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CONTENTS

Editorial 7

Articles 9

The Role of Small-Scale Entrepreneurs in Shaping the Turkish Community in Post-1989 Czechia 11
AHMET UYSAL

Weaponizing the Past: The Role of Historical Biopics in the Stalinist Culture War (1939–1941) 33
MICHAŁ BOBROWSKI

The Psychological Impact of War Violence and Its Taming: "Shell Shock" in Greece during and in the Aftermath of the First World War 61
ALEXANDROS MAKRIS

Book Reviews 93

Instructions for Authors 101

EDITORIAL

Dear colleagues,

We are delighted to present the first issue of *Studia Territorialia* for 2026.

This year, our journal celebrates its 25th anniversary. For this issue, we have compiled three original articles that each provide a distinctive approach to the contemporary history and political transformations of Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, three of the core macro-regions defining our scope.

The volume opens with a contribution to the field of migration and diaspora studies. This article adds to the growing body of literature on the post-communist transition. The new opportunities provided by the fall of communism in Czechia attracted a wave of small-scale entrepreneurs from Turkey, who opted to move there for business. Ahmet Uysal's article traces the fate of this first wave of migrants from Turkey and examines their role in forming the Turkish diaspora in the Czech Republic. Based on semi-structured interviews with members of the local Turkish community, it analyzes how their experiences with resettlement and doing business in Czechia in the 1990s mirrored the country's broader socio-economic trends.

The second article contributes to the historiography of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. Following the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact with Nazi Germany in 1939, the Soviet Union initiated a string of aggressions, invading Poland and a number of other sovereign European nations. The USSR's new alliance with Hitler at the outbreak of World War II necessitated a shift in domestic messaging and in the operation of the entire propaganda apparatus. The cultural front assumed a prominent role, most notably in cinematography. Michał Bobrowski investigates the main ideological tenets and narrative strategies that accompanied the war campaigns between 1939 and 1941. Drawing on a close scrutiny of two selected historical biopics from that era, he shows how, by reinvigorating

old historical myths, Soviet cinema weaponized the past to mobilize the domestic public behind the war effort and legitimize the country's external policies vis-à-vis its western neighbors.

Finally, the third article explores the problem of taming violence in war and post-war societies. Shifting the focus to Greece, it examines how Greece's participation in World War I and the subsequent Greek-Turkish War impacted soldiers' mental health. Relying on patient records from the archive of the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital near Athens, Alexandros Makris investigates how war-related mental disorders and violent behavior were treated and institutionally managed in this Balkan country during the conflicts and in the aftermath of a decade of war. In doing so, he introduces the Greek medical discourse on war neuroses in the context of contemporary international debates on "shell shock," the dominant diagnosis of that time.

For more such articles, please be sure to check our upcoming special issue, "Taming War and Postwar Violence," which will be published shortly.

On behalf of the Editors,

Lucie Filipová and Jan Šír
doi: 10.14712/23363231.2026.6

ARTICLES

2026 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 11–32
STUDIA TERRITORIALIA 1

THE ROLE OF SMALL-SCALE ENTREPRENEURS IN SHAPING THE TURKISH COMMUNITY IN POST-1989 CZECHIA

AHMET UYSAL
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Abstract
Following the Velvet Revolution of 1989, Czechia's transition to a market economy created new opportunities for foreign entrepreneurs, attracting a small but significant group of Turkish small-scale entrepreneurs and migrants. While most Turkish entrepreneurs in the post-communist era concentrated on culturally and geographically closer regions to Turkey, some chose to settle in Czechia during the 1990s, establishing businesses in sectors such as textiles, furniture, tourism, and souvenirs. This study examines the role of early entrepreneurs and migrants in shaping the Turkish community in the Czech Republic, analyzing how their experiences reflected and contributed to the country's broader socio-economic transformation. Although the Turkish population remained small, these early actors laid important foundations for subsequent migration flows, particularly after 2010. Their initial success was facilitated by low competition and regulatory flexibility, yet the increasing institutionalization of the market in later years introduced new challenges. Despite these shifts, their local expertise and symbolic capital continue to influence the structure and public perception of the Turkish community. Methodologically, the study is based on qualitative research, drawing on semi-structured interviews with Turkish migrants to analyze their entrepreneurial

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experiences and community dynamics. By focusing on this group, the study contributes to the literature on new migration destinations, underscoring the long-term significance of small-scale Turkish entrepreneurship and migration in post-1989 Czechia.
Keywords: post-communism; transition; migration; small-scale entrepreneurs; Czechia; Turkish diaspora
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Introduction

En route from Prague Airport to the city center, a modest roadside kebab shop marked by the sign "Türk-eli" stands out as a visible marker of the Turkish migrant presence in the urban landscape. At first glance, seeing the word "Turk" on a kebab shop appears entirely unremarkable, as in today's Europe – shaped by the phenomenon of the transnational döner kebab[1] – such establishments are closely associated with Turkish migrants and can be found in nearly every corner of the continent. A curious passerby consulting a dictionary might discover that *eli* means "hand" in Turkish – thus rendering the name as "the hand of the Turk" – a choice that reflects a deliberate and culturally meaningful branding strategy. However, the kebab shop's name reveals a deeper layer of symbolic and contextual significance, as removing the hyphen uncovers the term "Türkeli," which denotes a small district along Turkey's Black Sea coast. The choice of the name *Türkeli* can similarly be interpreted as an attempt to maintain a connection with one's place of origin through everyday commercial practices. However, the narrative cannot be fully understood if cultural referencing is treated as the sole explanatory framework.

Based on interviews conducted for this study, in the 1960s, many people from Turkey – among them numerous families from the district of Türkeli in Sinop – migrated to Germany as guest workers. Over time, one such family established a second-hand furniture business there and, seizing the opportunities that emerged after the 1989 transition, relocated to Czechia to open furniture stores. As these businesses expanded and new branches were established, they facilitated a migration chain that brought many from Türkeli to Czechia for employment. The owner of the Türkeli kebab shop, was among those who migrated in this context, initially to work in the furniture trade. Over time, as the furniture retail sector underwent changes in ownership and structure, some of

[1] Ibrahim Sirkeci, "Transnational Döner Kebab Taking Over the UK," *Transnational Marketing Journal* 4, no. 2 (2016): 143–158, doi: 10.33182/tmj.v4i2.397.

these migrants transitioned into other forms of work. As the kebab shop illustrates, many ultimately established small businesses of their own and built new lives. In this sense, the shop's sign signifies more than just a name; it embodies the broader transformation of the Turkish community in Czechia that began in the wake of the collapse of the communist regime.

The Velvet Revolution of 1989 was a pivotal moment that not only transformed the political system of Czechoslovakia, but also its economic and social structures. This transformation entered a new phase with the independence of the Czech Republic in 1993, turning the post-communist transition process into a subject of extensive social science inquiry at both theoretical and empirical levels. Researchers working on this period have tended to focus on topics such as economic transformation, the adoption of liberal market policies, and the reshaping of migration frameworks. In this context, scholars have analyzed the institutional development of the transition economy and the implementation of market reforms, paying particular attention to privatization strategies. During this period, the state's pro-market economic liberalization policies aimed at improving the investment climate created new opportunities for domestic and international entrepreneurs alike. However, the social consequences of this structural transformation are often treated as a secondary issue in literature, with limited attention given to its effect on individuals, particularly migrant workers, in their everyday lives.

The shifts in the political and economic landscape created new opportunities for mobility, particularly for international entrepreneurs. The shift to a market economy, alongside trade liberalization and capital inflows, has made post-communist countries such as the Czech Republic more attractive to investors.[2] In this environment, small and medium-sized enterprises gained prominence, largely because of the flexible regulatory environment and comparatively lower costs of doing business. This liberalization led foreign entrepreneurs to concentrate mainly in the trade and service sectors,[3] while researchers examined how their activities intersected with evolving migration policy frameworks.[4]

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[2] Gil Eyal, Iván Szelényi, and Eleanor R. Townsley, *Making Capitalism Without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe* (London: Verso, 1998).

[3] Sylvie Burianová and Hana Votradovcová, "Czech Republic: Socio-Economic Aspects of Migration," in *Phantom Menace: The Politics and Policies of Migration in Central Europe*, ed. Jacek Kucharczyk and Grigorij Mesežnikov (Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 2018), 82–104.

[4] Dušan Drbohlav, "Immigration and the Czech Republic (with a Special Focus on the Foreign Labor Force)," *International Migration Review* 37, no. 1 (2003): 194–224, doi: 10.1111/j.1747-7379.2003.tb00134.x.

Although the effects of the transition process on regional development have been widely discussed,[5] it has been emphasized that studies on the social integration processes of entrepreneurs within this development trajectory remain limited. Alongside economic restructuring, changes in migration policy have also emerged as a focal point in scholarly discussions. While the transformation of the Czech Republic from a "transit country" to a "destination for migrants" in the 1990s has been well documented, the socio-cultural aspects of migrant experiences are often overlooked. Although migration policies have evolved within the framework of alignment with the European Union, the process has been characterized by a notable degree of ambiguity and selectivity. In conclusion, literature on the post-1989 transformation in the Czech Republic has largely focused on macro-structural changes, while the micro-level agency of migrants, their interactions with local communities and their everyday practices have largely been overlooked. This has led to an understanding of the period that is predominantly based on economic indicators. However, migrants' spatial settlement practices and micro-level social contributions are important for comprehending the post-communist transformation.

One of the key concepts underpinning this study is entrepreneurship, a significant dimension of migrants' micro-level contributions, defined as the process of mobilizing economic resources into production through novel combinations and the innovative exploitation of market opportunities.[6] Entrepreneurs are typically categorized by the scale of their operations as small, medium, or large-scale actors. Small-scale entrepreneurs, in particular, are characterized by operating with limited capital in local markets, organizing within flexible structures, and standing out with their capacity for rapid adaptation.[7] Following Czechia's transition to a market economy after 1989, entrepreneurial activity in the early years was primarily driven by individual initiative and informal networks, reflecting a pragmatic and experience-based nature.[8] Although some large-scale investors

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[5] Josef Bernard, Věra Patočková, and Tomáš Kostelecký, "Islands of Innovation in the Czech Republic: The International Labour Market of Highly Skilled Workers and Brain Gain Policies," in *Networking Regionalised Innovative Labour Markets*, ed. Ulrich Hilpert and Helen Lawton Smith (London: Routledge, 2012), 136–159.

[6] Joseph A. Schumpeter, *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest, and the Business Cycle* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1983; originally published 1934); Scott Shane and Sankaran Venkataraman, "The Promise of Entrepreneurship as a Field of Research," *Academy of Management Review* 25, no. 1 (2000): 217–226.

[7] David J. Storey, *Understanding the Small Business Sector* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[8] David Smallbone and Friederike Welter, "The Distinctiveness of Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies," *Small Business Economics* 16, no. 4 (2001): 249–262, doi: 10.1023/A:1011159216578.

entered the country during this transitional period, the overall entrepreneurial landscape was predominantly shaped by small and medium-sized investors.[9] Large capital groups primarily operated in institutional sectors such as industry, finance, and infrastructure. Meanwhile, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs were more inclined toward areas requiring lower entry costs, including trade, hospitality, restaurants, food services, and other service-oriented sectors. These investors were typically organized as individual actors, family-run businesses, or migration-based micro-enterprise networks. The simplified regulatory framework, low-cost market structure, and limited competition of the post-communist period created favorable conditions for these groups. Moreover, the structural gap left by the state's withdrawal from the economy enabled small-scale entrepreneurs to swiftly establish a presence in local markets.[10] In 1990s Czechia, despite the presence of large-scale investors, the entrepreneurial landscape was primarily shaped by small and medium-sized actors. This environment opened new pathways not only for domestic and Western capital but also for entrepreneurs from countries with no prior historical or cultural ties to Czechia. Among them, Turkish entrepreneurs – though small in scale – played a notable role in navigating the post-communist economic space.

This study focuses on how early Turkish entrepreneurs adapted to these structural openings, which sectors they entered, and how they engaged in processes of local integration. The central aim is to examine their role in the formation of the Turkish community in Czechia after 1989. Drawing on qualitative data and historical analysis, the study explores how these pioneers operated not only as economic agents, but also as cultural intermediaries and community-builders. In doing so, it contributes to both migration scholarship and the literature on transition economies by bringing micro-level agency into dialogue with macro-structural transformation. It is important to underline that the term "Turkish entrepreneur" alone does not sufficiently capture the complexity of the actors under study in the Czech context. In this research, the category of "entrepreneur" is closely intertwined with that of "migrant," reflecting overlapping experiences of mobility, adaptation, and community-building. This conceptual distinction is not merely semantic, but carries analytical weight, particularly

[9] David Smallbone and Friederike Welter, "Entrepreneurship and the Role of Government in Post-Socialist Economies: Some Institutional Challenges," *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 35, no. 2 (2010): 320–333, doi: 10.12759/hsr.35.2010.2.320-333.

[10] Iván Szelényi, "Social Inequalities in State Socialist Redistributive Economies," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 19, no. 1–2 (1978): 63–87; Smallbone and Welter, "The Distinctiveness of Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies," 249–262.

in understanding the dual role these individuals play in both economic and socio-cultural domains. The choice to use both "entrepreneur" and "migrant" as analytical categories, along with its implications for the research design, will be discussed in the following methodology section.

Beyond its economic implications, this study also engages with the literature on diaspora and spatial theory, which explores how migrants reproduce belonging and identity through everyday spatial and entrepreneurial practices. The symbolic and material dimensions of the "Türkeli" kebab shop – its name, location, and social embeddedness – reflect the interplay between *memory*, *mobility*, and *place-making*, a relationship widely discussed in diaspora scholarship.[11] Building on the notion of *diaspora space* and the relational understanding of place,[12] this paper views entrepreneurial activity as a spatial performance through which migrants inscribe their histories, aspirations, and collective identities onto the post-socialist urban landscape. Through this lens, the kebab shop ceases to be a mere site of commerce; it becomes a micro-space where embodied memories and social imaginaries intersect, giving form to a new geography of diaspora.

Within this broader framework, the article underscores the pivotal role of the first-generation Turkish entrepreneurs who arrived in the early 1990s, whose small-scale initiatives formed the earliest nuclei of what would later evolve into a Turkish community in Czechia. These pioneers – often operating through informal networks and flexible structures – acted as cultural intermediaries and spatial anchors, transforming the post-communist urban environment into a site of diasporic sociality. Their activities demonstrate how migrant agency contributes to the social reconstruction of transition economies by linking economic adaptation with community formation and place-based identity production.

By focusing on this largely unexplored group within Czech post-socialist migration studies, the study addresses a significant gap in both the empirical and conceptual understanding of the subject. It argues that the processes of entrepreneurship, adaptation and community formation should not be viewed as distinct areas, but as interconnected dynamics that reshape migrant identities and urban

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[11] James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9, no. 3 (1994): 302–338; Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996); Steven Vertovec, "Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22, no. 2 (1999): 447–462, doi: 10.1080/014198799329558.

[12] Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*. See also Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar, eds., *Locating Migration: Rescaling Cities and Migrants* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

landscapes. In doing so, the paper contributes to an interdisciplinary dialogue between migration studies, diaspora studies, and post-communist transformation studies. It reveals how everyday entrepreneurial spaces become laboratories for reimagining belonging and locality in post-1989 Central Europe.

Methodology

In this study, the concept of "community" does not imply a monolithic or fully homogenized entity but refers to a network of social relations, shared symbolic markers (such as the "Türkeli" connection), and emerging collective memory. Although much of the existing literature on Turks in Czechia has focused on historical processes and inter-state relations,[13] research on the community itself – particularly the segment that has gradually emerged since 1989 – remains scarce. Among the limited studies, those by Tungul and Uysal et al. are notable for their focus on the contemporary Turkish population in the country: Tungul examines whether this group can be defined as a diaspora, while Uysal analyzes Turkish migration by periodizing it and exploring the associated economic, cultural, and social transformations.[14] While these works provide valuable insights, the broader academic literature on the Turkish community in Czechia remains underdeveloped. This study therefore seeks, first, to contribute to the scholarship on migration and emerging communities by examining the socio-economic transformation in Czechia after 1989, and second – and more centrally – to investigate the experiences of the first Turkish migrants and entrepreneurs who played a formative role in establishing the foundations of this community.

The first Turks to arrive in Czechia in the early 1990s were mainly small-scale entrepreneurs, often accompanied by migrant workers engaged in the same informal economic networks. Although few in number, most identified themselves as "entrepreneurs," reflecting the flexible and opportunity-driven ethos of the post-Cold War economy. Here, the term "small-scale entrepreneur" is used broadly to include both formal business owners and migrant workers involved in entrepreneurial practices. By the 2000s, diversification of activities showed

[13] Ali Öncü, "İki Savaş Arası Dönemde Türkiye-Çekoslovakya İlişkilerine Genel Bir Bakış," *Akademik İncelemeler Dergisi* 9, no. 2 (2014): 159–181, doi: 10.17550/aid.14407.

[14] Lucie Tungul, "The Turkish Community in the Czech Republic: A Diaspora in the Making?" *Politics in Central Europe* 16, no. 2 (2020): 499–523, doi: 10.2478/pce-2020-0025; Ahmet Uysal, Hasan İçen, and Kaan Kapan, "Periods of Turkish Migration in the Czech Republic: A Diachronic Perspective on the Turkish Community," *Ege Coğrafya Dergisi* 34, no. 1 (2025): 125–140, doi: 10.51800/ecd.1652991.

that entrepreneurship had become not only an economic role but also a form of social and cultural belonging, blurring the distinction between "entrepreneur" and "migrant."

This study employs a qualitative research design, using semi-structured in-depth interviews with 24 Turkish migrants who arrived in Czechia during the 1990s. Conducted throughout 2024, these interviews adopted a meaning-centered approach to capture participants' migration experiences, business practices, community relations, and identity perceptions. Participants were recruited primarily through snowball sampling, utilizing initial entry points within the established business owners in Prague and Brno to reach a diverse range of actors. Prior to each interview, informed consent was obtained, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Data were thematically coded, with attention to underlying meaning structures, recurring themes, and variations across participants, such as differing entrepreneurial trajectories and sectoral shifts in the 2000s. While these accounts illuminate evolving strategies and the fluidity between entrepreneurship and migrant identity, their retrospective nature introduces limitations, including selective memory, nostalgia, and reinterpretation.[15] As Thompson notes, oral testimonies reflect not only past realities but also present-day reconstructions,[16] meaning that early years – often remembered as a "golden era" – may be idealized and structural challenges understated. These narrative dynamics are therefore treated not merely as methodological constraints but as insights into the construction of collective memory within the Turkish community in Czechia.[17]

General Overview of the Turkish Community in Czechia

In recent years, the Turkish population in Czechia has grown steadily, reaching approximately 5,668 individuals by 2024.[18] This figure places the community 21st among all foreign national groups in the country. Primarily concentrated in major urban centers such as Prague and Brno, the community is composed

[15] Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2002), 77–88.

[16] Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 124–129.

[17] Anna Green, "Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates," *Oral History* 32, no. 2 (2004): 35–44.

[18] Czech Statistical Office (CZSO), *Foreigners in the Czech Republic: Statistical Yearbook 2024* (Prague: Czech Statistical Office, 2024), https://csu.gov.cz/produkty/statistical-yearbook-of-the-czech-republic-2024.

largely of young adults between the ages of 20 and 30. Of the total population, 3,958 are men and 1,710 are women. While 1,241 individuals possess permanent residence permits, the remaining 4,427 reside under temporary or other legal statuses. This distribution reflects a migrant group still in the process of long-term settlement. Demographic data indicate a steady increase in the Turkish population in Czechia over the past three decades – rising from 223 individuals in 1993, to 520 in 2004, 1,664 in 2015, and reaching 5,668 by 2024. Although the absolute numbers remain modest, the upward trajectory is noteworthy and points to a gradual yet sustained growth pattern. Despite this trend, the Turkish community continues to represent a relatively small segment within Czechia's broader migrant population. The Turkish migration experience in Czechia thus calls for a nuanced, layered analysis, best pursued by dividing the post-1989 period into three analytically distinct phases,[19] each characterized by specific configurations of migration motivations, policy contexts, and patterns of community formation.

