that he is able to pay 500 Lei for a visit or whatever he wants. He is shown a much more

effective way of helping the family by giving this money to increase the budget rather than for an avoidable expense. But in any case his wish to keep Lenuța at home is respected, and to leave her only with Georgeta, when she has time off. G., expecting resistance, seems puzzled, but seeing his judgment is appealed to as to an intelligent man he feels somewhat obliged to respond accordingly and promises to help the I. family whenever they need it.

This opportunity presents itself very quickly as Nicușor falls ill with measles. G. calls Dr. P. in for a consultation, with the cost of care to be borne by him.

Lenuța has endemic goiter. Georgeta has no time, so Lenuța is entrusted to the care of the social worker. Consulted at Colțea hospital by Dr. B, Lenuța is found to be generally healthy, having endemic goiter, and is prescribed medical treatment, acting on the secretions. In a few days the good results of the treatment begin to be noticed, the goiter decreases, the general mood improves; from time to time she needs to go to the same doctor for further treatment.

28-I-1930

Marioara receives a special treatment. Taking into account the diagnosis established at various times at the Brâncovenesc, Filaret, and Fieraru Hospitals, Dr I. from the Mașina de Pâine clinic is once again warned against the danger of reactivation of tuberculosis; the doctor reassures the Assistance that the client is being treated according to her sanitary situation.

1-II-930

Oița weaned. It is with great difficulty that Marioara can be persuaded of the need to wean her child. She would be ready to breastfeed until the child was two, just so "the little girl would grow big and beautiful". The little girl is 1 1/2 years old, plump, very lively, walks well and already shows signs of an authoritarian, even despotic character; if she is refused anything, she gets angry and screams until she gets what she wants; Nicușor she beats, makes him fulfil her little desires and with great cunning she finds the most precious things, even if those were hidden as well as possible; she imitates his every gesture, even risking being injured by her mother's machine; her mother, who prides herself on her, she tyrannizes, always demanding signs of attention; this attention is expressed through breastfeeding.

With the help of the nurse at the Prince Mircea clinic, the little girl is weaned after all. This change does not affect her at all; her food suits her, she drinks her milk according to the nurses' instructions; the child feels perfect; she is given little toys that amuse and reassure her. At the same time, the mother is taught how to look after her; there is an attempt to make her understand that Oița does not

need to be beaten or spoiled; for a moment, the mother's only response is a happy smile and the words "look what a beautiful, clever girl I have!"

3-II-930

However, one can notice a slight change in the mother's attitude; she tries to control herself, to talk to the child calmly and positively; when a word is said slowly but firmly, the girl reacts immediately, which is also demonstrated to Marioara.

5-II-930

Her health is maintained at the same level; Lenuța's health is improving and treatment at Colțea continues.

7-II-930

Petre leaves Bucharest. Petre managed to find work in the countryside and left with a companion of his for Ploiești, with big plans to create for themselves the status of craftsmen from the capital. Georgeta equipped him with a real mother's care and he promised to write to them when needed.

11-II-930

Petre's departure serves as the subject of the conversation with Lenuța; following consultations at the hospital where she was always accompanied by the social worker, the girl seems to show greater confidence; but her way of thinking is totally primitive she only recounts a series of facts, telling how last year Petre was very ill and how they spoon-fed him and how he almost died and how doctor P. rescued him. Asked if she's not sorry he's gone, she says indifferently enough that she's sorry, that he was a good boy who knew a lot from books. Quite frankly she says that he read some beautiful novels and told many interesting stories about life in his workshop. This, however, seems not to have impressed her as she is more attracted by the practical things of accounting, earning, debt, craft etc.

17-II-930

Marioara's work needs to be reorganized. After consecutive consultations at Colțea Hospital and Filaret clinic, Marioara's health is noted to have weakened slightly. She begins to cough and complain of fatigue. This can be explained by the fact that, in addition to the influence on her health, her work has increased in spring; her job as a shoe part stitcher is characterized by its periodicity, in relation to the season; and the maximum earnings are usually brought by spring and

early summer. Wanting to pay off her debts more quickly, Marioara tried to abuse her strength by taking a lot of orders.