The first phase of Turkish migration to Czechia (1989–2004), often referred to as the pioneer period, was shaped primarily by small and medium-sized entrepreneurs who capitalized on the regulatory and institutional gaps of the post-communist transition. Though few in number, they established early ventures in trade, hospitality, and services, laying the groundwork for subsequent migration waves and community formation. The second phase (2004–2016), coinciding with Czechia's EU accession, saw a diversification of the migrant profile as entrepreneurs were joined by skilled professionals and labor migrants, shifting the community toward a more complex and multidimensional structure. The third phase (2016–present) has been marked by structural transformation, with rising numbers of both highly skilled migrants and service-sector labor, particularly in the food industry. The prominence of the döner kebab trade during this period has enhanced the community's economic visibility and served as a cultural marker in urban spaces, especially in Prague and Brno.

This tripartite framework underscores that Turkish migration should be viewed not merely as an economic process but as a dynamic phenomenon shaped by cultural affiliations, agency, and collective memory. Focusing on the first phase is particularly significant, as it unfolded amid the transition from communism to a liberal market economy – an environment of institutional gaps, flexible opportunities, and low competition. Medium-scale entrepreneurs' early initiatives were more than individual ventures; they constituted a foundational

[19] Uysal, İçen, and Kapan, "Periods of Turkish Migration," 128.

moment in establishing a Turkish presence in Czechia, later remembered as a formative period that influenced the social and spatial orientations of subsequent migrants. Examining this early phase offers insights into both the local dynamics of post-communist transformation and the emergence of diasporic formations in the Czech context.

"*Golden Years*": Unexplored Opportunities Far from Turkey

The disintegration of the Eastern Bloc and the collapse of communist regimes in 1989 led to a significant shift in Turkey – not only in the realm of foreign policy but also in public and political discourse. During this period, the notion of a "Turkish world stretching from the Adriatic to the Great Wall of China"[20] gained increasing prominence in media and political rhetoric. Regions such as Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and the Turkic-speaking parts of Asia were collectively reimagined as components of a broader "historical and cultural hinterland" to which Turkey was believed to have deep-rooted civilizational ties. This discursive reorientation reflected a renewed interest in formerly peripheral geographies within Turkey's post-Cold War geopolitical imagination.[21] In Turkish public discourse, representations of this new era were largely shaped by themes such as "opening doors," "reuniting with kin," and "a historical longing for reunion."[22] These motifs reflected a romanticized sense of renewal that resonated not only in public policy but also in the narratives of entrepreneurial actors.[23] In the aftermath of the Cold War, the initial contacts established between Turkey and the former communist countries were primarily driven by economic motivations. These emerging relationships were not limited to formal political engagements but also unfolded through direct interactions between populations and increasing exchanges within newly liberalized markets.

The post-Cold War period generated a two-directional pattern of spatial mobility in Turkey's relationship with its post-communist neighbors. From

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[20] Mustafa Aydın, "Determinants of Turkish Foreign Policy: Historical Framework and Traditional Inputs," in *Seventy-Five Years of the Turkish Republic*, ed. Sylvia Kedourie (London: Routledge, 2013), 152–186.

[21] Arif Akbaş, "Post-Sovyet Dönemde Rusya ve Yeni Orta Doğu Politikaları," *Orta Doğu ve Orta Asya-Kafkaslar Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 3, no. 2 (2023): 1–17.

[22] Ziya Öniş and Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era," *Turkish Studies* 10, no. 1 (2009): 7–24, doi: 10.1080/14683840802648562.

[23] Mustafa Kutlay, "Economy as the 'Practical Hand' of 'New Turkish Foreign Policy': A Political Economy Explanation," *Insight Turkey* 13, no. 1 (2011): 67–88.

one direction, individuals from former Soviet republics – particularly Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia – began arriving in Turkey as part of the so-called "suitcase trade." This informal economic activity led to the emergence of new commercial zones, commonly referred to as "Russian markets," notably in Istanbul's Laleli, a centrally located, wholesale-oriented textile district catering to short-term migrant traders, as well as in various towns along the Black Sea coast. These particular spots and their periphery where such economic activities take place have become not only centers of commerce but also important sites of cultural contact and everyday social interaction. On the other side of this dynamic, Turkish entrepreneurs have gradually deepened their presence in post-communist regions, particularly through growing engagement in sectors such as retail, textiles, tourism, and food. The outward orientation of Turkish entrepreneurs in this period was shaped not only by market opportunities, but also by factors rooted in geography and history. Investment decisions were often influenced by linguistic and cultural familiarity, shared historical legacies, and the practical advantages of geographic proximity. As a result, regions such as Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia – areas with strong historical and cultural ties to Turkey – became preferred destinations for Turkish business initiatives. This pattern of expansion reflects a strategic logic that blends economic interests with social, cultural, and emotional affinities, highlighting the multilayered nature of entrepreneurial decision-making in transnational contexts.[24]

Czechoslovakia represents a notable exception to this general trend of Turkish entrepreneurs favoring countries with historical or geographical proximity to Turkey. While historical, cultural, and migratory ties were indeed limited compared to other regions, they were not entirely absent. In the 1920s and 1930s, for example, a small number of Turkish students studied in the country. Moreover, economic relations were maintained during the socialist period; trade statistics indicate existing, albeit modest, commercial exchanges, suggesting that Czechoslovakia was not a completely unknown market to Turkish economic actors. Nevertheless, the primary surge of Turkish entrepreneurs in the early 1990s was driven less by these historical footnotes and more by the structural conditions

[24] Deniz Yükseker, "Business Relations into/from Gendered Social Relations: Exchange in the Transnational Suitcase Trade Market of Laleli," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 27 (2002): 77–106, doi: 10.1017/S0896634600003812; H. Deniz Yükseker, *Laleli-Moskova Mekiği: Kayıtdışı Ticaret ve Cinsiyet İlişkileri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003); Murat Kırcı, *Türkiye'deki Bavul Ticareti: Gelişmeler ve Yeni Alternatifler* (Master's thesis, Marmara University, 2007); Deniz Yükseker, "Türkiye Toplumunu Birarada Tutan Nedir? Toplumsal Tutkal Olarak Borç ve Borçluluk," *Toplum ve Bilim* 117 (2010): 6–18.

of the time – namely, the country's rapid transition to a liberal market economy after 1989, its relatively low level of competition, and its more affordable business environment compared to Western Europe. These factors combined to create a window of opportunity that appealed to early movers seeking untapped markets.

The motivations of Turkish migrant entrepreneurs who arrived in the Czech Republic after 1989 were shaped by a variety of factors, including the search for new economic opportunities, the influence of social networks, an interest in emerging markets, and, for some, a sense of adventure associated with settling in an unfamiliar environment. Although the Czech Republic was relatively unknown in Turkey, this initial disadvantage was, for some entrepreneurs, perceived as an indication of untapped opportunities. One interviewee remarks, "Everyone in Turkey was going to Azerbaijan or Russia; I wanted to try somewhere different."[25] Another participant similarly observes, "No one in Turkey knew much about the Czech Republic, so I saw a gap in the market."[26] In addition to individual motivations, social networks played a crucial role in shaping patterns of migration. Many of the early Turkish entrepreneurs who settled in the Czech Republic were already acquainted with one another in Turkey, often through business ties, family relations, or community-based connections.[27] Expressions like "I came first, then I invited my friend"[28] highlight how migration spread relationally, reinforcing both informational flows and a shared sense of confidence among newcomers.

Another important factor influencing migration to the Czech Republic – closely linked to both emerging opportunities and social networks – was marriage to local partners. Especially from the mid-1990s onward, such transnational marriages played a significant role in facilitating long-term settlement in the country.

Narratives provided by participants regarding the 1990s tend to construct an idealized representation of the period. Participants frequently refer to the 1990s

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[25] A textile trader (worked in Laleli, Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1993), interview with author, Prague, May 3, 2024.

[26] A textile trader (worked in the Grand Bazaar in Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1994), interview with author, Prague, March 22, 2024.

[27] Steven J. Gold and Ivan Light, "Ethnic Economies and Social Policy," in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, ed. Patrick G. Coy (Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing, 2000), 165–191, doi: 10.1016/S0163-786X(00)80039-7.

[28] A furniture trader (from Sinop, migrated to Czechia in 1997), interview with author, Prague, April 12, 2024.

using expressions such as "golden years"[29] "time of opportunity"[30] and "lack of competition"[31] reflecting a period perceived as rich in opportunity and low in regulation. These accounts align with what has been described as a "structural advantage" in immigrant economies.[32] As one participant recalled, "People couldn't find anything in the market, so I brought products from Turkey – and they sold out immediately."[33] Informal practices were common, as illustrates by statements like, "No one asked about taxes," or "I asked for a license, and they said there was no such system," echoing findings on post-socialist informality.[34]

Building on these conditions, the first wave of Turkish migrant entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic during the 1990s primarily invested in sectors such as textiles, souvenirs, furniture, jewelry, tourism, and, to a lesser extent, entertainment (including casinos). These sectoral choices were closely linked both to Turkey's industrial strengths and to the market gaps that emerged in the Czech Republic during its post-socialist transition. In particular, the prominence of the textile sector was driven by Turkey's well-established production infrastructure and its export-oriented experience, which had expanded significantly since the 1980s. During this period, Turkey became a key player in textile exports to Eastern Europe,[35] and Turkish entrepreneurs sought to capitalize on this advantage in newly accessible markets like the Czech Republic. Many Turkish entrepreneurs sourced goods from Istanbul's Laleli district, becoming known as "Laleli merchants," who specialized in shuttle trade and flexible wholesale practices geared toward post-communist markets. Laleli's rise as a regional trade hub after

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[29] A souvenir trader (worked in Laleli, Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1997), interview with author, Prague, April 12, 2024.

[30] A tour guide (worked in Antalya, migrated to Czechia in 1990), interview with author, Prague, July 5, 2024.

[31] A textile trader (worked in Laleli, Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1994), interview with author, Prague, March 18, 2024.

[32] Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou, "The New Second Generation: Segmented Assimilation and Its Variants," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 530, no. 1 (1993): 74–96.

[33] A textile trader (worked in Laleli, Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1997), interview with author, Prague, May 17, 2024.

[34] David Smallbone and Friederike Welter, "The Role of Government in SME Development in Transition Economies," *International Small Business Journal* 19, no. 4 (2001): 63–77, 10.1177/0266242601194004.

[35] Gary Gereffi, "International Trade and Industrial Upgrading in the Apparel Commodity Chain," *Journal of International Economics* 48, no. 1 (1999): 37–70, doi: 10.1016/S0022-1996(98)00075-0; Ziya Öniş and Fikret Şenses, *Turkey and the Global Economy: Neo-Liberal Restructuring and Integration in the Post-Crisis Era* (London: Routledge, 2009); Nebahat Tokatlı, "Globalisation and the Changing Clothing Industry in Turkey," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 35, no. 11 (2003): 1877–1894.

1990 significantly shaped their commercial approach abroad. As one participant noted, "Everything we learned in Laleli, we brought here. Back then, Prague felt like Laleli's rural outpost."[36] Others were referred to as "Kapalıçarşı merchants," drawing on the Grand Bazaar's longstanding traditions of negotiation, customer engagement, and informal transnational trade. Together, these commercial cultures played a formative role in shaping early Turkish entrepreneurship in the Czech Republic.

The majority of Turkish entrepreneurs and migrants who settled in the Czech Republic after 1989 were engaged in the textile sector, which evolved along two distinct trajectories. The first was composed of small-scale actors who informally imported textile products from Turkey and sold them in open-air markets, relying heavily on personal networks rather than formal business structures. As one participant recalled, "We brought the goods in suitcases, contacted other Turks, and rented a market stall."[37] These entrepreneurs operated with limited capital and adopted fast-turnover trade strategies, supported by migrant networks and kinship-based ties. The second trajectory involved Turkey-based textile brands that entered the Czech market through direct investment or franchising arrangements, with the goal of establishing long-term commercial presence and brand recognition. Entrepreneurs from industrial hubs such as Istanbul and Bursa opened shops or showrooms, exemplified by one respondent's comment: "If these products are sold in Turkish stores, then it made sense to open one here too."[38] While the first group prioritized flexibility and short-term gains, the second focused on institutionalization, sustainability, and market integration. Despite these differences, both models strategically utilized Turkey's textile production strengths and responded to the structural opportunities presented by the Czech Republic's post-socialist transition.

In addition to the textile trade, Turkish entrepreneurial activity in the Czech Republic during the 1990s also expanded into the souvenir trade, which developed in response to location-specific opportunities and the dynamics of Prague's urban tourism economy. Although less dominant than textiles, the souvenir sector became a significant area of engagement, particularly in Prague's historic districts, where around twenty Turkish-owned shops operated

[36] A souvenir trader (worked in Laleli, Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1997), interview with author, Prague, April 12, 2024.

[37] A textile trader (worked in Laleli, Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1999), interview with author, Brno, June 20, 2024.

[38] A textile trader (worked in Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 2001), interview with author, Prague, April 18, 2024.

at its peak.[39] Over time, however, the proliferation of global retail chains and the consolidation of local businesses led to a substantial decline, with only a handful of these shops remaining. As one entrepreneur remarked, "Back then, there was one of us on every street. Now it's all chain stores. The few who are left are holding on out of nostalgia."[40] The gold and jewelry sector, while involving fewer entrepreneurs, was viewed as a prestigious niche within the Turkish business community. One Turkey-based company played a particularly prominent role in sustaining this sector, representing a rare example of commercial continuity in a highly competitive environment.

In the 1990s, tourism emerged as another area of Turkish entrepreneurial activity in the Czech Republic. Turkish-owned travel agencies operated with a dual focus: providing services to visitors from Turkey and organizing tours to Turkey for the local Turkish community. These businesses leveraged Turkey's tourism infrastructure while tapping into Czechia's growing market. However, the 1997 economic crisis, declining demand, and legal uncertainties led many agencies to close. As one entrepreneur recalls, "At first, things were going well – we had plenty of customers and the business was growing. But when the crisis hit, everything collapsed. We were already working with limited capital, so we couldn't survive."[41] Despite these challenges, tourism offered many newcomers, especially those with language skills, a temporary source of income and a means of early integration. Although most of these ventures were short-lived, they played a key role in migrants' initial economic adaptation. Additionally, following the closure of casinos in Turkey in 1998, two Turkish-owned casinos relocated to the Czech Republic, bringing with them workers who formed a small but distinct occupational group within the Turkish community.

Among the sectors in which Turkish migrants engaged economically in the Czech Republic, the furniture industry stands out as a particularly distinctive and relatively overlooked area. In contrast to the more prevalent entrepreneurial patterns in trade, textiles, and services, this sector reflects unique dynamics shaped not only by capital intensity and business models but also by migration trajectories, the organization of social networks, and labor strategies. One notable example is ASKO, a company founded by a family who migrated from Sinop,

[39] A souvenir trader (worked in İzmir, migrated to Czechia in 2001), interview with author, Prague, April, 21, 2024.

[40] A furniture trader (from Sinop, migrated to Czechia in 1998), interview with author, Prague, May 7, 2024.

[41] A travel agency owner (from Ankara, migrated to Czechia in 1993), interview with author, Prague, May 10, 2024.

Turkey to Germany in the 1960s and later identified a market opportunity in post-1989 Czechia. Opening its first store in Prague's Bílá labuť shopping center in 1991, the company rapidly expanded during the 1990s, establishing branches in cities such as Brno, Zlín, Plzeň, and Hradec Králové, eventually operating seven outlets by 2004. Beyond individual success, this trajectory exemplifies how diaspora capital and transnational mobility can be transformed into formal, growth-oriented enterprise. What further distinguishes this case is its reliance on place-based migration chains: as the business expanded, numerous individuals from the founder's hometown, Türkeli (Sinop), migrated to work in its branches. This concentrated form of migration – widely recognized in the literature as place-based chain migration[42] – was structured through kinship and hometown ties, as evidenced by shared surnames among employees and interview statements such as, "Most of those who came to work here are my relatives; one of us came first, and the rest followed."[43] This case demonstrates that Turkish entrepreneurship in Czechia is not solely characterized by individual economic agency, but also by community-based structures that generate employment, foster social reproduction, and shape spatial settlement. Ultimately, it illustrates how transnational migration networks can underpin sectoral success, and how furniture manufacturing has served as a distinctive avenue for the integration of migrant labor into the formal economy.

As a result, the sectoral orientations of the first generation of Turkish entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic were shaped by a combination of Turkey's established economic strengths and the structural voids present in the post-socialist Czech market. Their entrepreneurial trajectories emerged at the intersection of individual competencies – such as risk-taking, network-building, and the ability to identify market opportunities – and broader structural facilitators, including simplified regulatory frameworks, openness to foreign investment, and low levels of domestic competition. Yet, by the early 2000s, increasing market saturation, intensified competition, and evolving consumer preferences began to challenge these early advantages, prompting some entrepreneurs to withdraw from the sectors in which they had initially flourished. This evolution illustrates that migrant entrepreneurship extends beyond mere economic activity; it constitutes

[42] John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, "Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood Formation, and Social Networks," *The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* 42, no. 1 (1964): 82–97; Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, eds., *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[43] A furniture store employee at ASCO (worked in Sinop, migrated to Czechia in 1995), interview with author, Prague, November 3, 2024.

a complex process shaped by social adaptation, spatial positioning, and cultural brokerage within the host society.

"*Challenging Years*": Turkish Migrants' Struggles for Adaptation in Czechia

The 1990s, often described by Turkish migrant entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic as a "golden era" characterized by abundant opportunities and an unsaturated market, came to an end with the country's accession to the European Union in 2004 and the subsequent intensification of global competition. One entrepreneur reflects on the transition: "In the 2000s, things changed. Back in the day, whatever you brought would sell – but now it's different; you can't take a single step without making careful calculations."[44] This statement captures the evolving regulatory landscape, as EU membership introduced stricter standards in trade, taxation, work permits, and consumer protection. These reforms posed particular difficulties for entrepreneurs who had built their businesses through informal practices and individual initiative. Many of those who had once relied on courage and adaptability were now compelled to navigate institutional procedures and professional frameworks. As another participant noted, "We didn't even know what an accountant was – now we're submitting paperwork every month."[45]

Early Turkish entrepreneurs in the Czech Republic thrived in an unsaturated market, generating high profits quickly. This success fostered a false sense of security regarding the permanence of their prosperity. One participant described this outlook: "At first, business was great... [and] we thought it would always be that way... The easy days were over."[46] However, most entrepreneurs spent their earnings on personal needs rather than long-term investments, which prevented the growth of sustainable economic assets. Today, many early actors reflect on this period as a "missed opportunity" and regard the lack of institutionalization as a historical loss for the Turkish community.

During this period, the textile sector – once a key domain for Turkish entrepreneurs in the 1990s due to the prevalence of Laleli-style trade – was particularly

[44] A textile trader (worked in Bursa, migrated to Czechia in 1996), interview with author, Brno, June 20, 2024.

[45] A textile trader (worked in İstanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1998), interview with author, Prague, July 22, 2024.

[46] A textile trader (worked in İstanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1996), interview with author, Prague, May 18, 2024.

affected by market shifts, including the entry of global brands, changing consumer habits, and the growing dominance of low-cost Chinese products. This shift led many Turkish entrepreneurs to redirect their efforts toward areas such as restaurants, fast food. As one participant puts it, "We used to sell T-shirts at the market – now we sell kebabs. Times have changed."[47] This transition also marked the beginning of noticeable socioeconomic differentiation within the Turkish community. While those able to institutionalize their businesses managed to continue, others closed their shops or moved into different sectors. As a result, new class distinctions and divergent experiences began to emerge within the community.

Entrepreneurs and migrants experienced not only economic transformations but also a profound shift in terms of social perception and identity. Among the Turkish migrants who arrived in Czechia during the 1990s, the notion of being a "migrant" remained largely absent from both personal narratives and public discourse. Instead, individuals commonly referred to themselves as "entrepreneurs," "investors," or "traders," framing their relocation as a rational choice in pursuit of opportunity. As one participant put it: "We didn't come here as migrants – we came to invest. We never saw ourselves that way."[48] These narratives reflect an understanding of migration as a movement based on economic capital, while the label "migrant" was often associated with need, vulnerability, and lower social status. This perception was shaped in part by the socio-economic context of the period. In the 1990s, Czech society was itself undergoing an economic transition, and much of the local population faced significant hardship. In this setting, Turkish entrepreneurs – due to their relative economic success – were often perceived as "foreign but prosperous." However, this framing began to shift fundamentally in the latter half of the 2000s. Following the Czech Republic's accession to the European Union in 2004, rising living standards and the increasing visibility of Western European norms led to a redefinition of national identity. As Czechs rearticulated their own sense of belonging, external groups such as the Turkish community were also repositioned within the social landscape.

Migration thus became associated not only with economic difference but with cultural otherness. One participant summarized the shift: "Back then, just being here was an advantage – now they ask more about where you come from.

[47] A textile trader (worked in Bursa, migrated to Czechia in 1996), interview with author, Brno, June 20, 2024.

[48] A souvenir trader (worked in Laleli, Istanbul, migrated to Czechia in 1997), interview with author, Prague, April 12, 2024.

Being Turkish now means being a migrant."[49] Another observed: "We used to feel like we were the same. Now it's like – you're Turkish. A line has been drawn between us."[50] This transformation reveals how migrant status becomes a socially reproduced form of "otherness," embedded in everyday interactions. By the 2010s, the self-assured entrepreneurial figure that had defined the Turkish community in the 1990s had largely given way to a more visibly migrant identity. This transformation was shaped by broader societal and economic changes in both Turkey and Czechia, prompting new forms of identity-making and debates around belonging within the community. Migration, in this sense, was no longer simply about geographic relocation – it became a status that was socially redefined over time, reflecting changing perceptions and structural conditions. This evolving context also reshaped the position of the Turkish community within Czech society.

In conclusion, the period between 2004 and 2016 marked a phase of restructuring and adaptation for Turkish entrepreneurs. In contrast to the earlier "golden era," success in this later period required not only entrepreneurial drive but also new competencies such as regulatory compliance, professional management, and strategic planning. For the first-generation migrants, this was also the moment when a conscious sense of "being a migrant" began to emerge – accompanied by a gradual institutionalization of entrepreneurial practices.

Understanding the historical development of the Turkish community in the Czech Republic requires more than examining demographic growth or recent migration trends. Rather, it demands a multilayered analysis grounded in the experiences of the entrepreneurial and migrant actors who arrived in the 1990s and formed the foundational layer of this community. These early arrivals were not only economic agents but also the first to engage with the country's language, bureaucratic structures, and social dynamics. In this sense, they can be regarded as the "pioneer generation" of the Turkish community in Czechia. These early pioneers initially positioned themselves as "entrepreneurs" or "investors," rather than identifying with the label of "migrant." This self-perception was largely shaped by their relatively high level of material prosperity and the fact that, in the early 1990s, Czech society itself was still undergoing an economic transition. The institutional transformation brought about by European Union accession and the intensification of market competition in the

[49] A textile trader (from İzmir, migrated to Czechia in 2000), interview with author, Prague, May 20, 2024.

[50] A furniture trader (from Sinop, migrated to Czechia in 1997), interview with author, Prague, April 12, 2024.

2000s gradually altered the social status of these entrepreneurs. Consequently, the identity of the "Turkish entrepreneur" increasingly evolved into that of a more visibly "migrant entrepreneur."

Although this early cohort of entrepreneurs achieved notable economic success, their limited engagement with long-term institutional planning has contributed to a prevailing sense of missed opportunity within the community. The initial period of rapid profit generation was rarely accompanied by efforts toward formalization, strategic investment, or business sustainability. As a result, the absence of structural consolidation has come to be viewed – both individually and collectively – as a formative yet cautionary experience for the broader Turkish migrant community in the Czech Republic. At the same time, the role of the first generation remains highly influential within the contemporary Turkish community in the Czech Republic. Newcomers, particularly in navigating bureaucratic procedures, establishing businesses, and achieving social integration, continue to draw on the experiences and guidance of these early actors. The pioneering role attributed to this group is not limited to informal support mechanisms; it also contributes to the institutionalization of intergenerational solidarity within the migrant community.

In conclusion, this study proposes a multi-layered approach to understanding the Turkish community in the Czech Republic – one that moves beyond current demographic trends to incorporate historical, sociological, and cultural continuities. The entrepreneurial and migrant cohort that arrived in the 1990s not only generated economic capital but also laid the foundations for the community's institutional memory, diasporic identity, and intergenerational transitions. On the micro-level, entrepreneurs responded to these structural shifts by diversifying their strategies – some pivoted from textile retail to the food sector (kebab shops), while others formalized their businesses to comply with EU regulations, moving away from the informal practices of the 1990s.

Conclusion

While Turkish entrepreneurs in Czechia capitalized on early post-socialist market gaps for rapid entry, their organizational patterns stood in sharp contrast to the local Vietnamese community. Unlike the Vietnamese model, which relied on tight-knit ethnic enclaves and collective solidarity to dominate open-air markets, Turkish entrepreneurship was characterized by loose, individualistic networks and localized chain migration (exemplified by the Türkeli-Sinop link). Operating primarily as "lone agents" rather than a cohesive collective, Turkish

entrepreneurs faced the pressure to formalize and institutionalize only as the regulatory framework of the market consolidated.

This study contributes to broader theoretical debates on migration, diaspora, and post-socialist transformation. The findings reveal that small-scale entrepreneurship in post-communist settings functions not merely as an economic adaptation strategy but as a spatial, cultural, and relational practice through which migrants negotiate belonging and visibility. Turkish entrepreneurs in Czechia exemplify how migrants, through everyday economic and spatial engagement, actively produce what Avtar Brah terms *diaspora space* – a dynamic arena where mobility, memory, and identity intersect and are continuously redefined.[51] Within this space, commerce becomes more than a livelihood; it is a mode of emplacement, a means of asserting presence, and a process of transforming unfamiliar post-socialist urban environments into familiar social landscapes.

This perspective challenges the macro-institutional orientation of much of the transition-economy literature, which has traditionally emphasized formal economic restructuring, privatization, and state policy. By foregrounding the micro-level agency of migrant entrepreneurs, the study reveals how everyday practices – such as naming, local networking, or adapting to shifting regulations – play a constitutive role in the social reconstruction of post-communist modernity. Migrant entrepreneurship, therefore, emerges as both an outcome and a driver of structural change, linking the intimate scale of individual adaptation with the broader processes of market liberalization and urban transformation.

The Turkish experience in Czechia further demonstrates that post-communist transformation was not merely a top-down institutional transition imposed by global economic logics but also a bottom-up reconfiguration shaped through migrant participation, resilience, and creativity. The agency of early Turkish entrepreneurs – who operated as cultural mediators, community builders, and local innovators – shows that migrants are not passive recipients of transformation but active co-authors of new social and economic orders. Their entrepreneurial spaces thus function as laboratories of diasporic life, where the boundaries between host society and migrant community are constantly renegotiated through economic and spatial interaction.

By bridging the insights of migration, diaspora, and post-socialist transformation studies, this paper advances a more integrative framework for understanding how entrepreneurship, mobility, and place intersect to generate new

[51] Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*.

forms of belonging and urban life in post-1989 Central Europe. In highlighting the pioneering role of Turkish entrepreneurs as both economic and cultural actors, the study expands existing migration scholarship to include the spatial and historical contingencies of the post-socialist context. It also adds a diachronic dimension to diaspora studies by showing how community formation unfolds not only through transnational connectivity but also through local, place-based practices that materialize in urban everyday life. Ultimately, the analysis demonstrates that small-scale entrepreneurship in post-communist societies is a powerful lens through which to understand the interdependence of structural change and migrant agency – an intersection that continues to shape the evolving map of Central European modernity.

2026 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 33–59
STUDIA TERRITORIALIA 1

WEAPONIZING THE PAST: THE ROLE OF HISTORICAL BIOPICS IN THE STALINIST CULTURE WAR (1939–1941)

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Abstract
This article investigates how Soviet historical biopics produced between 1939 and 1941 functioned as instruments in Stalin's culture war – a campaign to reshape public consciousness and justify Soviet policies during the initial phase of the Second World War. Through close analysis of films *Minin and Pozharsky* and *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*, the study demonstrates how Stalinist cinema mobilized historical myth to legitimize aggression against neighboring states and to justify the new Soviet-German alliance. By reviving imperial narratives of an "eternal struggle" between the virtuous, united East Slavic peoples and the oppressive, Western-aligned Polish enemy, filmmakers transformed history into a weapon of ideological warfare. The resulting synthesis of nationalist and Marxist rhetoric exemplifies how the Stalinist regime turned culture itself into a political front.
Keywords: cinema; propaganda film; Stalinist historiosophy; Soviet Union; Poland; Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; *Minin and Pozharsky*; *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*
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Introduction: Soviet Film as an Imperial Instrument

A quarter of a century ago, when Ewa Thompson put forward the postulate of applying Edward Said's postcolonial method to the study of the imperial relationship between the hegemonic power (Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union) and the smaller nations of Eastern Europe (as well as Central Asia and Siberia),[1] hers was, at the time, the solitary voice of a pioneer challenging the prevailing research perspective reproduced for generations by Russian-speaking and Anglophone Russicists. This traditional perspective held that emblematic Russian authors, such as Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky, were creators of literary masterpieces, luminaries of the human soul, and insightful observers of social processes – a view that long dominated the reception of their work. A postcolonial (or post-dependence) lens, however, while in no way diminishing their artistic greatness, also reveals in these works a reflection of imperial ideology, and in their creators its proponents. In recent years, this type of perspective has become increasingly common in the humanities of post-communist countries[2] – a development undoubtedly influenced by ongoing geopolitical changes. As in the case of postcolonial studies dealing with territories (post-)dependent on Western European empires, the main research objective remains the analysis of the relationship between the dominant (self-appointed) center and the peripheries forced into submission, achieved both through a critical reading of the dominant discourse and through the reconstruction of the strategies by which emancipatory tendencies are expressed.[3]

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1 Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, London: Greenwood Press, 2000).

2 Among various studies, see Vitaly Chernetsky, "Postcolonialism, Russia and Ukraine," *ULBANDUS, The Slavic Review of Columbia University*, no. 7 (2003): 32–62; Janusz Korek, ed., *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality: Poland and Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), the first English-language volume jointly produced by Polish and Ukrainian historians, political scientists, and cultural scholars exploring postcolonial perspectives on the region. Related reflections by Maria Janion, Ryszard Nycz, Aleksander Fiut, and Włodzimierz Bolecki were published in a 2014 English-language special issue of *Secondary Texts. Postcolonial or Postdependence Studies?* no. 1 (2014). More recent contributions in literary studies include works by the Ukrainian scholar Vira Ageyeva (*Behind the Scenes of the Empire: Essays on Cultural Relationships between Ukraine and Russia* [Hannover: Ibidem, 2025]) and the Estonian scholar Epp Annus (*Soviet Postcolonial Studies. A View from the Western Borderlands* [London, New York: Routledge, 2019]; *Coloniality, Nationality, Modernity. A Postcolonial View on Baltic Cultures under Soviet Rule* [London, New York: Routledge, 2020]).

3 The call to revise thinking about Russia and the Soviet Union as structures expressing cultural imperialism is articulated explicitly in the records of a 2005 discussion at the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Vitaly

A dynamic similar to the one observed in literary and culture studies unfolds within the historiography of Soviet and Russian cinema. In classical accounts – whether Russian-language works produced before and after the collapse of the USSR,[4] or their Anglophone counterparts[5] – foundational figures such as Sergei Eisenstein and Vsevolod Pudovkin are regarded first and foremost as great artists, auteurs whose films represent masterpieces of cinematic art. Their entanglement with the regime and its ideology, while indisputable, is typically treated as a matter of secondary importance – a contextual dimension rather than a core semantic component of their work. In contrast, for film scholars seeking to decolonize the discourse, the task of deconstructing and exposing successive layers of ideological content remains paramount.[6] In Soviet cinema, particularly during the period of the state's most stringent control over cultural production – roughly from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s – the very distinction between auteur cinema and regime cinema loses its *raison d'être*. Every cultural production of that era was, by definition, propaganda; even the most canonical works of cinematic art were fundamentally propaganda films (*Aleksandr Nevskii*,

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Chernetsky, Nancy Condee, and Harsha Ram, "Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space," *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006): 828–835.

4 See Rostislav Yurenev, *Kratkaia istoriia sovetskogo kino* (Moskva: Soiuz kinematografistov SSSR, Biuro propagandy sovetskogo kinoiskusstva, 1979); Neia Zorkaia, *Istoriia sovetskogo kino* (St. Petersburg: Aleteiia, 2005); Neia Zorkaia, *Istoriia otechestvennogo kino. XX vek* (Moskva: Belyi gorod, 2014), published posthumously.

5 See Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Herbert Marshall, *Masters of the Soviet Cinema. Crippled Creative Biographies* (London, New York: Routledge, 1983).

6 One of the early examples of such a critical approach is Nancy Condee, *The Imperial Trace: Recent Russian Cinema* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). Condee examines contemporary Russian film through the lens of enduring imperial preoccupations. In recent years, postcolonial discourses on Soviet film have also intersected with identity and ecocritical discourses, as exemplified by the tellingly titled works of Caroline Damien, *A Siberian History of Soviet Film. Manufacturing Visions of the Indigenous Peoples of the North* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024), or Lukas Brasiskis and Masha Shpolberg, eds., *Cinema and the Environment in Eastern Europe: From Communism to Capitalism* (New York: Berghahn, 2024), doi: 10.3167/9781805391050. Moreover, a somewhat akin scholarly prism – i.e., one that approaches the Soviet Union as a colonial empire and its culture as a machinery for reproducing the ideological justifications of imperial practices – has gained increasing traction in the publications from both the former Eastern Bloc and the Anglosphere over the past two decades. For example, Joanna Wojnicka's studies (*Dzieci XX Zjazdu. Film w kulturze sowieckiej lat 1956–1968* [Kraków: Universitas, 2012]; *Prorocy, kapłani, rewolucjoniści. Szkice z historii kina rosyjskiego* [Kraków: Universitas, 2019]) and Denise Youngblood's *Russian War Films: On the Cinema Front, 1914–2005* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2024), doi: 10.1353/book.119502, share with postcolonial scholarship a sensitivity to imperial dynamics, even though they do not operate within the postcolonial paradigm as such.

dir. Sergei Eisenstein, 1938, being a prime example). This in no way diminishes the purely cinematic genius of their creators.

Particularly valuable material for an analysis in the spirit of postcolonial theory may be found in the body of films produced in the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1941, i.e, the period of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact's validity. This pact, signed on August 23, 1939 by Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union, was a non-aggression agreement that included a secret protocol dividing Eastern Europe between the two powers. Immediately following the pact's signing, Germany launched an attack on western Poland (September 1), while the Soviet Union invaded its eastern territories on September 17, and subsequently annexed them. Furthermore, the USSR occupied the Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) and Bessarabia. In the north, after Finland rejected similar demands, the USSR waged the Winter War (1939–1940), annexing Finnish territory along the Karelian Isthmus. The Nazi-Soviet pact was broken by the Third Reich as it launched the offensive against the USSR on 1941, June 22.[7]

In retrospect, the discussed period in Soviet film culture may seem as a mere prelude to the intensification of propaganda efforts in 1941–1945. Yet, the significance of Soviet cinema in this brief, twenty-two-month span should not be underestimated. It provides valuable material for studying the relationship between film art and totalitarian ideology, exemplifying the rhetoric that rationalized and justified Soviet imperial aggression. Through a carefully constructed network of distortions, manipulations, and selective use of historical facts, Stalinist mass media furnished the public with persuasive arguments for the legitimacy, justice, and even historical necessity of its unprovoked military assaults on neighboring states. In doing so, the propaganda apparatus reused some of the culture-war rhetoric that had been successfully employed in Tsarist times.

In 1939–1941, the imperatives of state propaganda required the construction of a coherent narrative to justify decisions that were difficult to defend – not only under international law and basic ethical norms but also within the USSR's own political doctrine, which had to be rapidly revised. One of the fundamental axioms of Soviet thought was the conviction that objective, scientific truth could only be comprehended through the dialectical method which, to use an essayistic metaphor, functioned as a recipe for combining black with white

[7] See Dominik Zimmermann, "Molotov Ribbentrop Pact," *Max Planck Encyclopedia of Public International Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), https://opil.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/law:epil/9780199231690/law-9780199231690-e1925.

so that an entirely new quality emerged, one that was by no means simply gray. This axiom became a potent ideological tool, capable of justifying any political move, even one that contradicted the very essence of the regime's previously declared ideological line. The utilitarian function of dialectical materialism was thus indispensable, facilitating the creation of a political mythology capable of reconciling contradictions and providing persuasive explanations for abrupt, 180-degree policy reversals.[8]

Regardless of how effective the dialectical method was in reconciling opposites, Soviet newspaper readers and film audiences could hardly have avoided a sense of cognitive dissonance in the latter half of 1939. According to Ewa Thompson's analysis of the pre-August 1939 media, Soviet print outlets provided no indication of the drastic geostrategic shift that would soon occur.[9] This insight can be extended to cinema: until very recently, the Third Reich had been portrayed as the ultimate enemy – a criminal state posing an existential threat to the USSR and representing the terminal stage of capitalism. This image was reinforced by films such as *Professor Mamlock* (*Professor Mamlok*, dir. Herbert Rappaport, Adolf Minkin, 1938), *Peat-Bog Soldiers* (*Bolotnye soldaty*, dir. Aleksandr Macheret, 1938), *The Oppenheim Family* (*Sem'ia Oppengeim*, dir. Grigori Roshal, 1939), and *Squadron No. 5* (*Eskadril'ia No. 5*, dir. Abram Room, 1939).

Naturally, any impulse an individual might have had to voice concerns over this cognitive dissonance was tempered by the awareness of consequences that could follow from questioning the newly adopted political line. Nonetheless, the propaganda apparatus had to mitigate this dissonance by crafting and promoting a narrative that justified both territorial aggression against neighboring states and an alliance with the regime's former "enemy number one." The aim of this article is to investigate this narrative's foundations in Stalinist historiosophy and to reconstruct the narrative itself.

One of the key factors shaping Soviet film production of 1939–1941 was Joseph Stalin's growing interest in cinema. The dictator, known for his personal interventions in the film industry, followed the development of major productions during this period with greater attention than ever before, directly influencing the decision-making process at every stage.[10] He was clearly aware

[8] See Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism. The Breakdown*, transl. P. S. Falla (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 103–105.

[9] Ewa M. Thompson, "Nationalist Propaganda in the Soviet Russian Press, 1939–1941," *Slavic Review* 50, no. 2 (1991): 388, doi:10.1017/S0037677900104930.

[10] Richard Taylor, "Red stars, positive heroes and personality cults," in *Stalinism and Soviet Cinema*, ed. Richard Taylor and Derek Spring (London: Routledge, 1993), 70.

of how crucial controlling the political narrative had become. The Soviet films of this period complement one another, together forming a coherent – at least from the standpoint of the dialectical method – and internally consistent semantic construction encompassing the various dimensions of this wide-ranging narrative.