18-II-930

Since the problem presents the need on the one hand to ensure earnings and on the other to preserve health, a transformation of her work is proposed to Marioara.

The project of a workshop. The hardest part of the work being machine sewing, this will be done by Marioara together with Lenuța; the simpler but very laborious work of preparing and cleaning the leather could be done by a girl from the neighborhood, who will be initiated in the work and will receive the corresponding part of the earnings. The idea is welcome and Marioara remains convinced that she has always wanted exactly this organization of her work.

20-II-930

First unsuccessful attempt. Marioara immediately finds a helper in Gica D., a cute and smart girl, very proud of her knowledge of the trade. At first glance she seems industrious, cheerful, benevolent and in truth she does many things apart from her job itself; she also takes care of the children and the house cleaning. Marioara seems content, she feels she is the master of the workshop; she teaches both girls with a gentle and instructive tone and is happy when she is seen to be working hard.

All the greater the surprise, when the next day the girl is no longer in her place; Marioara explains, complaining, that the girl's parents are to blame, that they are conceited people who asked her for 400 Lei a week, that they praised her as a craftswoman when all the girl did was to ruin the material by the dozens, etc. After she calmed down, she realizes the exaggerations she had said and only notes that the first helper did not meet her needs.

22-II-930

The second attempt leaves something to be desired. Another helper is found a small client from another assisted family; she is a 13 year old girl, who has tried about 4 different trades by her age, mostly looking for higher earnings. Not having a job, she is offered to work at Marioara's for 200 Lei a week, on condition that she also learns the trade. Little Tanța comes enthusiastically, seeing in this income the only means of escaping the scorn of her old father. But two days later, complaints come from both sides and work stops again.

Almost crying, Tanta recounts that because of a slight bronchitis she became suspicious in Marioara's eyes, who gave her warm milk from a special cup and

did not allow her to go near her children, which offended her a lot. The main cause of the discord, however, is the disagreement between the girls.

27-II-1930

Lenuța doesn't get along with her new companion. Things having been investigated, the following emerges: left alone while Marioara had gone off to get her orders, both girls decorated themselves up with shawls and paper flowers "like monkeys", in Georgeta's words, and started inventing impossible adventures, trying to outdo each other in extraordinary stories taken from cheap novels. Georgeta, who had been a mute and unobserved witness to this scene, intervened angrily; the frightened girls blamed each other and quarreled for good. A dozen boots mysteriously disappeared and then were found under the bed, ruined, and became the cause of yet another of Lenuța's arguments against her new companion.

3-III-930

A.C.F. becomes the means of friendship. To restore order, the girls are told a lot of appealing things about the ACF[R], about the summer camps and the fun the "acefists" find within the Association. Hearing about the way of working and behaving of the otherwise very soft and impressionable ACF members Lenuța almost gets excited: she would be ready to run immediately to the Blue Triangle, especially after hearing that the first law of its members is friendship and hospitality for every new girl. Only the reminder that her illness is not yet fully gone stops her in her tracks. Tanța seems to be more reserved; at the first opportunity she is brought to the Association; a whole new atmosphere a crowd of girls in uniform, outdoor games, cinema and the whole friendly and cheerful appearance of the Association impresses her deeply. She attends the chorus singing of the hymn "I Serve", where she [learns about] the Blue Triangle code, makes acquaintances with some willing and good-natured girls, and leaving very thoughtful but bright-eyed, says that not only is it very nice but she must go back and learn more so she can read the books in the ACF library and "what it writes in the cinema".

The next day both girls work together, quiet and touchingly attentive to each other.

Work is going cheerfully and briskly and family life seems more normal than ever.

6-III-930

Georgeta calls on the help of the Assistance. Georgeta, feeling unwell, asks for help from the Assistance; she is taken to Colțea hospital medical section for con-

sultation; she is given a free gastrointestinal radioscopy at the same hospital and is given 15 days to clarify the diagnosis; appendicitis is presumed.