During this period, a number of films were produced that directly or indirectly addressed the supposed necessity of Red Army intervention in the territories targeted by Soviet aggression. The Winter War with Finland became a particularly prominent theme, as evidenced by the feature films *Behind Enemy Lines* (*V tylu vraga*, dir. Yevgeny Schneider, 1941) and *Frontline Friends* (*Frontovye podrugi*, dir. Viktor Eisymont, 1941), as well as the documentary *The Mannerheim Line* (*Liniia Mannergeima*, dirs. Vasily Belyaev, Leonid Varlamov, Nikolai Komarevtsev, Valery Solvtsov, 1940). Cinema also depicted the annexation of the Baltic states, as in *Estonian Land* (*Estonskaia zemlia*, dir. Vasily Belyaev, 1941), and the occupation of territories belonging to Romania (*Bukovina – Ukrainian Land* / *Bukovina – zemlia ukrainskaia*, dir. Oleksandr Dovzhenko, 1940).

The central theme of Soviet propaganda cinema of this era, however, was the justification of the annexation of the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic (1918–1939) – referred to in Soviet discourse as the liberation of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus. Soviet films responding to the propaganda needs after September 17, 1939, can be divided into three main categories according to the historical periods in which their narratives are set. The first one includes films depicting Polish-Russian conflict and the triangular relations among Russians, Ukrainians, and Poles in the epochs preceding the October Revolution. The most important examples are *Minin and Pozharsky* (*Minin i Pozharskii*, dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin, 1939) and *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi* (*Bogdan Khmel'nitskii*, dir. Ihor Savchenko, 1941) – historical epics characteristic of Stalinist cinema, focused on prominent military and political leaders. The second group is formed by films dealing with the Polish-Bolshevik War of 1919–1921, belonging to the specifically Soviet genre of revolutionary epic. Its most notable representative is *Shchors* (dir. Oleksandr Dovzhenko, 1939), alongside *Horsemen* (*Vsadniki*, dir. Ihor Savchenko, 1939) and *The First Cavalry Army or Breakthrough of the Polish Front in 1920* (*Pervaia konnaia, Proryv Pol'skogo fronta v 1920 godu*, dir. Efim Dzigan, 1941). Finally, the third category consists of films set in the territories of the Second Polish Republic occupied by the USSR, either shortly before their "liberation" by the Red Army or immediately afterward. The most significant examples are the social dramas *Wind from the East* (*Veter s vostoka*, dir. Abram Room, 1940) and *Dream* (*Mechta*, dir. Mikhail Romm, 1941), as

well as the feature-length documentary *Liberation* (*Osvobozhdenie*, dir. Oleksandr Dovzhenko, 1940).

In this article, I will focus primarily on the films belonging to the first group. The greatest attention will be devoted to *Minin and Pozharsky*, somewhat less to *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*, while the films belonging to the other two groups will be invoked only in contexts that I consider relevant, without an in-depth analysis (with the exception of *Shchors*, which I will examine more closely because of its significant intertextual relationship with *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*). This choice is based on the conviction – reinforced by extensive source research – that these two historical epics served the Soviet propaganda apparatus as a kind of foundation upon which it erected the ideological monolith of a historiosophical and geopolitical narrative crafted in response to the events of 1939. Prior to undertaking an analysis of the two historical biopics, I will set forth the most essential tenets of Soviet historical and historiosophical thought from the second half of the 1930s – as the crucial context and ideological foundation upon which these films emerged.

The Cycles of History and the Eternal Struggle

As the old saying goes, Russia is a country with an unpredictable past.[11] Periodically, the state engages in sweeping revisions of its official interpretation of history, refurbishing well-worn imperial narratives to align with current political imperatives. The films *Minin and Pozharsky* and *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi* exemplify the central themes of the Soviet propaganda narrative of 1939–1941, tracing the history of successive state entities, whose perfected and historically inevitable continuation Stalin's USSR proclaimed itself to be. These themes included, above all, the glorification of Russian-Ukrainian brotherhood, the portrayal of Poles as exploitative feudal lords, and the deliberate avoidance of representing Germany as an adversary. At the same time, both films belong to the wider tradition of biographical historical cinema, one of the key genres of Stalinist film production that popularized the Soviet historiosophical doctrine taking shape since the early 1930s. Stalinist cultural ideologues argued that Soviet historical cinema was not merely an artistic rendering of the past but a medium for

[11] See Mikhail Gurevich, "Teasing the Sacred Cows to the End of History: Appropriation of Emblematic Imagery in Late- and Post-Soviet Animation," in *Propaganda, Ideology, Animation. Twisted Dreams of History*, ed. Olga Bobrowska, Michał Bobrowski, and Bogusław Zmudziński (Kraków: AGH University Press, 2019), 31.

conveying objective historical truth, made possible by the "scientific" method of dialectical materialism.

This conviction was articulated by Włodzimierz Sokorski, a senior functionary in Stalinist Poland's cultural administration:

> Soviet cinema has become a tool for discovering objective truth – truth about humanity, society, and the path of its development. A truth understood historically. Lenin's method of reflecting reality in art armed Soviet film with a scientific means of reconstructing historical phenomena. This is why, alongside films about the Great October Revolution, works such as *Peter the Great, Suvorov, Alexander Nevsky, Ivan the Terrible, Bohdan Khmelnytskyi* and many others could emerge – films that taught Soviet society to understand its national history and to discern within it the forces that drove progress.[12]

The new historiosophical doctrine – epitomized and celebrated by the genre of epic film biography – was a central, though not the only, component of a far-reaching project of political, ideological, and cultural transformation. This was the shift that David Brandenberger aptly described as the turn "from the materialist internationalism of the 1920s to the statist russocentrism of the late 1930s."[13] On the historiosophical and historiographical front of the culture war, a campaign was launched against "Pokrovskiism" – the interpretation of Russian history advanced by Mikhail Pokrovsky, the leading Soviet historian of the 1920s. Drawing on Marxist-Leninist premises, Pokrovsky saw history in determinist terms, as a chain of violent events inevitably leading to the emancipation of the exploited classes. He stressed the role of the masses as the driving force of history, relegating individual agency to a secondary role, and was an uncompromising critic of the tsarist system, Russia's imperial past, and Russian chauvinism. However, by the mid-1930s the official line had changed dramatically: the Great-Russian imperial tradition was largely rehabilitated and elements of tsarist imperial ideology were incorporated into the state's doctrine. As codified in the "catechism" of Stalinist historiosophy, *History of the Communist Party*

[12] Włodzimierz Sokorski, "Trzydziestolecie filmu radzieckiego," in *Film radziecki*, ed. Jan Guranowski (Warszawa: Książka i wiedza, 1951), 9–10. Unless otherwise noted, translations are by the author. It is worth noting the telling absence of the film *Minin and Pozharsky* among the examples mentioned by Sokorski. This is, of course, connected with the taboo surrounding the topic of the anti-Polish campaign of 1939–1941 within the framework of official discourse in postwar Poland.

[13] David Branderberger, "Who killed Pokrovskii? (the second time): The prelude to the denunciation of the father of Soviet Marxist historiography, January 1936," *Revolutionary Russia* 11, no. 1 (1998): 67, doi: 10.1080/09546549808575684.

of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks),[14] the past was no longer judged by the standards of "eternal justice" or condemned for failing to meet modern criteria, as in Pokrovsky's "vulgar sociologism." Instead, monarchs and military leaders were evaluated in relation to the historical conditions under which they acted. This methodological shift provided the rationale for glorifying the contributions of chosen rulers, some of whom were elevated to the status of heroes in the centrally managed collective imagination.

While one of the principal criticisms put forward by Stalinist historians against the "anti-Marxist" and "anti-historical" Pokrovsky's approach concerned its "incorrect, vulgar understanding of the connection between history and the present" and its interpretation of historical facts "from the standpoint of today rather than the conditions in which historical events occurred,"[15] it was, in fact, the newly reconstructed Soviet historiosophy of the 1930s that most profoundly blurred the boundaries between various temporal orders. The ultimate cinematic expressions of the historiosophical doctrine prevailing in the USSR in the late 1930s are two flagship works of Soviet historical-biographical epic: *Alexander Nevsky* (1938) and *Peter the Great* (*Pyotr Pervyi*, dir. Vladimir Petrov, 1937–1938). These films – paradigmatic of a system based on a powerful individual, surrounded by a widespread cult – articulated the need for centralized, absolute political authority, especially under external threat. In both films, the ruler's ruthless severity toward the enemies of the homeland is presented as a higher necessity, sanctified by his profound love for the nation and his superhuman sense of justice. Furthermore, these two emblematic film frescoes, like the entire paradigm of Stalinist historical art, reflect a significant shift in the perception and conceptualization of historical time.

In accordance to the dialectical worldview, which disregards simple "either-or" logic, the Marxist paradigm of historical progression as linear, unidirectional, and oriented toward a foreseeable future coexisted within Stalinist culture with a notion of historical time as cyclical, emphasizing the repetition and inevitability of certain mechanisms or historical conflicts. Such view, otherwise associated mostly with nationalist discourses, perceives contemporary events as echoes of past occurrences of significance for a nation's identity – the occurrences such as the anti-Polish uprisings led by Minin and Pozharsky or by

[14] See *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). Short Course* (Paris: Foreign Languages Press, 2023). First print in the USSR: 1938.

[15] Janina Schoenbrenner, "O właściwe pojmowanie tzw. aktualizacji w nauczaniu historii w szkole," *Wiadomości historyczne* no. 5 (1949), 47. This citation from a renowned Polish historian from a Stalinist era is representative of the Stalinism critique of Pokrovsky.

Khmelnytskyi. Within this framework, history becomes a theater of the present, while the present becomes a ritual of history.

Ivan Čolović captures this phenomenon incisively:

> [T]he distance between then and now, between past and current events, sometimes shrinks to the point that they overlap. Two narrative streams – one depicting contemporary events, the other evoking similar events from the past – merge into a single account of a timeless event, often referred to as "eternal struggle." The principal actor in this struggle [...] loses its historical dimension, as it came to existence through the fusion of ancestors and descendants into one, eternal national subject.[16]

Although originally referring to a different, albeit closely related discourse – Serbian nationalism – these words equally describe Russian historiosophical ultraconservatism, whose successive iterations validate Merab Mamardashvili's observation that "the pathological repetition of many phenomena in Russian life has itself become a phenomenon of Russian life."[17]

This vision of history naturally aligns with an essentialist view of nationhood. And thus, figures portrayed in late 1930s and early 1940s Soviet films, particularly in historical cinema, are ethically and psychologically defined by their nationality. The all-Russian discourse revived under Stalin, emphasized the "eternal" threat from the West and the enduring bonds of brotherhood among the East Slavic peoples. Between 1939 and 1941, the role of historical enemy from the West – assigned in other periods to Germans, French, or Swedes – was primarily attributed to Poles, or more precisely, the elites of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In Soviet historiographical discourse, this state, whose Second Republic was depicted less as a continuation than as a pale shadow, appears as dependent on Western European powers while simultaneously pursuing an expansionist eastern policy aimed at subjugating Ukraine and Russia.

Minin and Pozharsky: Martyrdom and the Promise of Historical Justice

Vsevolod Pudovkin's highly mythologized costume drama is devoted to the armed uprising led by its eponymous characters against Polish and Lithuanian

[16] Ivan Čolović, *Balkan – teror kulture* (Beograd: Biblioteka XX vek, 2008), 50.

[17] See Merab Mamardashvili, *Kak ia ponimaiu filosofiiu* (Moskva: Progress, 1990), 140, quoted in Gurevich, "Teasing the Sacred Cows," 36.

magnates – a revolt of decisive importance for restoring the Muscovite state after the Time of Troubles (1598–1613). In certain respects, the film can be considered typical of the historical genre in Stalinist cinema. First, the action takes place during a historical period of great significance for Russian identity, and the film concludes with a battle that in Čolović's terms may be labelled an "eternal struggle" fought by the all-Russian, timeless national subject. Second, the two national heroes are portrayed hagiographically: they are not only two-dimensional but almost devoid of individual personality, much like Eisenstein's Alexander Nevsky. Moreover, the acting style of the performers in the title roles (Alexander Khanov as Minin; Boris Livanov as Pozharsky) is conventionalized and ceremonial. The actors, along with the director and the screenwriter (Viktor Shklovsky, based on his own novella of the same title), clearly did not aim to produce psychologically realistic portraits of the protagonists, but rather monumentalized representations of titanic figures. Third, from the opening shot to the finale, Pudovkin's biopic constitutes an apotheosis of the Stalinist myth of the Great Return, that blends temporal orders in an ahistorical manner.

On the other hand, Pudovkin's film departs in some respects from the "sanctified" canon of historical representation established in Stalinist cinema only two years earlier. Most notably, in contrast to the basic rule of the era's cult-of-personality films, the story centers on two equal protagonists rather than a single dominant military-political leader. It appears that the two main characters – Prince Dmitrii Pozharsky (a wise and just knight, courageous warrior, brilliant strategist, and benevolent protector of the common people) and the townsman Kuzma Minin (a butcher's guild member; visionary, patriot, and charismatic popular tribune capable of reconciling warring social classes and inspiring them to extraordinary sacrifices) – were intended by the filmmakers to represent two aspects of the historical grounding of total power in the Stalinist state.

This constitutes a specific variant of a rhetorical strategy that Evgeny Dobrenko, in his comparative analysis of *Alexander Nevsky* and *Stepan Razin* (dir. Ivan Pravov, 1939; a biopic about the leader of the peasant rebellion) calls the "dialectic of the popular monarchy."[18] As Dobrenko observes the Stalinist power was presented as rooted both in the heritage of the tsarist monarchy and in the tradition of grassroots uprisings against ruling elites. The particularity of

[18] Evgeny Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema and the Production of History: Museum of the Revolution* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 17, doi: 9780748634453.001.0001.

Pudovkin's version of this dialectic lies in its encapsulation within a single work, as well as in the fact that the ruling class, represented by Pozharsky, collaborates closely with the working class, represented by Minin, because their interests are perfectly aligned. Both are shown to stand on the same side of the "cultural front," united in defending the nation's future and moral order. This alignment is made possible chiefly by the fact that the principal antagonists are the Polish oppressors, and so the struggle against them carries both national and class dimensions.

Another striking – though ideologically justified – departure from the prevailing norms of Stalinist cinema is the portrayal of the Russian state as weak, dysfunctional, and disintegrated. This choice is closely tied to Stalinist culture's (re)construction of a martyrological narrative about the Time of Troubles, which, alongside the Mongol invasions and the Napoleonic wars, counts among the greatest historical traumas deeply inscribed in Russian collective memory. Although the causes of this crisis were complex and largely internal – dynastic discontinuity following the end of the Rurikid line, recurring famine, peasant uprisings, and factional struggles for power – in Stalinist historiography, as well as in conservative strands of Russian historiography from other periods, the crisis was framed as a Russo-Polish conflict and cast in the terms of a grand, almost Manichean struggle.[19]

Russian historical memory codified the narrative of the Time of Troubles around two complementary sentiments: victimhood and heroism. This perspective was solidified in the nineteenth century through patriotic works such as Stepan Degtiarev's 1811 oratorio *Minin and Pozharsky, or the Liberation of Moscow*; Ivan Martos's 1818 Kremlin monument (Moscow's oldest); paintings by Mikhail Scotti (*Minin and Pozharsky*, 1850), and Konstantin Makovsky (*Agents of the False Dmitry Kill the Son of Boris Godunov*, 1862; *Appeal of Minin*, 1896); and Alexander Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* (1825) with Modest Mussorgsky's 1872 opera adaptation. Collectively, these and countless other cultural texts created the myth of a united Russian people resisting foreign invaders – especially the Poles. After 1917, Pokrovsky's Marxist school reinterpreted the narrative, portraying the pretenders as progressive forces and condemning Minin and Pozharsky as reactionaries. Stalinist historiography reversed this position, restoring and intensifying the pre-revolutionary interpretation, reducing the period's complexity to a heroic tale framed by stark moral dichotomies. Within this mythology, Minin and Pozharsky regained the position of fearless liberators

[19] See Ibid., 80.

under whose leadership "the entire Russian people rose against the Polish invaders."[20]

It is a historical fact that the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – as well as Sweden – eagerly exploited the weakness of its eastern neighbor, pursuing a policy to destabilize Moscow's rule and seize control. The most striking examples were the so-called *Dymitriads* – campaigns to place on the Russian throne pretenders loyal to the Commonwealth and claiming Ivan the Terrible's legacy. In 1610, Polish forces, invited by powerful boyars, entered Moscow under Hetman Jan Karol Chodkiewicz, who soon returned to Poland, leaving the Kremlin under Aleksander Korwin Gosiewski. Both commanders appear in Pudovkin's film – unlike another key figure, Hetman Stanisław Żółkiewski, who also played a crucial role. The Polish-Lithuanian garrison became notorious for its brutality toward Muscovites of all classes, bloodily suppressing any signs of revolt. This lasted until 1612, when – as a Soviet critic wrote in an October 1939 report from *Minin and Pozharsky*'s set – "the Russian people crushed the Polish aggressors who had set foot on sacred Russian soil."[21]

It is worth devoting some attention to the film's opening sequence. From the very first seconds, the viewer is immersed in the imagery of Stalinist historiosophy. Even before the opening credits appear, the screen shows a series of static shots of the Kremlin in 1939. Ivan Martos's monument to Minin and Pozharsky is framed together with the Troitskaya Tower, topped with the five-pointed red star (installed in 1935), and the Grand Kremlin Palace, above which the red flag waves. It would be hard to find a better illustration of the symbolic interweaving of historical layers within Stalinist myth-making. The visual emblems of communism, rising above the architectural symbols of past despotism, do not conflict with them but resonate in a pure harmony.

After a long opening sequence accompanied by a solemn choral piece (music by Yuri Shaporin, lyrics by Nikolai Aseyev), a title card establishes the historical context: "For six years, Russian soil had suffered under the yoke of foreign intervention. In the autumn of 1610, Polish nobles seized the Kremlin by deceit and attempted to advance into northern Russia. Uprisings erupted everywhere, but well-armed invaders crushed the scattered peasant units, while the boyars preferred negotiating with foreigners rather than making concessions to their own subjects." In accordance with the tenets of Stalinist historiography, the

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[20] *Historia ZSRR. Krótki kurs*, ed. A. Szestakow, transl. Cz. Jędraszko (Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1952), 42.

[21] A. Amasovich, "Tak sozdaetsia fil'm," *Smena* 10 (1939), 22.

Time of Troubles is reduced to a bilateral national war. There appears a misleading implication that peasant revolts were solely anti-Polish uprisings, with only the final sentence hinting at an internal dimension. Yet the film leaves no doubt that the few traitors of the nation – "fifth column" of a sort – are contemptible exceptions, disrupting the nation's flawless unity and deserving the severest punishment. It is also worth noting the recognition of the Polish army's power. Films set in the seventeenth century portrayed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth as a formidable state. Interestingly, a pattern emerges in Soviet films from 1939–1941 dealing with Poland: the closer the action is to contemporary times, the less respect is shown for Polish military capabilities. Consequently, the late 1930s' Poland appears disorganized, lacking economic or military strength, and posing no threat to the world's most powerful nation.

The main narrative begins only in the fourth minute. The opening sequence introduces all major plot threads and key characters. We first meet Roman, a fugitive peasant serving as the viewer's guide; the Time of Troubles is shown from his "low" perspective. The monumentally portrayed protagonists remain beyond direct reach – revered idols of the cult-of-personality era, exalted by total authority, and not depicted as flesh-and-blood figures relatable to the audience. This applies especially to Prince Pozharsky. As a personification of the Orthodox warrior ethos, he radiates sanctity, inspiring awe and mystical fear, compelling humble submission of the gaze.

Minin is initially portrayed as slightly more human and approachable than Pozharsky. In the opening scene, he finds Roman, a peasant wounded in the head, amidst the devastation brought by the invaders. Stylized as Christ, Roman symbolizes the suffering of the Russian people under foreign domination. Minin provides aid but, above all, awakens Roman's national consciousness, addressing him – and, through him, the audience – with a fiery appeal in which lament over the homeland's fall mixes with a call for cross-class national unity in the face of a formidable enemy. These themes recur in the historically grounded scene of Minin's speech to the citizens of Nizhny Novgorod, one of the film's key moments from an ideological standpoint. In this eloquent diatribe, clearly directed at the contemporary Soviet viewer being prepared for wartime sacrifices, anti-Polish motifs intertwine with glorification of self-sacrifice, exhortations to renounce material goods for the defense of the homeland, and appeals to patriotic duty.

Roman soon separates from Minin and almost immediately encounters Pozharsky. The prince spends the night in a roadside monastery, what provided the filmmakers a convenient opportunity to surround the character with an aura

of sanctity, enhanced by Orthodox symbolism and iconography. On the wave of incorporating pre-revolutionary motifs into Soviet ideology, Orthodoxy was partially rehabilitated as a traditional foundation of Russian statehood, as evidenced, for instance, in the prologue of Mikhail Romm's *Dream*. The combination of the religious *mise-en-scène* and the choral soundtrack positions Pozharsky within a sacred tradition, turning him into a living icon without excessively emphasizing his attachment to orthodox Christian values.

Because of the heavy traveler traffic, Pozharsky must share a room with Roman's former master, Orlov – a character embodying all the pathologies of the elite, a prototype of the internal enemy, traitor, and collaborator, personifying the traits popularly ascribed to the boyars. Strictly speaking, as a *stolnik*, Orlov is not actually a boyar; he is a steward, not a landowner. Yet Roman pointedly addresses him as "boyar" in later scenes. Apparently, the filmmakers were less concerned with historical accuracy than with reinforcing a stereotype that framed social injustice not as systemic but as the result of corrupt elites, following the familiar "good tsar, bad boyars" trope. A cornerstone of the Stalinist culture war was the call – and practice – of ruthlessly eliminating the internal enemy. This is clearly dramatized in the conflict between Orlov and Roman, which echoes the heightened class antagonism of the Time of Troubles. Feudal lords demanded rights not only to pursue fugitive peasants but even those they themselves had expelled during famine. Of course, the film omits that the greatest victims of post-1612 re-centralization were the peasantry, whose exploitation grew even harsher. In the finale, Roman kills the vile Orlov, enacting popular justice. The viewer is left with the impression that by expelling Polish oppressors and punishing native collaborators, Russian society took a decisive step toward a fairer economic order.

Importantly, in the more than twenty-minute opening sequence, the main antagonists – the Poles – are not present on-screen. They function as "significant absentees" driving the plot as a factor determining all characters' actions and serving as a reference point for their moral condition ("Hold on to Władysław, as I do!" – shouts the drunken Orlov, provoking Pozharsky's deep outrage and leaving no doubt about the man's utter corruption).[22] When the Poles finally appear, they are immediately depicted as criminals who order a massacre of civilians. Warned of the approaching insurgent army led by Prokop Lapunov,

[22] Orlov refers to Władysław IV Vasa, king of Poland in 1632–1648, who formally held the title of Tsar between 1609 and 1613, in accordance to the agreement between Hetman Żółkiewski and the boyars.

Dmitry Troubetskoy, and Ivan Zarutsky,[23] commander Gosiewski eagerly accepts a treacherous boyar's proposal to burn Moscow's wooden districts and carries it out the next morning at the head of torch-bearing, winged hussars. Such use of distinctive Polish military symbols of various eras – demonized or parodied – remains a constant device of Soviet propaganda films of the period (e.g., *Shchors*, *The First Cavalry Army*, *Wind from the East*).

The sequence depicting the Moscow fire, crucial for the film's rhetorical impact, is based on an event that must be regarded as one of the most infamous episodes in the history of Polish military. On March 27, 1611, by order (probably) of commander Gosiewski, the Poles set fire to the residential districts of the occupied capital.[24] Stanisław Żółkiewski writes:

> It was a massacre of great scale among such a dense crowd of people, the wailing and crying of children, alike the Judgment Day. So many of them, with wives and children, flung themselves into the fire; so many defeated, so many burned, but also many saved themselves by fleeing to the nearby troops... In this way the Muscovite capital burned with great bloodshed and immeasurable damage, for it was a wealthy and great city.[25]

In Pudovkin's film, the inhabitants of Moscow, led by Pozharsky, bravely resist the enemy, but in the face of the raging element they prove powerless. The sequence of their defeat reaches the height of national-martyrological pathos, with the catastrophic tone pushed to its limits. The mystery of the national sacrifice culminates in a monumental shot of the wounded Pozharsky falling to the ground while the magnificent buildings around him turn to ruins.

The rhetorical complement to the Moscow fire sequence is the scene at the court of Polish King Sigismund III Vasa, showing that the barbarity of the Polish troops, while directly driven by cowardice, baseness, and atavistic impulses, in

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[23] The reference is to the so-called First People's Militia (*Pervoe narodnoe opolchenie*). The uprising led by Minin and Pozharsky is known in historical writing as the Second People's Militia (*Vtoroe narodnoe opolchenie*). Importantly, in Pudovkin's film the leaders of the first uprising are depicted in a critical light. Only the figure of Lapunov, who was killed in July 1611, is treated with reverence. Pozharsky is portrayed as the continuer of his great work – just as Stalin, according to the prevailing narrative, was presented as the spiritual heir and outstanding successor of Lenin. Zarutsky and Troubetskoy are shown as traitors to the cause, in whom the Soviet viewer of the time could easily recognize a metaphorical reference to the Trotskiist faction.

[24] For reasons that remain unclear, the film gives a different date (April 27). This inconsistency cannot be explained by the discrepancy between the Gregorian and Julian calendars.

[25] Stanisław Żółkiewski, *Początek i progres wojny moskiewskiej* (Kraków: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1920), 117–118. First print in Poland: 1833.

a broader perspective results from the imperial ambitions of Warsaw and other Western capitals greedily eyeing the East's riches. In an opulent throne room (sets and costumes styled on Western models, emphasizing the Commonwealth's cultural otherness from the Russian perspective), King Sigismund (Mikhail Astangov), Hetman Chodkiewicz (Anatoly Goryunov), and a catholic cleric named De-Mallo (fictional; Yevgeny Gurov) appear. The Polish monarch is insignificant in the film's plot. He appears only in this scene, portrayed as a grotesquely weak man of narrow horizons and inflated ego. De-Mallo – embodying the catholic church's hypocrisy and Machiavellianism – outwits the king, luring him with visions of power and wealth promised by further Eastern conquests. The priest uses a map to show Moscow's strategic importance as the key to controlling the region, with major economic significance. On behalf of his patrons (the Jesuits), De-Mallo promises financial support for the next phase of aggression (i.e., Chodkiewicz's reinforcements) and silently agrees to the king's suggestion of an assassination of Pozharsky. This provokes clear disapproval from Chodkiewicz, who remains the only Polish character in the film shown with a trace of respect (or rather as the least repulsive among the antagonists). Chodkiewicz considers himself a proud warrior, heir to the European knightly tradition, loyal to his class's honor code. His greatest flaws are arrogance and megalomania. Compared with the eminent Russian commanders of epic Soviet biographical cinema (e.g., *Suvorov*, 1941, dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin; *Kutuzov*, 1944, dir. Vladimir Petrov; *Admiral Nakhimov*, 1947, dir. Vsevolod Pudovkin), who make tactical and strategic decisions with both prudence and brilliance, Chodkiewicz is depicted as a far lesser commander – obstinate, blinded by ambition, and easily provoked into tactical errors tragic for the Polish side. In the final sequence, he leads the relief force toward Moscow, where the Polish garrison on the Kremlin is starving, cut off from supplies by the Russian siege. Just before the decisive battle, in which the Polish forces suffer a crushing defeat, Chodkiewicz compares himself to Caesar. His miscalculations come at great cost to the troops under his command. By the film's end, the portrayal of the Poles becomes increasingly grotesque – the routed invaders flee in panic before the victorious Russians, and the hussars abandon their wings that were slowing their retreat. The ultimate humiliation and exposure of the invaders' inherent cowardice serve as just revenge for the immense harm they inflicted.

Structurally, *Minin and Pozharsky* features a vivid compositional frame. All major formal and thematic elements introduced in the opening sequence find their resolution in the epilogue. The choral song celebrating beloved Moscow returns ("Do not forget, beautiful Moscow, how we dealt with the enemy... Rise, immortal force of the people!"). The two titular heroes, as if they were Ivan

Martos's monuments brought to life, stand on a platform addressing the cheering crowd – and by extension the cinema audience as well. In the closing words of Minin's speech, a clear suggestion emerges that the "eternal struggle," of which their anti-Polish uprising was a crucial episode, continues: "The Pole sat on Rus' like a goose, and did not depart like a swan! We crushed the Pole not only with arms, but also with our common, righteous unity! We crushed them! And if they return, we will crush them again! Here we cut the Pole's tail! And there [points West] we will strip their skin."

It is telling that at the very moment when the Soviet Union was brutally annexing the territories of its Western neighbors, Soviet cinemas exhibited a film in which Russia appears as the victim of external aggression. Dobrenko makes a compelling case that one of the rules of Stalinist epic cinema was the equation of nation and class – both in relation to the oppressed groups and to the oppressors.[26] Setting the story during the Time of Troubles allowed for the Russians to be portrayed as the oppressed and the Poles as the oppressors. The implications are clear: by leading a victorious uprising against the Polish invaders, Minin and Pozharsky are inaugurating the great historical process of (pan-)Russian mass emancipation from the chains of historical injustice. The Red Army's expulsion of the "Polish lords" from Western Ukraine and Belarus is framed as nothing less than the fulfillment of Minin and Pozharsky's testament – the crowning and completion of their great historical mission.

In this context, it is worth devoting some attention to another historical biographical film by Pudovkin from the Molotov-Ribbentrop period. *Suvorov* (1940) does not directly address Polish themes, focusing instead on the anti-Napoleonic Italian campaign of 1799. What is important and symbolic, however, is that the film opens immediately after the successful (from the Russian perspective) storming of Warsaw's district Praga (November 4, 1794). This was a bloody retaliation for the Warsaw Uprising of 1794 (April 17–19) and marked the final defeat of Tadeusz Kościuszko's Insurrection, ending in a massacre that claimed anywhere from several to several tens of thousands of civilian victims. In a broader historical perspective, the massacre of Praga is described in Russian historiography as settling scores for the burning of Moscow in 1611. In *Suvorov*, the civilian casualties are not mentioned. The film's opening carries a between-the-lines message that could not have been difficult for a Soviet viewer in 1940 to decipher: the necessary precondition for establishing a new order in Europe – an order aligned with the political goals and interests of the USSR, and thus of

[26] Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema*, 25–26.

all humanity – is the resolution of the burning Polish question, as the spread of socialism is obstructed by the deep-rooted Polish reactionism.

Bohdan Khmelnytskyi: "Eternal Struggle" and "Fraternal Friendship"

A few paragraphs earlier, I noted that *Minin and Pozharsky* in some respects departs from the model of historical cinema that prevailed during the Stalinist period. Another distinguishing feature of Pudovkin's work, setting it apart from other Soviet productions of the time, is its casting of the Poles as the ultimate enemy threatening Russian statehood. As it was already mentioned, other Soviet films from 1939–1941 dealing with Polish themes – though anti-Polish sentiment had by then become an officially sanctioned and zealously practiced norm – do not depict Poland as posing a direct threat to pre-revolutionary Russia, let alone to the Soviet Union. Only Pudovkin's historical fresco does so, serving both as a response to a particular ideological need and as a foundation for further propaganda narratives.

As a result of the turn in Soviet geostrategic doctrine in 1939, the position previously occupied by the Third Reich as the paramount enemy threatening the security, cohesion, and identity of the Soviet nation became vacant – a void that could only partly be "filled" by placing the Polish Republic in that role. An analysis of Soviet propaganda discourse from 1939–1941 makes it clear that the Germans could not simply and mechanically be replaced by the Poles. For the reasons outlined below, such a substitution was not possible.

In 1939, most Soviet citizens still vividly remembered the anti-Polish propaganda campaign that had accompanied the Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1921, exemplified by films such as *War on War* (*Voina voine*), *To the Front!* (*Na front!*), *Lords – Bandits* (*Pany-naletchiki*); all three directed by Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky, *On the Red Front* (*Na krasnom fronte*, dir. Lev Kuleshov), and *Long Live Workers' and Peasants' Poland!* (*Da zdravstvuet, raboche-krest'ianskaia Pol'sha*, dir. Czesław Sabiński), all made in 1920. During the NEP (New Economic Policy) period, and especially after Józef Piłsudski's 1926 coup, anti-Polish themes became a regular feature of Soviet cinema (*P.K.P. (Piłsudski Bought Petliura* / *P.K.P. Pilsudskii kupil Petliuru*, dir. Aksel Lundin and Georgy Stabovoy, 1926; *Shadows of Belweder* / *Teni Bel'vedera*, dir. Aleksandr Anoshchenko, 1927; *Forest Story* / *Lesnaia byl'*, dir. Yuri Tarich, 1926). After the signing of the Polish-Soviet non-aggression pact in 1932, the anti-Polish tone in Soviet propaganda was reduced, but never entirely eliminated, as evidenced by Nikolai Ostrovsky's *How the Steel*

Was Tempered, a canonical work of socialist realist literature.[27] In the years just before the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, during the Great Terror of 1937–1938, the anti-Polish campaign took the monstrous form of ethnic purges, whose victims were Soviet citizens of Polish descent.

None of this changes the fact that the Polish Republic of 1939 could not be presented, for the purposes of domestic propaganda, as the chief enemy threatening the USSR security. In Soviet media discourse, Poland was portrayed as an ephemeral, decadent state led by corrupt politicians, degenerate plutocrats, and cowardly generals – an artificial construct brought into being by the Western powers after 1918. Two decades later, this state had become a textbook example of a decaying bourgeois-capitalist order in its terminal phase. Its last remaining resource was the quasi-enslaved labor of the working and peasant masses (watching films such as *Liberation* or *Wind from the East*, one might easily conclude that the exploited classes were almost exclusively Ukrainian and Belarusian). The final nail in the coffin of the Polish state was the catastrophe that fell on September 1, 1939. Soviet propagandists sought as far as possible to downplay the Nazi German invasion, vaguely suggesting that the attack was provoked by the reckless decisions of the Polish political elite and by the imperial ambitions of unspecified Western powers.

Soviet propaganda did not allow their receivers to forget that Poland had once been a formidable enemy of feudal Russia. Moreover, it also reminded them – albeit very cautiously (as seen in *The First Cavalry Army*) – that as recently as 1920, the Red Army had been defeated by the newly formed Polish state (to some extent, the September 17, 1939, aggression was rationalized as settling the score for the 1920 Battle of Warsaw). However, the Polish state of 1939, portrayed in Soviet propaganda as collapsed, was incapable of being a worthy opponent for the "world's most powerful army." Consequently, the propaganda story of the USSR's military aggression could not be framed within the conventional structure of a war epic. The disparity between the two military potentials was too great, and the outcome of their confrontation too predictable. There was no room for heroism or drama. In accordance with the rigid conventions of socialist realism – and, indeed, of any propaganda – the enemy could not be depicted as powerless. The structure of war propaganda crucially requires a symmetry that corresponds with a Manichean vision of military conflict. When one side

[27] The first volume, which has a much stronger anti-Polish tone than the second, was originally published in installments in the journal *Molodaia gvardiia* in 1932, with the second volume appearing two years later. A heavily revised book edition was released in 1936.

is labeled "good" and "powerful," and the other "evil" and "weak," it becomes impossible to maintain the dialectical balance needed to construct a narrative of suitably epic proportions. The Soviet propaganda machine developed a simple but effective rhetorical strategy to resolve this problem.

A dogmatically enforced narrative portrayed Polish political and military elites as shadows of a bygone era. While they posed no threat to Soviet might, they remained extremely dangerous to the impoverished and oppressed populace of the eastern territories of this faltering state, which had collapsed like a house of cards under the western assault. The more dire the situation became in the west, the more brutal Polish soldiers became toward the Ukrainian and Belarusian people (a motif of desperate Polish cavalry fleeing the western aggression, who burn villages in an act of blind hatred, appears in the films *Wind from the East* and *Liberation*). In order to legitimize this narrative, it was necessary to place it within a broader historical context. In response to this need, *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi* presents the Poles as the eternal enemies of the Rus' peoples – as cultural imperialists who aspire to dominate Ukraine and invariably seek alliances with Western powers hostile to Russia.

Within the overall semantic structure of the Soviet propaganda cinema's historiosophical narrative under the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi* emerges as the ideological continuation and fulfillment of *Minin and Pozharsky*. While Pudovkin's work presents a mythologized genesis of the Polish-Russian conflict, Savchenko's film broadens this narrative by incorporating the Ukrainian context – an element integral to the Kremlin's contemporary prowar rhetoric that was presented in strict accordance with state doctrine. On an ideological level, the film is an amalgam of Marxist slogans blended with Cossack and Great Russian themes, which are presented – in accordance with the prevailing ideological line – as convergent and harmoniously aligned. The nation-building myth of the Cossacks, though inherently incompatible with the reformulated pan-Russian narrative of the Stalinist era, was nonetheless absorbed by it for the needs of the historical moment in the spirit of dialectical materialism. Within the traditional narrative celebrating the "ancient" and "natural" brotherhood of "Great" and "Little" Russians, the period from 1939 to 1941 saw an emphasis placed on the affirmation of Ukrainianess and the promise that Ukrainian cultural and ethnic identity would not be constrained within this brotherhood, but rather, could only be fully realized within its framework.[28]

[28] It is worth noting that from the post-revolutionary years to the early 1930s one could observe a genuine appreciation of Ukrainian culture (at least when viewed in comparison with the pe-

Khmelnytskyi's uprising (1648–1654) – much like the popular insurrection in Pudovkin's *Minin and Pozharsky* – was portrayed as both a revolutionary and a national-liberation struggle. The film frames the Cossack rebellion using the elementary conceptual categories of Marxism, modified and "Russified" in the Stalinist spirit. In this way, the struggle of the Ukrainian Cossacks against the "Polish lords" becomes another chapter in the timeless struggle of the pan-Russian national subject. Following the rigid convention of Soviet historical cinema of the 1930s and 1940s, Savchenko's film glorifies the intellectual and moral qualities of an outstanding individual. Khmelnytskyi appears a great leader without whose contribution the uprising would have been merely a peasant revolt, insignificant from the perspective of historical change – one that would likely have been easily crushed by the militarily superior Polish nobility. In Nikolay Mordvinov's interpretation, Khmelnytskyi possesses all the obligatory attributes of Stalinist cinema's political-military leaders: strength, charisma, strategic genius, and a deep (and mutual) love for his people.[29] As a sworn enemy of the Polish political elites, this historical prototype of the protagonist perfectly fit the propaganda needs of the 1939–1941 period.

Dobrenko characterizes the titular heroes of *Minin and Pozharsky* and *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi* as mythological figures lacking distinct personalities – "moving monuments" or "speaking statues."[30] However, compared to the protagonists of Pudovkin's film, who behave in a hieratic, conventionalized, and ritualized manner in every single scene, Khmelnytskyi appears as a hero somewhat

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riod before 1917). Moreover, the tradition of resistance to Russian domination was regarded as an integral element of Ukrainian identity. This corresponded with the sharp criticism of tsarist imperialism and Great Russian chauvinism (as well as of "local nationalisms") expressed by the participants of the 12th Congress of the Communist Party of Russia (Bolsheviks) in 1923, and with the *korenizatsiia* ("indigenization" or "rooting") policy implemented during the following decade. See Marek Waldenberg, *Narody zależne i mniejszości narodowe w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej: Dzieje konfliktów i idei* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2000), 358. In the 1930s, an opposite, centrally directed process began – one of whose symptoms was the previously unimaginable absorption of heroic narratives from the tsarist era into the Soviet propaganda machine. Especially in Soviet Ukraine, the policy of re-Russification was carried out brutally and relentlessly, under the slogan of eradicating Ukrainian nationalism. The affirmation of Ukrainian identity between 1939 and 1941 was purely declarative, and it must have been clear to Ukrainians of the time that these declarations diverged sharply from the actual political practice.