8-III-930

Marioara’s health is suspect. Marioara starts coughing more often, spitting up blood; she is taken for consultation to the Fierarii clinic; fibrous infiltration of the left lung is found and the client is recommended for admission to a sanatorium.

At the same clinic, a monthly food allowance is given, from April on.

12-III-930

Marioara is consulted at Colțea hospital, section for women’s illnesses [*secția bolilor de femei*]; she is found to be suffering from mild metritis and is prescribed a simple treatment that she can apply herself at home.

The gastric disorders are due to very damaged teeth, the repair of which is for the time being most necessary.

13-III-1930

Marioara alone creates her own recovery program. Having had her health condition explained to her, the client is encouraged to find a solution herself. In her opinion, the best way would be the following; until the end of a series of injections she will continue working, trying to pay off her debts as much as possible; overwork will be prevented by overfeeding the client and saving her strength with the help of the two girls; at the same time the client’s teeth will be repaired; after a series of injections in May the client will go to the sanatorium, where she will stay until her health is restored; during this time the children will remain in the care of Georgeta, who will also supervise Lenuța’s work; Lenuța will continue to work with Tanța and if possible, in collaboration with a more experienced craftswoman, so as to pay off the debts for the machines little by little and to prevent the accumulation of debts; the Assistance will contribute by supplementing the family budget. By collaborating with relatives from Curtea de Argeș the children will be sent to the countryside for recreation.

The client is full of confidence in the success of the program and is ready to continue the double activity with energy. The work with this family continues and there are prospects that within 2 months she will gain full material independence.

Appendix 2: Table and Timeline of Councilwomen in Bucharest City Councils (1919–1938)