[29] For comparison, one may recall the hostile depiction of Hetman Mazepa in *Peter the Great*, where he appears as a pro-Western traitor to the ideal of all-Russian unity – a symbol of Ukraine's cultural and political estrangement from Moscow. By contrast, Stalinist historiography portrayed Khmelnytskyi as a visionary devoted to his people, deeply committed to the notion of Ukrainian-Russian brotherhood. See *History of the USSR*, 47.

[30] Dobrenko, *Stalinist Cinema*, 67.

less stripped of the impulses and passions typical of ordinary mortals. In this respect, he more closely resembles Petrov's tsar Peter I than Eisenstein's prince Alexander Nevsky: he gladly feasts at lavishly set tables and does not shy away from earthly pleasures.

Khmelnytskyi's greatest (and perhaps only) weakness is his passion for Helena Czaplińska (Garen Zhukovskaya) – a character embodying the patriarchal archetype of the seductive temptress and treacherous manipulator, akin to Jezebel or Delilah. Their turbulent relationship echoes the costume melodramas popular in 1930s Western cinema, which centered on romantic intrigues within royal courts (e.g., *Queen Christina*, 1933; *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, 1933; *The Scarlet Empress*, 1934). This subplot strongly reinforces the film's anti-Polish message. Initially portrayed with slight empathy as a proud Catholic, Helena regards the Cossack leader with fear and contempt. She resists him but is compelled by her confessor, Father Łętowski (Aleksandr Davison) – a spiritual twin of Pudovkin's Father De-Mallo – who convinces her that becoming the hetman's mistress (and later wife, after converting) is her duty to God and Poland. Her true role, however, is to spy on and undermine him. The subplot climaxes when Helena attempts to poison Khmelnytskyi. The hetman ruthlessly sentences her to death in a scene echoing Peter the Great's condemnation of his son Alexei, often interpreted as allegorical justification for Stalinist purges and show trials.

Bohdan Khmelnytskyi aligns with a historiosophical vision emphasizing the fatalistic cyclicity of historical processes. This is reflected not only in its portrayal of Polish-Ukrainian relations as inherently and "naturally" antagonistic but also in its depiction of an eternal and indestructible Russo-Ukrainian brotherhood, embodied in Savchenko's work by the figure of Hetman Khmelnytskyi (an interpretation, of course, at odds with historical facts). Symptomatically, in a pre-release director's statement, Savchenko stressed that Khmelnytskyi was considered a traitor by both Polish monarchists and Ukrainian nationalists.[31]

The film reinforces a Stalinist pan-Russian interpretation of Russo-Ukrainian history. It presents the Russo-Ukrainian fraternal bond as natural and constant, while simultaneously framing the Poles as a perpetual threat to both nations. Polish political elites and their military forces are shown to be as brutal as in *Minin and Pozharsky;* their superior weaponry is noted, too. Cruel Sarmatians suppress Cossack rebellions "with fire and sword,"[32] impaling rebels.

[31] Igor Savchenko, "Ne budet sily toi, chtob nas slomila," *Sovetskii kinoekran* 3 (1941), 3.

[32] Let us refer here Henryk Sienkiewicz's epic novel *With Fire and Sword* (*Ogniem i mieczem*, 1884) which depicts the 17th-century Cossack uprising from the Polish nobility's perspective.

Their bloody methods horrify the Muscovite envoys en route to Warsaw. This group is led by the Prince Trubetskoy (featured episodically but highly significant for the film's ideological message) whose immense wisdom and integrity leaves no doubt of his spiritual nobility, radiating dignity akin to Pozharsky in Pudovkin's film.

The film's final sequence depicts the signing of the Treaty of Pereiaslav (concluded on January 18, 1654 by Hetman Khmelnytskyi and Vasily Buturlin, plenipotentiary of Tsar Alexis I), under which Ukraine was placed under the rule of the Russian Tsar. To this day, the treaty remains a symbol of unity within the pan-Russian geopolitical narrative, representing the incorporation of Ukraine into the Russian sphere of influence. In Savchenko's film, the signing of the Pereiaslav Agreement is portrayed as the symbolic ratification of an already existing alliance, Khmelnytskyi's greatest triumph, and the fulfillment of his most ambitious political plans. It is presented both as an act of ultimate political emancipation for the Cossacks and as a resounding defeat of the Polish nobility's imperial aspirations.

In the context of *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*, some attention should also be given to the film *Shchors*, as from a broader perspective these two works appear to be mutually reinforcing in meaning and ideology. Together, they form a cohesive vision of historical Russian-Ukrainian-Polish threefold relations. What is specific to the 1939–1941 period is the fact that both films explore symbols and sentiments which, in other times, were treated with reserve and suspicion in Soviet culture as dangerously inclined toward Ukrainian nationalism. According to the doctrine, Ukrainian identity could only be affirmed if it fully embraced both its "fraternal" subordination to the Russian/Soviet cultural-political center and its uncompromising rejection of Polish influence.

Stalin personally ordered Dovzhenko to create a film about the "Ukrainian Chapayev" – Mykola Shchors, a Red Civil War hero. At the dictator's request, the project was repeatedly modified to align with shifting political demands.[33] This was no accident – the "USSR's primary viewer" clearly believed the propaganda value of *Shchors* was immense. In Dovzhenko's characteristic style, the film combines a glorification of revolutionary fervor with a fascination for the cultural and geographic "flavors" of the Ukrainian soil. Its depiction of Ukraine during the Civil War largely coincides with that found in the novel *How the Steel Was Tempered*: the semantic landscape unfolds across a continuum of nature, folk customs, and the intellectual and spiritual life of the progressive (and Russified)

[33] Oksana Musienko, *Ukrains'ke kino: teksty i kontekst* (Vinnytsia: HLOBUS-PRES, 2009), 154.

Ukrainian elites. All these components are coherently and harmoniously integrated within a framework of Ukrainian self-identification that is presented as both idealistic and subordinate. The Ukrainian people's choice of the revolutionary path is portrayed as entirely natural and nearly unanimous – a reaffirmation of ancient brotherhood in a new and better, socialist form.

In classic film studies on Soviet cinema – both Russian and international – *Shchors* is widely considered one of its greatest achievements.[34] Dovzhenko himself described it as the most significant work of his life, a "monument to the people and the great Ukrainian October."[35] Today, however, this consensus is increasingly questioned. Critics now point not only to the film's ideological bias – understandable, given its production context – but also to its structural weaknesses.[36] Perhaps the main flaw, at least within the conventions of epic war cinema, is its vague and convoluted portrayal of the enemy. On the surface, the primary antagonists are the followers of the Ukrainian independence leader Symon Petliura, who is exposed as an ally of the Polish elites complicit in exploiting the Ukrainian people. Yet the "Petliurists" seem too weak and lack popular support to be compelling adversaries. Meanwhile, the Germans – potential key foes – are treated with ideological caution, reflecting Soviet cinema's taboo around German themes at the time.

Dovzhenko's film depicts German officers negatively but emphasizes transnational class solidarity among ordinary soldiers who sympathize with the revolution. In a typical scene from the Stalinist era, German privates condemn their own colonel to death in a people's court. Thus, while Shchors fights against, in his own words, "Petliura and the German occupiers," the German troops are ultimately portrayed as fellow working people. In one scene, they and the Red Army soldiers discard their weapons and embrace – a clear message that class bonds outweigh national loyalties.

The Polish headquarters is filled with ornaments of historical imperial power – hussar armor and baroque patriotic paintings. In the sequence's climactic moment, a highly symbolic shot uses a "picture-in-picture" composition: Shchors stands before a battle painting in the style of Jan Matejko (1838–1893,

[34] Vsevolod Pudovkin, Elizaveta Smirnova, "Drogi rozwoju radzieckich filmów fabularnych," in *Film radziecki*, ed. Jan Guranowski (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1951), 36; Rostislav Iurenev, *Historia filmu radzieckiego* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1977), 109–110; Leyda, *Kino*, 354–355.

[35] Oleksandr Dovzhenko, "Avtobiografiia," in *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1966), 53.

[36] Liubomir Hoseiko, *Istoriia ukrainskogo kinematografu, 1896–1995* (Kyiv: Kino-Kolo, 2005), 98; Youngblood, *Russian War Films*, 48; Wojnicka, *Dzieci XX Zjazdu*, 152–153.

Polish patriotic history painter), which depicts the Cossack colonel Ivan Bohun fighting a Polish nobleman. Raising his saber, Shchors shouts the order to attack. This is a direct reference to the historical figure of Bohun, the antagonist in aforementioned Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *With Fire and Sword* who also appears in Savchenko's *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*. It is no accident that the regiment led by Shchors was named after Bohun – an unambiguous symbol of Cossack revolt against Polish domination. This fusion of temporal layers – similar to the opening frames of *Minin and Pozharsky* discussed earlier – is characteristic of the Soviet historiosophical doctrine of the late 1930s and early 1940s. Shchors becomes Bohun; Bohun becomes Shchors. They merge into a single, transcendent national subject engaged in a perpetual struggle against their eternal enemy: the Polish lord.

Conclusion

As Joanna Wojnicka notes, the Polish theme in Soviet cinema before 1941 "rarely appeared on its own; it usually existed 'in the context' [...] of the Ukrainian and Belarusian themes."[37] The Stalinist discourse of 1939–1941, which was thoroughly essentialist in its approach to nationality issues, defined Polishness primarily in relation to Ukrainianness, and vice versa – Ukrainianness was itself defined mainly by its reference to Polishness. Their mutual relationship was presented as embodying a master-slave model; the narrative framework of all Soviet films from this period thematizing Polish-Ukrainian relations (*Wind from the East*, *Liberation*, *Bohdan Khmelnytskyi*, *Shchors*, *The First Cavalry Army*, among others) was consistently based on the same culture-war pattern: a story of liberating the Ukrainian people from Polish bondage (with fraternal support from Moscow).

The category of Polishness was thus fused with capitalism, imperialism, colonialism, and even fascism. Polish characters were almost exclusively depicted as privileged figures in positions of authority: landowners, industrialists, catholic church hierarchs, officers, and gendarmes. Soviet filmmakers particularly favored using recognizable elements of Polish military iconography from various eras (from hussars' wings to the early twentieth-century square-shaped *rogatywka* cap). Along with recurring motifs (such as lavish Sarmatian costumes and the monumentalism of catholic religious architecture), these visual tropes functioned as symbols of the brutal, state-sanctioned violence essential

[37] Wojnicka, *Prorocy, kapłani, rewolucjoniści*, 135.

to maintaining the Polish political and economic order – a backward construct based on extreme social inequalities whose destruction by the USSR was thus presented as an ultimately moral and righteous act.

On the other hand, Ukrainian (and Belarusian) identity, through the lens of Soviet filmmakers in the 1939–1941 period, was portrayed as one tempered and cultivated in opposition to the oppression of Polish lords – both under serfdom and in its post-feudal forms.[38] Ukrainians and Belarusians were stereotypically identified with the common people, or with an undernourished and severely overworked urban proletariat formed through urbanization processes driven by rural poverty (see the narrative premise of Romm's *Dream*). Soviet films of this period strongly affirmed Ukrainian identity and culture (primarily folk traditions, but also high culture, especially literature). However, Ukrainians and Belarusians were depicted as organically united with Russians – their powerful protectors against Western, especially Polish, colonial expansionism.

While constructing the narrative that sanctioned the imperial policy, Soviet cinema emphasized the cultural and linguistic proximity of these three nations while downplaying the significance of existing differences and divisions. The role of the Cyrillic script was heavily emphasized as a key unifying factor,[39] as was the cultural significance of a shared religious tradition (something unthinkable in the fiercely secular pre-Stalinist era).

All these elements were perfectly suited to "driving a wedge" between the East Slavic nations and the Latinized, catholic Poles. In advancing an ideological narrative designed to meet immediate political needs, Stalin's propagandists ultimately employed the universal framework of all propaganda, a framework tailored to generate both exclusive and inclusive sentiments through its foundational logic: us versus them.

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[38] Although in the Soviet propaganda from 1939–1941 Western Ukraine and Western Belarus were presented together, even a cursory look at the research material discussed here reveals that, quantitatively, the Ukrainian theme clearly dominated over the Belarusian one. This disproportion was likely caused by the Kremlin's belief in Ukraine's greater strategic importance – both in terms of its geographical location and natural resources – as well as in the stronger potential for social resistance among the Ukrainian population. To support this assumption, one may refer to the "statistics" presented in the film *Liberation*. The results of the referendum mentioned in the film stated that 93% of Ukrainians and 96% of Belarusians voted in favor of unification with the USSR. These figures, of course, should not be taken literally as an accurate reflection of public sentiment, but rather as a message to be read between the lines – that reactionary elements were perceived as more deeply rooted among the Ukrainian population.

[39] It is symptomatic that in 1940 the alphabets in the Soviet republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus were changed from Latin or Arabic script to Cyrillic.

2026 ACTA UNIVERSITATIS CAROLINAE PAG. 61–92
STUDIA TERRITORIALIA 1

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF WAR VIOLENCE AND ITS TAMING: "SHELL SHOCK" IN GREECE DURING AND IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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Abstract
The article examines the psychological impact of wartime violence on Greek soldiers during and in the aftermath of the First World War, focusing on the relationship between war-related mental disorders, violence and their institutional management. Situating Greece within the broader historiography of wartime brutalization and shell shock, it explores how Greece's participation in the First World War (1917–1918) and the Greek-Turkish War (1919–1922) shaped soldiers' mental health and behavior. Drawing on medical publications, contemporary press accounts, and archival material from the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital, the study analyzes both the reception of war neuroses in Greek scientific discourse and their practical "taming." It argues that Greek psychiatrists recognized the psychological consequences of warfare, but generally incorporated them into existing psychiatric and neurological frameworks rather than developing a distinct diagnostic category comparable to shell shock.

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Introduction

Violence is ubiquitous in every war. The massive scale and industrialized character of First World War exposed large segments of the population to unprecedented forms of violence. One consequence of this experience was the brutalization of both wartime and postwar societies. As George Mosse observed in his pioneering work *Fallen Soldiers*, "human nature became primitive, instinctual, and violent" during the First World War. Across all belligerent nations, human life came to be regarded as "cheap," while "enthusiasm and willingness to sacrifice gave way to a cruel hatred and a desire to annihilate the enemy completely."[1] Confrontation with mass death and widespread atrocities profoundly reshaped many soldiers' attitudes towards life and death. As Mosse further contended, death was increasingly trivialized, while wartime and postwar societies alike became more brutalized, as "the post-war age made the death of the enemy a component of his broader dehumanization."[2] Furthermore, he maintained that the period witnessed a marked increase in crimes committed by men with no previous criminal record.[3] Although Mosse's "brutalization thesis" has been subject to substantial criticism, particularly regarding the extent to which wartime experience can explain the political violence of the interwar years,[4] it continues to offer a valuable analytical framework for examining the social consequences of modern warfare. A considerable body of scholarship has demonstrated that the return of servicemen was frequently accompanied

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1 George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 162–163.

2 Ibid., 163–164.

3 Ibid., 170.

4 See Antoine Prost, "The impact of war on French and German political cultures," *The Historical Journal* 37, no. 1 (March 1994): 210, doi: 10.1017/s0018246x00014771; Benjamin Ziemann, "Germany after the First World War – A Violent Society? Results and Implications of Recent Research on Weimar Germany," *Journal of Modern European History* 1 (2003): 82–85, doi: 10.17104/1611-8944_2003_1_80.

by heightened levels of political, domestic, and gender-based violence across Europe, Australia, and the United States.[5]

Another phenomenon that ultimately became a defining feature of both the medical and cultural history of the First World War was "shell shock," an umbrella term which was coined to refer to the mental disorders experienced by soldiers.[6] Psychological breakdown among combatants was by no means unique to the twentieth century and has been documented in military contexts since antiquity.[7] However, in the context of mass and industrialized warfare, such conditions acquired an unprecedented visibility and assumed a central place in both medical and public debates during the First World War.

Not all veterans suffering from shell shock, of course, engaged in criminal or violent behavior; nevertheless, some cases were associated with acts of violence. The "taming" of this dimension of wartime violence, which was also evident in Greece during and in the aftermath of the First World War, formed part of broader mechanisms for managing mentally ill soldiers. During this period, the treatment and management of soldiers with mental health conditions became increasingly bureaucratized in Greece. Patients were initially treated at the Second Military Hospital in Athens, while the most severe and complex cases were transferred to the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital in Athens. As one of the

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5 Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace. The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 97–99; John Lawrence, "Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post–First World War Britain," *The Journal of Modern History* 75, no. 3 (September 2003): 561–571, doi: 10.1086/380238; Elizabeth Nelson, "Victims of War: The First World War, Returned Soldiers and Understandings of Domestic Violence in Australia," *Journal of Women's History* 19, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 83–106, doi: 10.1353/jowh.2007.0068; Jochen Böhler, "Enduring Violence: The Postwar Struggles in East-Central Europe, 1917–21," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 1 (January 2015): 58–77, doi: 10.1177/0022009414552145; Jennifer Keene, "A 'Brutalizing' War? The USA after the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 1 (January 2015): 78–99, doi: 10.1177/0022009414546506.

6 From the vast body of relevant bibliography, see, for instance, George L. Mosse, "Shell-Shock as a Social Disease," *Journal of Contemporary History* 35, no. 1 (January 2000): 101–108, doi: 10.1177/002200940003500109; Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner, eds., *Traumatic Pasts. History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Peter Leese, *Shell Shock. Traumatic Neurosis and the British Soldiers of the First World War* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Gregory M. Thomas, *Treating the Trauma of the Great War. Soldiers, Civilians and Psychiatry in France, 1914–1940* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Fiona Reid, *Broken Men. Shell Shock, Treatment and Recovery in Britain 1914–30* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011); Tracey Loughran, *Shell-Shock and Medical Culture in First World War Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

7 For instance, see Lawrence Tritle, "'Ravished Minds' in the Ancient World," in *Combat Trauma and the Ancient Greeks*, ed. Peter Meineck and David Konstan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 87–104, doi: 10.1057/9781137398864_5; Kathryn Hurlock, Owen Rees, and Jason Crowley, eds., *Combat Stress in Pre-Modern Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022).

principal institutions involved in the treatment of war-related psychological disorders, the Dromokaiteion occupies a central place in this study.

This article examines how war-related mental disorders and the violent behavior associated with them were understood, diagnosed, and managed in Greece during and after the First World War. Drawing on medical publications, military medical writings, newspaper accounts, and patient records from the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital, the article first examines the reception of international debates on shell shock within the Greek medical community. It then turns to the writings of Konstantinos Papastratigakis, one of the leading Greek military psychiatrists of the period. Next, it analyzes the experiences of military patients treated at the Dromokaiteion. The paper concludes by arguing that, although Greek psychiatrists recognized the psychological consequences of warfare, they generally incorporated them into existing psychiatric and neurological frameworks rather than developing a distinct diagnostic category comparable to shell shock.

The Greek "War-Decade" (1912–1922) and Its War Violence

In Greece, warfare neither began in 1914 nor ended in 1918. During the so-called "war decade" (1912–1922), the country sought –and to a large extent succeeded in – militarily realizing the Megalē Idea (Great Idea), an irredentist policy that had shaped Greek political aspirations for nearly a century.[8] The victorious Balkan Wars (1912–1913) and Greece's participation in First World War (1917–1918) on the side of the Entente Cordiale contributed significantly to the territorial expansion of the Greek state. This process, however, unfolded alongside a profound internal political crisis, the "National Schism," which divided the country over the question of participation in the First World War.[9] The

[8] For the Great Idea, see Michael Llewellyn Smith, *Ionian Vision. Greece in Asia Minor, 1919–1922* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 1–20; Thomas W. Gallant, *Modern Greece. From the War of Independence to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 99–115.

[9] The National Schism marked a profound political and social division that polarized Greek society into two opposing camps. On one side stood the Venizelists, supporters of Prime Minister Eleutherios Venizelos, who advocated intervention on the side of the Entente; on the other were the Anti-Venizelists, aligned with King Constantine I and committed to a policy of neutrality. Against this backdrop, Venizelos established the Provisional Government of National Defense in Thessaloniki in September 1916, thereby creating a rival political center aligned with the Entente. The first units of the National Defense Army, numbering approximately 20,000 men, began participating in military operations on the Macedonian Front later that year. Following the reunification of the country under Venizelos in June 1917, the Kingdom of Greece formally entered the war on the side of the Entente. See Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge

subsequent defeat in the Greek-Turkish War (1919–1922) in Asia Minor (Anatolia) marked a decisive reversal. By the end of this turbulent decade, the Treaty of Lausanne (1923) established Greece's modern borders, with the exception of the Dodecanese Islands, which were incorporated into the Greek state in 1947.[10] This article focuses on the period spanning Greece's participation in the First World War and the Asia Minor Campaign (1917–1922), during which military personnel were systematically referred by the Ministry of Military Affairs to the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital.

Over the course of this decade, approximately 450,000 men were mobilized[11] and endured the harrowing experience of war. Violence lay at the heart of this experience. Warfare constituted a transformative, life-altering event that profoundly affected the psychological state of many soldiers, in some cases leading them to commit acts of violence during or after military service. Such cases formed part of a broader transnational pattern that attracted the attention of medical professionals, state authorities, and contemporary observers across Europe in the aftermath of the First World War.

Greek soldiers, like their counterparts in other armies, were exposed to and participated in acts of violence during the successive conflicts of the war decade. In some cases, the experience of warfare left a lasting impression on those who served. For example, one veteran recalled that during the retreat of the Greek army from Asia Minor in August 1922,

> Like a pack of ravenous wolves, the soldiers descended upon the villages in their path. Inhabitants who had not anticipated the need to flee to the mountains found

University Press, 1997), 81–108; John S. Koliopoulos and Thanos M. Veremis, *Modern Greece: A History since 1821* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 68–102.

[10] For the "war decade," see George B. Leon, *Greece and the Great Powers 1914–1917* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1974); George B. Leon, *Greece and the First World War. From Neutrality to Intervention, 1917–1918* (Boulder and New York: Columbia University Press 1990); N. Petsalis-Diomidis, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference (1919)* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1978); George Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic. Social Coalitions and Party Strategies in Greece, 1922–1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Smith, *Ionian Vision*; Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912–1913* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Konstantinos Travlos, ed., *Salvation and Catastrophe: The Greek-Turkish War, 1919–1922* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020); Panagiotis Delis, *Notions of Violence and Ethnic Cleansing on the Eve of the First World War. The Balkan Wars of 1912–13* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2024).

[11] Alexandros Makris, *"Oi kērykes tēs ideas tou ethnous". Palaioi polemistes, anapēroi kai thymata polemou stēn Ellada. Pronoia, organoseis, mnēmē (1912–1940)* ["The preachers of the idea of the nation." Veterans and war victims in Greece. Welfare, associations, memory (1912–1940)] (Athens: Hestia Publishers, 2023), 21. The total casualties, including both killed and missing, amounted to 76,671 men. Ibid., 22.

their homes ransacked. The soldiers looted and set the buildings ablaze, showing no hesitation in harming any elderly men or women who were unable or unwilling to escape. They operated under the mistaken belief that civilians would be spared, yet their vengeful and destructive fury spared no one. The villagers that failed – or chose not – to abandon their homes suffered devastating consequences: they lost their possessions, their dignity, and, in many cases, their lives.[12]

Such incidents, primarily involving deserters, are documented in numerous ego-documents produced by military personnel, which recount cases of beatings, sexual violence and the destruction of villages by fire.[13]

Contemporary newspapers contain numerous reports of crimes committed by military personnel during both the wartime and postwar years. While these articles rarely sought to analyze the phenomenon and typically provided no information regarding the perpetrators' prior history of violent behavior, the frequency with which such cases appeared in the press suggests that they constituted a recurring feature of contemporary public discourse. For instance, in April 1918, Sergeant SS shot and killed the soldier AD with his Mannlicher rifle inside the Patras prison after AD insulted him and threw objects from his cell.[14] In February 1919, soldier IX murdered a shepherd in Messolonghi.[15] In another case, which might be described in contemporary terms as a femicide, Sergeant AK murdered his partner, NG, in Gyri, Achaea, in September 1919, allegedly in

[12] Manolis Axiotis, *Egō, o Manolis Axiotēs... Ē periperiodēs zōē tou ērōa tōn "Matōmenōn chōmatōn"* [I, Manolis Axiotis... The adventurous life of the hero of "Farewell Anatolia"] (Glyfa: Baltas Publications, 2016), 187. Axiotis was from Asia Minor and had enlisted voluntarily in the Greek Army.

[13] E.g. Athanasios I. Chrisochoou, *To ellēniko ippiko kata tēn Mikrasiatikē Ekstrateia 1919–1922* [The Greek cavalry during the Asia Minor campaign, 1919–1922] (Athens: Ioannis & Arist. G. Papanikolaou Printing House, 1934), 353; Panagiotis Panagakos, *Symvolē stēn istoria tis dekaetias 1912–1922* [Contribution to the history of the decade 1912–1922] (Athens: n.p., 1960), 697–698; Michalis Valsamanis, *Pōs ezēsa tēn katastrofē tēs Smyrnēs* [How I lived the destruction of Smyrna], ed. Georgios Papastamos and Paraskevi Kerasiotou (Chalkida: Kostogiannos Publications, 1998), 68–72, 110–111; Ioannis Margaritopoulos, *Me mia chara. Ē stratiōtikē thitia tou Ioannē Margaritopoulou, Mikra Asia kai Ellada 1921–1924* [With joy. The military service of Ioannis Margaritopoulos. Asia Minor and Greece 1921–1924], ed. Dimitris Panagiotopoulos and Alexandros Makris (Athens: Mov Skiouros, 2025), 102–122. For war-related violence during the "war-decade," see Tasos Kostopoulos, *Polemos kai ethokatharsē: Ē xechasmenē plevra mias dekaetous ethnikēs exormēsēs, 1912–1922* [War and ethnic cleansing: The forgotten side of a ten-year national expedition, 1912–1922] (Athens: Vivliorama, 2007).

[14] "O chthesinos phonos" [Yesterday's murder], *Neologos*, April 25, 1918, 1. Mannlicher and Gras rifles were the main rifles used by the Greek Army during this period. For personal data protection reasons, only the initials of those concerned are listed.

[15] "Phonos poimenos" [Murder of a shepherd], *Neologos*, February 13, 1919, 1.

response to her decision to move to Agrinio to pursue employment as a singer.[16] In 1920, a fratricide in Bartholomio and two additional murders happened, one in Andravida and one in Varvasaina, all committed with a Gras rifle. In the latter case, the motive was trivial: the victim had been late in bringing wine to the perpetrator, who, in a fit of anger, killed him,[17] demonstrating the extent to which human life could be considered negligible. Cases such as these indicate that even prior to demobilization, some men in khaki uniform were unable to control their tempers, resorting to murder for personal reasons, even using their service weapons.

One of the consequences of wartime violence was the onset of mental illness among some soldiers. It should not be assumed, however, that exposure to combat inevitably resulted in psychological disorders, nor that mental illness necessarily led to violent behavior. Nevertheless, contemporary medical and legal records suggest that, in certain cases, violent conduct was understood to be associated with an individual's mental condition. For instance, a daily newspaper report from First World War describes a soldier serving on the Macedonian Front who, in 1917, was convicted of "attempted rape while in a state of partial mental confusion."[18]

One case in particular suggests a possible association between wartime experiences, mental illness, and subsequent violence. PK, a veteran of the First World War, killed his grandmother in 1920 and was subsequently admitted to the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital for psychiatric observation as a criminal defendant.[19] According to the available evidence, he had no prior criminal record and no documented history of mental illness before his military service. In 1918, while serving on the Macedonian Front, he reportedly "suffered from severe paroxysms with mental confusion, insensitivity, convulsions, and intense mental agitation followed by aggressive impulses, as a result of which he was confined for a week." Upon recovering consciousness approximately one month later, he was granted medical leave and returned to his hometown of Kalamata at the end of 1918, where he worked as a chairmaker.[20] There, on December 5, 1920,

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16 "Nichterinos phonos" [Night murder], *To Fōs*, September 8, 1919, 1.

17 "Adelphoktonia sto Bartholomio" [Fratricide in Bartholomio], *To Fōs*, February 9, 1920, 1; "O diplous phonos stin Andravida" [The double murder in Andravida], *To Fōs*, July 10, 1920, 1; "Fonos" [Murder], *To Fōs*, December 2, 1920, 1.

18 "I chthesini tou stratodikeiou" [Yesterday's military court], *Makedonia*, November 16, 1917, 1.

19 For personal data protection reasons, only the initials of patient's names are listed. For more on the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital, see below.

20 Michael Gianniris, "Ai psychopthiai kai to eglēma en Elladi" [Psychopathy and crime in Greece], *Iatrikē Proodos* 29, no. 2 (February 1924): 41–42.

at the age of 27, PK murdered his grandmother with a hatchet and subsequently threw her body from the balcony.[21] He later stated that he did not remember committing the crime, recalling only that he had become angry with his sister because she had failed to bring him incense to burn before the icon of Saint Nicholas, a daily practice. According to his testimony, his memories thereafter "fade away."[22] Following his arrest, he remained in prison for nine months. On October 14, 1921, acting on the order of the public prosecutor, the authorities transferred him to the Dromokaiteion for psychiatric observation. One month later, on November 16, 1921, he reportedly experienced three epileptic seizures of mild intensity, characterized by convulsions, confusion, anaesthesia, and loss of consciousness. The medical report concluded that he "frequently suffers from such mild and short-lived paroxysms with loss of consciousness" and recommended long-term confinement and treatment in a psychiatric institution in order to prevent the recurrence of violent acts associated with similar seizures.[23]

While this case does not by itself establish a direct causal relationship between wartime service and subsequent homicidal behavior, it nevertheless illustrates how contemporary psychiatrists interpreted the relationship between military experience, mental illness, and violence. More broadly, it demonstrates the ways in which violent crime committed by veterans could become the object of psychiatric investigation and institutional intervention.

The Reception of the "Shell Shock" in Greece

Medical developments during the First World War, particularly the growing recognition of psychological disorders among soldiers and the accompanying medical and scientific debates, also reached the Greek medical community. Although the number of Greek contributions to this discussion remained limited, their reception offers valuable insight into how Greek physicians understood and treated soldiers suffering from what was elsewhere described as shell shock.

The New York-based Greek-language newspaper *Atlantis* was the first Greek publication to address the phenomenon of war-related psychological disorders during the First World War. In its New Year 1915 issue, the newspaper described the phenomenon of "war psychoses" in the ongoing European conflict. The article noted that, during Germany's preparations for the war, "care was taken for

[21] "Tragikos pfonos" [Tragic murder], *Sēmaia*, December 8, 1920, 2.
[22] Gianniris, "Ai psychopatiai kai to eglēma en Elladi," 41.
[23] Ibid., 42–43.

soldiers' mental illnesses, on the assumption that the number of such illnesses during a new war would be very high," and, to this end, a "special hospital for war psychoses" was established in Strasbourg. Patients admitted to this institution were categorized into three groups: (a) those who fell ill during conscription; (b) those who developed "nervous disorders" during the war; and (c) those who developed such disorders "as a result of injury or some other cause of illness." The second category, in particular, was attributed to "hysterical psychoses of terror after dramatic re-enactments of battles," referring to "mental disorders that usually occur after various other major disasters." The third category "finally includes cases in which, following injury, a clear hypersensitivity occurs. Here we are dealing with nerve damage." The article concluded that,

> based on observations made to date, there is no singular, specific mental illness of war. Rather, great exertion, intense emotions, insufficient sleep, and poor nutrition are factors which, in general – and not only in wartime – constitute well-known causes of mental disorders, with the only exception being that these factors occur with particular intensity during war.[24]

The conclusion reflects contemporary perceptions of the phenomenon. By early 1915, only a few months after the outbreak of the war, the belligerent states had already observed a significant rise in cases of mental and neurological disorders among soldiers. Research into these conditions, however, remained at an early stage, and the term "shell shock" was not coined until February 1915.[25] Consequently, the article did not engage in a detailed discussion of the causes of these disorders. Nevertheless, the classification of patients into three categories suggests that the deterioration of soldiers' mental health was understood primarily as a consequence of either military mobilization or wartime experiences.

Following Greece's entry into the war in 1917, similar discussions of war-related nervous and mental disorders began to appear in the Greek medical press. *Iatrikē Proodos*, one of Greece's most historic medical journals, published since 1896, featured a series of four articles on nervous and mental disorders in military personnel. These were not original contributions by Greek scientists but translations of publications from the United States. One such article reproduced instructions issued by the U.S. Army Medical Corps to military physicians

[24] "Yparchousi 'polemikes psychoseis'?" [Are there 'war psychoses'?], *Atlantis*, January 1, 1915, 2.
[25] Charles S. Myers, "A contribution to the study of Shell Shock. Being an account of three cases of loss of memory, vision, smell, and taste, admitted into the Duchess of Westminster's War Hospital, Le Touquet," *The Lancet* 185, no. 4772 (February 12, 1915): 316–320.

following the United States' entry into the First World War in April 1917. It emphasized that "it is imperative to take into account not only the disease currently active, but also any latent or predisposing conditions."

The article first discussed a range of neurological disorders, including tabes dorsalis, multiple or plaque sclerosis, pre-existing muscular atrophy, syringomyelia, hyperthyroidism, and epilepsy. It then turned to psychiatric conditions that could justify exemption from military service, including general paralysis, dementia praecox and manic-melancholic neuropathy. Additionally, it noted that "another category of recruits exempt from service are those suffering from mental disorders and having a psychopathic character." The assessment of such individuals required the identification of symptoms such as "morbid fears, morbid doubts, anxiety and nervousness, susceptibility to fatigue, hypochondria, compulsive tendencies, a propensity for habitual falsehoods, or opportunistic behavior." Finally, the article referred to recruits suffering from alcohol or drug addiction.[26]

The article introduced Greek readers to developments in the screening of military recruits in the United States and provided one of the earliest references in the Greek medical press to the concept of soldiers' "predisposing conditions." By the time the United States entered the First World War in 1917, military authorities had become increasingly aware of the large number of cases of shell shock and other psychological disorders reported among European combatants. The identification of individuals deemed psychologically vulnerable was therefore considered an important component of military efficiency and preparedness. During 1917–1918, psychological screening in the United States was combined with intelligence testing to exclude recruits of lower cognitive ability. Through these procedures, approximately 72,000 recruits, representing around 2 percent of all those examined, were rejected on neuropsychiatric grounds.[27]

Another article focused specifically on "shell shock." Concerning the nature of the condition, it noted that the symptoms closely resembled those observed following railway accidents, earthquakes, and other traumatic events. At the same time, the article emphasized that neuroses associated with trench warfare occurred far more frequently than comparable disorders encountered in

[26] "Praktika sēmeia en tē exetasē tōn neosyllektōn dia neurika kai phrenika nosymata" [Practical points in the examination of new recruits for nervous and mental disorders], *Iatrikē Proodos* 22 (1917): 351–352. This is a translation of an article published in *The New York Medical Journal* on August 25, 1917.

[27] E. Jones, K.C. Hyams, and S. Wessely, "Screening for vulnerability to psychological disorders in the military: an historical survey," *Journal of Medical Screening* 10, no. 1 (2003): 40–41.

civilian life. Morton Prince, Professor of Neurology at Tufts University, argued that war neurosis could manifest in a wide range of symptoms, from neurasthenia to severe paralysis and anaesthesia. He further suggested that the cause of this condition lay in the "anticipatory fear" that soldiers experienced regarding "what will happen when they are exposed to the explosion of shells," effectively attributing the neurosis to a potential predisposition of the individual. At the same time, the article presented an alternative explanation, reportedly widespread among soldiers themselves, according to which the disorder resulted from physical damage to the brain caused by the blast effects of exploding shells. Prince's emphasis on fear as the principal cause of the condition informed his recommendations for prevention. As he argued, "the soul of the combatant should be shielded with healthy courage and fearlessness," so that if a shell exploded nearby, the resulting fear "would be so insignificant that it would not be enough to produce psychoneurosis."[28] Together, these articles introduced Greek physicians to contemporary international debates concerning the psychological consequences of modern warfare. They familiarized the Greek medical community with competing explanations of war neuroses and, more broadly, highlighted some of the challenges that military and civilian doctors would confront following Greece's entry into the war.

The views expressed in the final article illustrate the diversity of contemporary understandings of shell shock during the First World War. Despite important differences, however, many of these explanations shared a tendency to locate the origins of war neuroses primarily in the individual soldier rather than in the experience of warfare itself. A central question in this medical debate was whether the behavioral and neurological symptoms resulted from organic brain damage caused by explosions or from the psychological effects of traumatic experiences. Another critical dimension concerned whether the war acted as the primary causative factor for these symptoms, or whether heredity and the soldier's pre-existing disposition were the principal determinants. These debates were significant not only for advancing psychological theory, but also for addressing practical concerns, including eligibility for compensation and war pensions.[29] The determination of diagnosis, as well as the

[28] Morton Prince, "Ē ex ovidon neuroplēxia" [Nerve damage caused by shells], *Iatrikē Proodos* 22 (1917): 355–356. This is a translation of the article by Morton Prince, "The prevention of so-called 'Shell Shock,'" *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 69, no. 9 (September 1, 1917): 726–727.

[29] José Brunner, "Will, Desire and Experience: Etiology and Ideology in the German and Austrian Medical Discourse on War Neuroses, 1914–1922," *Transcultural Psychiatry* 37, no. 3 (September

assessment of whether a patient possessed a pre-existing predisposition, posed a challenge for physicians across the belligerent states. The outcome of these assessments had important financial implications: recognition of a war-related disorder could confer eligibility for a pension, whereas the attribution of symptoms to hereditary or constitutional factors often limited or excluded such entitlements.[30]

As historian José Brunner has observed, "in addition to restoring neurotic soldiers to battle fitness, army doctors explicitly defined their task as preventing 'great economic damage to our fatherland.'"[31] At the same time, many physicians regarded war primarily as a context in which hereditary vulnerabilities and constitutional predispositions were revealed or exacerbated, rather than as the direct cause of psychological breakdown. Consequently, the attribution of mental illness to pre-existing predispositions frequently served as a preferred explanatory framework.[32] Last but not least, it is important to consider cases of malingering. Among many authorities, particularly senior officers, suspicions that soldiers might be feigning or exaggerating symptoms contributed to widespread skepticism towards cases of shell shock, which were often interpreted as manifestations of indiscipline, cowardice, or unwillingness to serve.[33] Consequently, numerous shell-shocked soldiers faced court-martial.[34] More generally,

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2000): 299–300, 307–310, doi: 10.1177/136346150003700302; Paul Lerner, "From Traumatic Neurosis to Male Hysteria: The Decline and Fall of Hermann Oppenheim, 1889–1919," in *Traumatic Pasts. History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930*, ed. Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 147–157, 163–167, doi: 10.1017/cbo9780511529252.008; Marc Roudebush, "A Battle of Nerves: Hysteria and Its Treatments in France during First World War," in *Traumatic Pasts. History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930,* ed. Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 254–260, doi: 10.1017/cbo9780511529252.012; Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, *Shell Shock to PTSD. Military Psychiatry from 1900 to Gulf War* (Hove and New York: Psychology Press, 2005), 17–21; Stefanie C. Linden, Volker Hess, and Edgar Jones, "The neurological manifestations of trauma: lessons from World War I," *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 262, no. 3 (April 2012): 254, doi: 10.1007/s00406-011-0272-9.