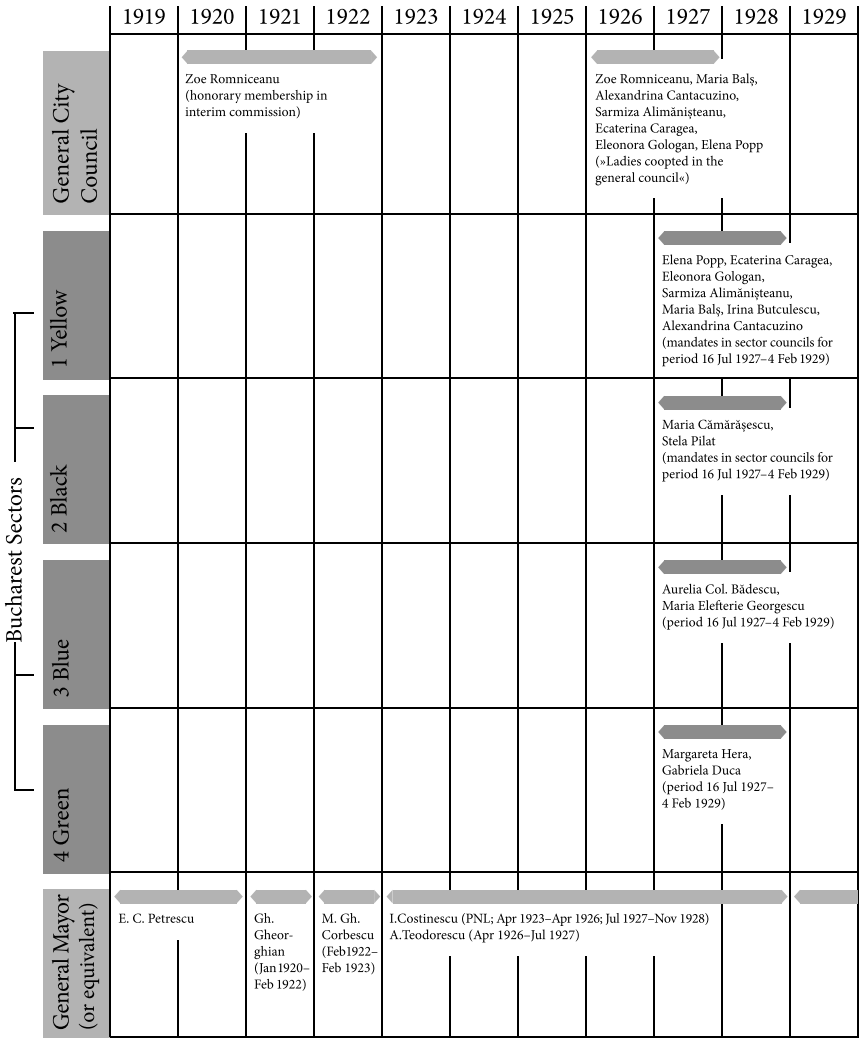

Figure 6: Table compiled from data in Serviciul Statistic al Mun. București, "Membrii Comisiunii Interimare dela 5 ianuarie 1920–2 fevruarie 1922," in *Anuarul Statistic al Orasului Bucuresti 1915–1923*, (Bucharest: Tipografia Curții Regale F. Gobl Fii, 1924), 3; Serviciul Statistic al Mun. București, "Tablou de Consilierii Municipali Dela 16 iulie 1927–4 fevruarie 1929," in *Anuarul Statistic al Municipiului București 1924–1930* (Bucharest: Tipografia de Arta și Editura Leopold Geller, 1931), v–x; Serviciul Statistic al Mun. București, "Tablou de membrii aleși ai Consiliului Comunal dela 31.X.1930–15.V.1931," in *Anuarul statistic al municipiului București 1924–1930* (Bucharest: Tipografia de Arta și Editura

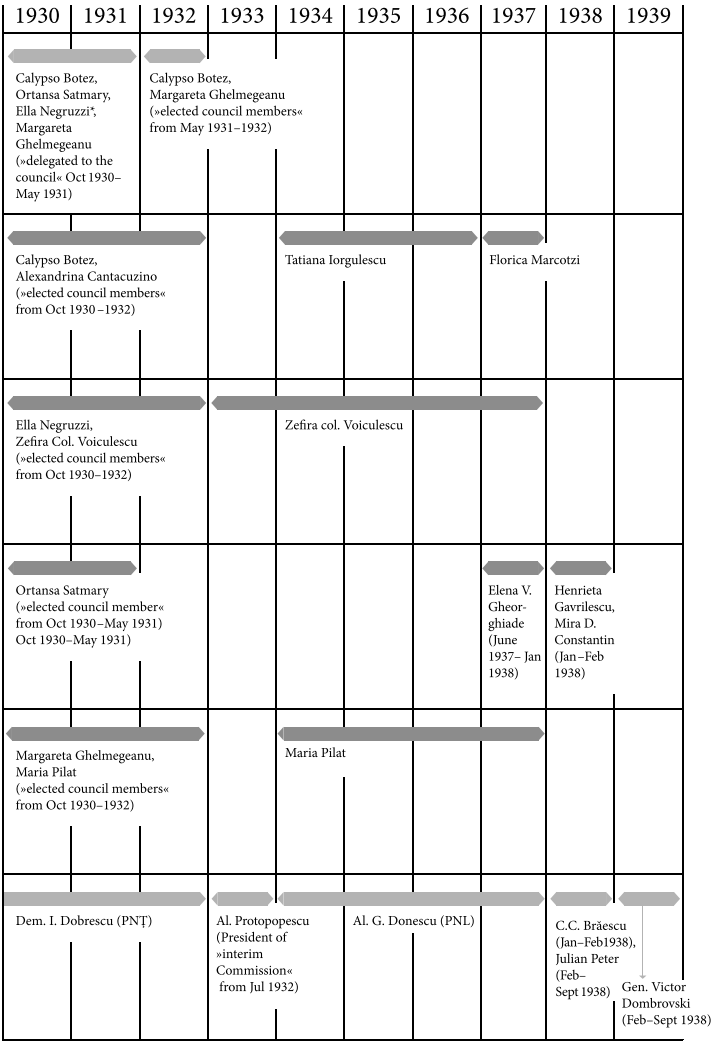

Figure 6: (continued)
Leopold Geller, 1931), xi–xii; Serviciul Statistic al Mun. București. "Tablou de primarii Capitalei cari s-au succedat dela 1859 până astăzi." In *Anuarul statistic al municipiului București 1924–1930,* iv–v. Bucharest: Tipografia de Arta și Editura Leopold Geller, 1931. Serviciul Statistic al Mun. București, "Membrii aleși ai Consiliului Comunal dela 16.V.1931 până în prezent," in *Anuarul statistic al municipiului București 1924–1930* (Bucharest: Tipografia de Arta și Editura Leopold Geller, 1931), xiii–xiv; Primăria Mun. București, *Anuarul statistic al orașului București 1931–1936,* xii–xxii. Table graphics: Paula Partzsch.

Appendix 3: Select Biographies

Gheorghe Banu (1889–1957). Hygienist physician who supported eugenics. Founder of the *Revista de igiena socială* [Journal of Social Hygiene] (1931–1944). Succeeded Dr. Iuliu Moldovan as Undersecretary in the MMSOS (1930–1931), later serving as Minister of Health and Social Protection in the antisemitic Octavian Goga government (1937–1938). Supported the practice of "voluntary" eugenic sterilization of persons suffering from certain diseases or criminals, considering the German 1933 law which allowed forced sterilization to be "authoritarian". In 1939, Banu argued for the need to "normalize the race" through medical certificates obtained by future spouses, preventative sterilization, and the segregation of persons considered disgenic.

See: Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization*, 198, 206; Marius Turda, ed., *The History of East-Central European Eugenics, 1900–1945: Sources and Commentaries* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 291.

Calypso Botez (1880–1937?). Held university degrees in history and philosophy, taught history in a Bucharest women's highschool after 1918. Founder of the Association for the Civil and Political Emancipation of Romanian Women (AECPFR). President of the National Council of Romanian Women (CNFR) between 1921 and 1930. Designated in the press as "theorist of Romanian feminism", in the early 1920s Botez co-authored several well-received articles of legal commentary on the 1923 Constitution and its impact on women's rights. Since around 1925 until at least 1936, president of the Section for Feminine Studies of the Romanian Social Institute. Supporter of the National Peasantist Party, at least since 1929. Councilwoman elected on PNȚ party lists in Bucharest General Council and Sector 1 (Yellow), between 1930 and 1932 (possibly 1933). Married to prominent progressive lawyer Corneliu Botez. In 1936, as president of the Federation of Romanian University Women, organizer of a women's protest against Mussolini's revisionism, in collaboration with the "Feminine Front" and other former PNȚ councilwomen.

See: Botez and Botez, "Actele juridice între soți [Legal documents between spouses]"; Botez, "Drepturile femeii în Constituţia viitoare [Women's rights in the forthcoming Constitution]"; Botez, "Problema feminismului. O sistematizare a elementelor lui [The problem of feminism. A systematization of its elements]"; Botez and Botez, *Problema drepturilor femeii române*; De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*, 76–78; Izabela Sadoveanu, "După Congresul Femeilor Române [After the Congress of Romanian Women]," *Adeverul*, September 19, 1936. I reconstituted Botez's activity after 1932 from various articles printed in the *Adeverul* daily, among which "O actiune anti-revizionistă a organizațiilor femi-

niste [An anti-revisionist action of feminist organizations]," *Adeverul*, November 20, 1936; Sadoveanu, "Cu prilejul unui congres feminin [On the occasion of a feminine congress]."

Alexandrina Cantacuzino (1876–1944). One of the most important leaders of the Romanian women's movement; President of the SONFR (1918–1938); Vice-President (from 1921) of the CNFR and its only President from 1930; co-founder of the Little Entente of Women (1923–1929); member of the official delegation of Romania to the League of Nations (1929–1936); Vice-President of the ICW (1925–1936) and convenor of the ICW Art Committee (from 1936); President of the Romanian feminist organizations Solidaritatea (Solidarity) (from 1925) and of the Gruparea Femeilor Romane (GFR, Association of Romanian Women) (from 1929). At the League of Nations, Cantacuzino was appointed to the influential Child Welfare Committee (1934) and the Advisory Committee on Social Questions (1937, 1938, 1939). In 1939, placed under house arrest due to her son's connections to the Romanian fascist Iron Guard movement. In a letter written to a confidante during this period,she defended her politics as "nationalist and liberal". Released that year, between 1940 and 1943, Cantacuzino resumed her public activities.

See: Roxana Cheşchebec, "Feminist Ideologies and Activism in Romania (approx. 1890s–1940s): Nationalism and Internationalism" (PhD dissertation, Central European University, Budapest, 2005), 74–75. Cantacuzino, *Cincisprezece ani*; De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms in Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe*, 89.

Ecaterina (Caterina) Cerkez (1910?–1970?). Received a humanities education in Bucharest and came from a family of engineers and architects interested in social reform. A collaborator of the more-conservative Alexandrina Cantacuzino in the 1920s, Cerkez undertook in 1925 a research trip together with the latter in the United States and Canada, at the behest of the International Council of Women, where she noted the activites of mutual aid associations set up by Romanian immigrants there. She was a secretary of the National Council of Women and occasionally reported on women's labour for international organizations. Until 1947, when she became a French teacher, Cerkez was active in political and educational initiatives. She was vice-president of the Asociația "Amicele Tinerelor Fete" (ATF).

See: Catherine Cerkez, "Section Francaise. Roumanie," International Women's News., The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs, 23, no. 4 (1929): 62; C. Cerkez, "Legislation Industrielle Pour Les Femmes. 13. Roumanie," International Women's News., The Gerritsen Collection of Aletta H. Jacobs, 29, no. 6 (1935): 48–49; Catherine Cerkez, "Roumania," in What the Country Women of the World Are Doing, ed.

Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks Gordon, Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1932), 74–76.

Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția (1908–1978). Social researcher. In ethnographic research from the 1920s, Cristescu-Golopenția focused on women's magical practices in rural households, in the context of the monographic investigations conducted by members of the Bucharest Sociology Seminar and the Romanian Social Institute. In the 1930s, Cristescu-Golopenția obtained her doctorate at the Sorbonne University, supervised by Marcel Mauss. After 1945, following her husband's arrest and imprisonment, Cristescu—still in Romania—taught Romanian literature and published academically in the field of comparative linguistics.

See: Cristescu-Golopenţia, *Credințe și rituri magice*; Ștefania Cristescu, *Sporul vieții: jurnal, studii și corespondență* (Bucharest: Paideia, 2008).

Ella Negruzzi (1876–1948). Born in Hermeziu, in the Negruzzi family of prominent, liberal progressive intellectuals. Graduate of Iași University with a degree in law. Around 1910 to 1912, founder of a women's social center [*cămin cultural*] in her native village, and in 1911 (together with Reuss-Ianculescu) of the "Woman's Emancipation" society, the first women's association in Romania affiliated to the IWSA (in 1913). In 1913, Negruzzi became a public figure after being banned from joining the Bar in her native Iași county. In 1919, she won a Supreme Court appeal on the issue and was consequently allowed to practice law in Ilfov county (which included Bucharest). Founding member of the AECPFR (in 1918). Member of the National Peasantist Party since at least 1929. PNȚ municipal councilwoman in Sector 2 Black, between 1930 and 1932. As of 1935, member of the antifascist "Group of Democratic Lawyers" and from 1936 of the popular front organization the "Feminine Front". In 1936, she became internationally very visible through coverage in the left-wing press as defender of communist Ana Pauker and eighteen other communist women and men, abusively detained and tried.

See: I.M. Ștefan and V Firoiu, *Sub semnul Minervei [Beneath Minerva's sign]* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975), 109–115.

Veturia Manuilă (1896–1986). Graduated from medical studies in Budapest and Cluj, becoming familiar with American social work through self-funded courses at Johns Hopkins University (1925–1926). Upon her return from the USA, in 1929, she founded the Superior School of Social Assistance "Princess Ileana" (SSAS) and the Demonstration Center for the Assistance of the Family in Tei neighborhood. Married to statistician Sabin Manuilă, they were both associated with the National Peasant Party and the Romanian Social Institute. In 1941, during Marshal Antonescu's Nazi-allied dictatorship, she became a member of the technical coun-

cil of the Patronage Council of Social Works (CPOS, led by Maria Antonescu). In 1947, together with her husband, Veturia Manuilă emigrated to the United States, working in the field of immigrants' integration for the rest of her life.

See: Maria Bucur, "Mișcarea eugenistă și rolurile de gen [The Eugenicist movement and gender roles]," in *Patriarhat și emancipare în istoria gândirii politice românești*, eds. Maria Bucur and Mihaela Miroiu (Bucharest: Polirom, 2002), 129–131; Emilia Plosceanu, "The Rockefeller Foundation in Romania: For a Crossed History of Social Reform and Science," Research Report, Rockefeller Archive Center Research Reports Online (New York: Rockefeller Archives, 2008),

http://www.rockarch.org/publications/resrep/pdf/plosceanu.pdf.

Appendix 4: Evolution of retail prices for key consumer goods (1920–1938) (in Lei)

	Rent for a 3-room apartment	Cement (100 Kg)	Wool cloth – average quality (1 meter)	Firewood (100 kg)	Eggs (100 pieces)	Milk (1 L)	Chicken (1 bird)	Potatoes (1 Kg)	Bread (2nd best quality)
1920									
1921		219.5		33.28	77.23	2.79	17.96	1.75	2.91
1922		228.03	160	41.86	121.14	3.86	29.75	2.17	3.5
1923		284.95	208	72	150	5.85	42.5	2.95	4.35
1924		310	220	85.5	200	8.25	51.85	4.55	7
1925		345	722.5	87.75	255	9.25	55.45	4.45	11.55
1926		369.21	757.1	106.26	256.79	9.9	62.27	4.23	10.9
1927		370	725	104.5	255	9.75	70.5	4.47	9
1928		301.1	809.1	88.15	235.3	9.5	58.5	4	9.1
1929	2916	304.75	805.65	88.8	236.9	8.8	57.4	3.4	8.9
1930	2250	290	728	86.9	188.55	7.85	52	2.5	6.9
1931	1720	no data	584	68.55	154.4	6.35	42.85	3.05	4.9
1932	1370	no data	473.55	60.8	134.5	5.25	35.35	2.65	5.95
1933	1360	no data	421.8	55.35	127.85	5	33.2	2.45	6.75

1934	1360	no data	442.8	53.1	118.6	4.75	31.65	2.35	5.85
1937	1550		477.3	63.1	155.55	5.05	44.65	2.75	7.1
1938	1595		534	74.4	173	5.4	49.8	3.25	7.2

Source: Table compiled from select data in Direcțiunea Generală a Statisticei, *Anuarul statistic al României 1922[Statistical yearbook of Romania 1922]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Curtii Regale F. Gobl Fii, 1922), 156–157; Direcțiunea Generală a Statisticii, *Anuarul statistic al României 1923 [Statistical yearbook of Romania 1923]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Curtii Regale F. Gobl Fii, 1924), 110–113; Institutul de Statistica Generală a Statului, *Anuarul statistic al României 1925 [Statistical yearbook of Romania 1925]* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Eminescu," 1926), 130–131; Institutul de Statistica Generală a Statului, *Anuarul statistic al României 1926 [Statistical yearbook of Romania 1926]* (Bucharest: Tipografia Curtii Regale F. Gobl Fii, 1927), 130–131; Institutul de Statistica Generală a Statului, *Anuarul statistic al României 1928 [Statistical yearbook of Romania 1928]* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Eminescu," 1929), 290–291; *Anuarul statistic al României 1939 și 1940 [Statistical yearbook of Romania 1939 and 1940]* (Bucharest: Institutul Central de Statistică, 1940), 632–633.

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Index

To increase usability and decrease index length, the number of entries related to very frequent terms, such as “women”, “welfare” “work” and “Bucharest”, has been minimized. For similar reasons, readers are asked to refer to the List of Abbreviations on pp. xi-xii for the full Romanian language name of all organizations for which abbreviations are indicated in parentheses here.

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