30 Brunner, "Will, Desire and Experience," 303–304; Leese, *Shell Shock*, 17–22, 65–67; Thomas, *Treating the Trauma of the Great War*, 60.

31 Brunner, "Will, Desire and Experience," 304.

32 Bruna Bianchi, "Psychiatrists, Soldiers, and Officers in Italy during the Great War," in *Traumatic Pasts. History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930*, ed. Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 229, doi: 10.1017/cbo9780511529252.011.

33 Reid, *Broken Men*, 58.

34 Leese, *Shell Shock*, 40–41; Simon Harold Walker, *Physical Control, Transformation and Damage in the First World War. War Bodies* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 126.

military authorities in all countries were initially reluctant to recognize a new medical diagnosis such as shell shock.[35]

The assumptions that informed medical debates during the First World War differ significantly from contemporary psychiatric understandings of trauma-related disorders. Today, the etiology of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is understood to focus primarily on exposure to the traumatic event itself.[36] As noted in the opening of the relevant chapter of the most recent *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM–5), "Trauma- and stressor-related disorders include disorders in which exposure to a traumatic or stressful event is listed explicitly as a diagnostic criterion."[37] Accordingly, the first diagnostic criterion for PTSD is "exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence."[38] This conceptual shift was influenced in large part by developments in military psychiatry following the Vietnam War, which proved pivotal in the emergence of PTSD as a diagnostic category.[39] The perspectives reproduced in *Iatrikē Proodos* in 1917 must therefore be understood within their historical context. Although they may appear outdated from a contemporary standpoint, they reflected prevailing medical assumptions about war neuroses during the First World War. The theorization of "shell shock" in the Greek context was firmly situated within this framework.

The doctor most closely associated with the study of mental disorders among soldiers in Greece was undoubtedly Konstantinos P. Papastratigakis (1891–1929). While a student at the Medical School of the University of Athens,

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[35] Leese, *Shell Shock*, 32–33; Jay Winter, "Shell shock," in *The Cambridge History of the First World War,* ed. Jay Winter, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 310, doi: 10.1017/cho9780511675683.018.

[36] As numerous scholars have emphasized, shell shock and the war neuroses documented among First World War soldiers cannot be equated with what is now classified as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Despite an apparent historical continuity between these conditions, they should not be regarded as identical syndromes operating under different terminologies. While some symptoms reported among First World War combatants resemble those observed in veterans of later conflicts, including the Vietnam War and the War in the Gulf, shell shock functioned as a broad and heterogeneous diagnostic category encompassing a wide range of psychological and neurological conditions. As such, it included disorders that would today be classified under distinct diagnostic categories, including depression and schizophrenia. See Thomas, *Treating the Trauma of the Great War,* 183–184; and Loughran, *Shell-Shock and Medical Culture,* 10–15.

[37] *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. Fifth Edition. DSM–5* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 265.

[38] Ibid., 271.

[39] Paul Lerner and Mark S. Micale, "Trauma, Psychiatry, and History: A Conceptual and Historiographical Introduction," in *Traumatic Pasts. History, Psychiatry, and Trauma in the Modern Age, 1870–1930*, ed. Mark S. Micale and Paul Lerner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

Papastratigakis was sent in 1912 to the Military Medical School of Lyon (Service de santé des Armées).[40] Under legislation enacted in 1911, Greek medical students were admitted to the French military medical school through a competitive selection, with all expenses covered by the Greek state. Upon completing their initial training, they proceeded to doctoral studies at the University of Lyon and subsequently received advanced military medical instruction at the Val-de-Grâce Medical School in Paris. Following the completion of their studies, they returned to Greece and were commissioned as permanent medical officers in the Greek Army.[41] The program remained in operation until 1925 and sent a total of thirty Greek students to France, the first of whom was Papastratigakis.[42]

After the outbreak of First World War, Papastratigakis returned to Greece and began his career as a medical officer, progressively rising through the ranks. In June 1916, he returned to France to complete his doctoral thesis, and from March 1917 to June 1918 he served as a medical officer on the Western Front. During his time in France, he specialized in neurology and psychiatry.[43] In 1927, Papastratigakis was sent as a representative of the Greek state to the 4th International Health Conference in Warsaw, where he delivered a presentation on the nervous and mental sequelae of skull injuries.[44] In 1928, he was elected Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Athens.[45] On June 23, 1929

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[40] Greek Military Archives Agency – Army General Staff, Officers Personnel Files, Personal File of Konstantinos P. Papastratigakis.

[41] Antonios I. Moschonas, *Istoria tis organōseōs tēs Anōtatēs Stratou Ygeionomikēs Epitropēs* [History of the Organization of the Supreme Military Medical Commission] (Athens, 1973), 193.

[42] Dimitrios G. Boukis and Konstantinos Gr. Kiriakopoulos, *Ē mythikē pragmatikotita. Oi stratiōtikoi iatroi apo to 1821 eōs to 1970* [The mythical reality. Military doctors from 1821 to 1970], vol. 3 (Athens: Scientific Association of Armed Forces Health Officers, 2022), 193.

[43] Papastratigakis served primarily at the Military Training Hospital in Athens, the Second Military Hospital of Thessaloniki, and the military hospitals of Komotini and Drama. In February 1921, he was promoted to the rank of Captain in the Medical Corps. Between 1925 and 1926, he taught at the Supreme School of Medical Officers. On 7 October 1926, he resigned his commission and was discharged from the army at his own request. During his twelve years of military service, Papastratigakis received numerous distinctions, including the Silver Cross of the Order of the Redeemer, the Fourth-Class Military Merit Medal, the French Croix de Guerre, and the French Medal of Science. Greek Military Archives Agency – Army General Staff, Officers Personnel Files, Personal File of Konstantinos P. Papastratigakis; Odysseas Rallidis, "Papastratikakis, Konstantinos," *Megalē Ellēnikē Egkyklopedeia* [Great Greek encyclopedia], vol. 18 (Athens: Pyrsos, 1932), 579; Boukis and Kiriakopoulos, *Ē mythikē pragmatikotita*, 196–197.

[44] Konstantinos Papastratigakis, "Ta neurika kai psychika ypoleimmata tōn traumatismōn tou kraniou" [The nervous and mental remnants of skull injuries], *Iatrikē Proodos* 32, no. 12 (July 15, 1927), 369–380.

[45] Petros I. Rontopoulos, "Konstantinos P. Papastratigakis," *Iatrikē Proodos* 34, no. 13 (June 1, 1929): 312; Boukis and Kiriakopoulos, *Ē mythikē pragmatikotita*, 196–197.

he drowned while swimming in Palaio Faliro, a seaside suburb of Athens, at the age of only 38.[46]

Despite his young age, Papastratigakis produced a substantial body of scholarly work. His most significant contribution on post-traumatic psychoneurosis in the military was published in 1924 under the title *The Mentally Ill in the Army*. This study drew exclusively on data from the wartime Greek Army.[47] As he explained in the preface, the work was intended not only for military physicians but also for combat officers, whom he regarded as playing a crucial role in the identification of mentally ill servicemen. The author's objective was to enable combat officers to recognize mentally ill soldiers.[48] Papastratigakis emphasized the importance of screening new recruits and the attention that officers should devote to this issue. Although relevant regulations had been in place in Greece since the nineteenth century,[49] his writings reveal that they were considered insufficient, particularly during times of war. As he argued, "the primary condition for the consolidation of the army is to prohibit mentally disabled men from joining it." To achieve this objective, he maintained that the Military Medical Board should be provided not only with information concerning a recruit's medical history but also with evidence that might assist in evaluating his "moral character."[50]

Papastratigakis' remarks concerning the exclusion from military service of individuals who lacked the "necessary mental qualities" underscore the central importance he attributed to hereditary predisposition and psychological vulnerability. The army, in his view, was expected to identify recruits classified under these categories and exclude them, not primarily for their own welfare but in order to safeguard the efficiency and operational effectiveness of the military institution. Similarly, in his discussion of predisposition to insanity, or "candidacy for phrenopathy," he stated that "quite simply, not all people have the same quality of brain."[51] He even linked predisposition to degeneration, a theory that

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[46] "O psychiatros Papastratigakis apethane enō kolympouse eis Palaion Falērion" [Psychiatrist Papastratigakis died while swimming in Palaio Faliro], *Akropolis*, June 23, 1929, 7.

[47] Konstantinos P. Papastratigakis, *Oi psychopatheis en tō stratō* [The mentally ill in the army] (Athens: K. G. Makridou and I. L. Aleuropoulos Printing House, 1924), 10.

[48] Ibid., 8.

[49] See the relevant decisions from the 1840s at *Diatagai kai odēgiai tou Ypouyrgeiou Stratiōtikōn aforōsai tin exetasē tis sōmatikēs ikanotētos tōn strateusimōn kai organismōn tōn Ygeionomikōn Epitropon tou Stratou* [Orders and instructions of the ministry of soldiers concerning the examination of the physical fitness of conscripts and organizations of the army health committees] (Athens: Royal Printing House, 1859), 8–10, 15–17, 21, 30.

[50] Papastratigakis, *Oi psychopatheis en tō stratō,* 169.

[51] Ibid., 46–47.

dominated psychiatry at the time, asserting that individuals who "deviate from the usual type of person" were degenerates.[52]

At the same time, military service was recognized as an extremely difficult experience, with multiple environmental and emotional factors "attacking" the "soldier's psyche," which Papastratigakis vividly described as follows:

> Abrupt separation from loved ones, departure into the unknown, arduous travel, the frequent necessity of enduring the deplorable conditions of various camps, endless marches, inadequate food, sleeplessness, anxious anticipation of military operations, and fears of possible injury, from which one considers oneself miraculously spared each time; family and financial concerns; anxieties over the illness or death of parents, spouse, or children; the absence of familiar companions or the arrival of unwelcome individuals; and the fear of punishment or court-martial for the slightest act of insubordination, which would not otherwise arise were moral resistance not weakened, these, in short, are the causes that, as if acting in concert, assail the soldier's psyche.[53]

Similar concerns were expressed by another military physician, Fotis Skouras, who, in 1939, described what he termed the "syndromes of enlistment":

> Emotional reactions are the first manifestations of the conscripted soldier. Faced with new living conditions, the recruit reacts primarily on an emotional level. [...] Based on these emotional blows, the sensitive nerves and brain of the recruit regulate

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[52] Ibid., 47. The concept of degeneration exerted a profound influence on psychiatric discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the psychiatrist Benedictin Augustin Morel, degeneration was understood as a pathological deviation from an ideal human type, transmitted across successive generations. Although the theory itself predated Morel, its principal innovation lay in the emphasis on heredity, later elaborated by Max Nordau. Subsequently, the theory of degeneration was further developed – most notably by Emil Kraepelin – systematized, and widely disseminated, becoming a dominant framework within European psychiatry during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. See Kelly Hurley, "Hereditary taint and cultural contagion: The social etiology of fin-de-siècle degeneration theory," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 14, no. 2 (2008): 193–214, doi: 10.1080/08905499008583317; Paul Hoff, "Kraepelin and degeneration theory," *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 258, no. 2 (2008): 12–17, doi: 10.1007/s00406-008-2002-5. In Greece, this theory likewise gained considerable currency from the late nineteenth century until the outbreak of the Second World War. See Despo Kritsotaki, *A Social History of Mental Health Care in Greece, c. 1900–1920. Hospitals, Patients, and Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025), 120–123.

[53] Papastratigakis, *Oi psychopatheis en tō stratō,* 40.

his subsequent course, and on this basis he may develop abnormal behavior and psychoneurotic disorders.[54]

In these passages, both physicians highlighted the transition from civilian to military life as a potentially significant factor in the development of mental disorders. At the same time, their observations also implied that individual susceptibility played an important role in determining how soldiers responded to the demands of military service. As Papastratigakis characteristically summarized elsewhere in his work: "From a purely psychological point of view, not everyone can be a soldier."[55] It should be emphasized that, at the time, psychiatry and neurology constituted a single medical specialty, and physicians in the field practiced as both neurologists and psychiatrists. This is important for understanding the biological perspective on the impact of emotional experiences put forward by Skouras.

In his book on mentally ill soldiers, Papastratigakis devoted a separate chapter to forensic psychiatry, focusing on military personnel who had committed offenses and crimes. As he argued, "since mental disorders are incompatible with the normal life of society and these individuals become dangerous, it becomes imperative to take measures against them."[56] He subsequently examined the legal implications of criminal behavior committed by mentally ill individuals, particularly the question of criminal responsibility and whether an offender could be held accountable for an unlawful act.[57] Among the offences most commonly associated with mental disorders, he identified homicide, sexual offences, theft, and defamation.[58] He also addressed cases of violence within the barracks, both among peers and against superiors,[59] including the case of a gendarmerie soldier who, following an argument with a colleague, drew his weapon and threatened to shoot him; the soldier was diagnosed with dementia praecox.[60]

The relationship between criminal behavior and the mental state of offenders was also a subject of considerable interest within Greek psychiatry beyond

[54] Fotis Skouras, "Ta synēthestera psychika nosimata en tō stratō" [The most common mental illnesses in the army], *Stratiōtikē Epitheorēsis* 35 (November 1939), 148. Mental illness during military service was also examined by the physician Fotis Skouras in 1939. However, this article is employed as supplementary material in the present study, as it pertains to cases of mental illness among soldiers in peacetime and was published nearly two decades after the period under study.
[55] Papastratigakis, *Oi psychopatheis en tō stratō,* 34.
[56] Ibid., 110.
[57] Ibid., 110–112.
[58] Ibid., 113.
[59] Ibid., 146–147.
[60] Ibid., 175.

the confines of military medicine. Michael Gianniris, a prominent psychiatrist and director of the Dromokaiteion from 1903 to 1942, had been conducting psychiatric assessments of criminal defendants since the beginning of the twentieth century and was widely regarded as one of the leading forensic psychiatrists in Greece.[61] Through this convergence of psychiatry and forensic expertise, the Dromokaiteion became, as historian Dimitra Tzanaki has argued, a key site for the identification of degenerates and, ultimately, for the construction of what was perceived as an "inferior, immoral, and criminal" segment of Greek society.[62] In a related article published in 1924, Gianniris presented three cases of epileptic psychopaths who had committed crimes, including the case of soldier PK discussed above.[63] Gianniris concluded that epileptic patients constituted the most difficult and dangerous category of inmates in psychiatric institutions.[64] Referring to the seventy-two epileptic patients treated at the Dromokaiteion between its foundation in 1887 and 1924, he observed that "most of them have committed or are committing dangerous assaults, attempted arson, escape attempts, or making false accusations."[65]

In the Greek context, Papastratigakis was the scholar most closely associated with the study of the war-related neuroses and psychoses that were subsumed under the umbrella category of shell shock during the First World War. His twelve years of service as a medical officer in the Greek Army provided him with a distinctive perspective from which to interpret the psychological consequences of warfare for Greek soldiers within a broader international framework. His writings were firmly informed by contemporary theories of heredity, degeneration, and constitutional predisposition, approaches that not only reflected prevailing psychiatric thought but also served broader military and administrative objectives. The relationship between mental illness and criminal behavior likewise occupied a prominent place in his work. His contributions remain among the few sources on this phenomenon in Greece, alongside another – probably the most extensive – set of data drawn from soldiers treated at the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital in Athens.

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61 Gianniris, "Ai psychopthiai kai to eglēma en Elladi," 41.

62 Dimitra Tzanaki, "Dromokaiteion. Ēthikē paranoia kai ēthikē/genetisia therapeia" [Dromokaiteion. Moral insanity and moral/genital therapy] in *Egkleismoi kai istoria* [Inclusions and history], ed. Giorgos Kokkinos and Elli Lemonidou (Athens: Pedio, 2024), 79.

63 Gianniris, "Ai psychopthiai kai to eglēma en Elladi," 41–45.

64 Ibid., 41.

65 Ibid., 45.

How Was the Psychological Impact of War Managed? Military Personnel at the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital (1918–1925)

The "taming" of war-related psychological disturbances among military personnel in Greece during this period formed an integral part of broader efforts to address the mental consequences of warfare. The Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital occupied a central position in this process, as military personnel suffering from mental disorders had been systematically admitted to the institution since 1918. Through the observation, treatment, and assessment of these patients, the hospital became one of the principal sites where the psychological effects of war on Greek servicemen were identified, interpreted, and managed.

The Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital was founded in Athens in 1887 through a bequest from the Greek expatriate Zorzis Dromokaitis.[66] It was the second psychiatric institution established in the Kingdom of Greece, following the psychiatric hospital on Corfu, and the first to operate in Athens. By the early twentieth century, it had become one of the country's principal centers for psychiatric care and research. An American observer visiting the hospital in 1919 described it as having a "small but excellent operating room. Laboratory and pharmacy good. Fine kitchen not yet in operation. Special building for the tuberculous insane. Buildings generally excellent, clean and well managed. Good hydrotherapeutic equipment."[67]

As part of the institution's highly regulated daily routine, fixed schedules governed waking, meals and bedtime. During the remainder of the day, patients were either confined to their rooms or, in the case of wealthier inmates, allowed to remain in designated communal areas under the constant supervision of nursing staff.[68] Regarding its operation, the director resided on the premises, while the head nurse and other nursing staff were permitted to leave only for 24 hours once a week.[69] As historian Vangelis Karamanolakis

[66] Vangelis Karamanolakis, "To Dromokaiteion Phrenokomeio: 1887–1903. Opseis tēs egkatastasēs enos idrymatikou thesmou" [The Dromokaiteion mental hospital: 1887–1903. Aspects of the establishment of an institutional framework], *Mnēmon* 21 (1998): 45–46; Markella P. Fiste, "To Dromokaiteio Psychiatriko Nosokomeio Attikis. Istorikē poreia tou idrymatos kai diachroniki exelixē tōn kyrioterōn nosografikōn kai psychopathologikōn ennoiōn" [The Dromokaiteio psychiatric hospital of Attica. Historical course of the institution and diachronic evolution of the main nosographic and psychopathological concepts] (Doctoral Dissertation, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 2014), 23–33.

[67] Carl E. Black, *Survey of the Hospitals of Greece* (Athens: The American Red Cross, 1919), 72–73.

[68] Karamanolakis, "To Dromokaiteio Phrenokomeio," 58.

[69] Dimitris N. Ploumbidis, *Istoria tis Psychiatrikēs stēn Ellada. Thesmoi, idrymata kai koinōniko plaisio 1850–1920* [History of psychiatry in Greece. Institutions, foundations, and social context 1850–1920] (Athens: Exantas, 1995), 185.

has observed, the Dromokaiteion was "closed, impenetrable, symbolically and in reality," surrounded by a high wall with a single gate guarded throughout the day by a gatekeeper who resided in the gatehouse. No staff member could leave the hospital without the director's consent, and relatives of patients were permitted to visit only twice a week, also with the director's approval. Access was otherwise restricted to judicial authorities and the prefect.[70] The medical staff of the Dromokaiteion included some of the most prominent Greek psychiatrists of the period: Christodoulos Tsirigotis, who served as director from 1887 to 1903; Michael Katsaras, deputy director from 1887 to 1894 and subsequently medical advisor; and Michael Gianniris, who studied medicine in Athens and France, served as deputy director from 1884 to 1903, and then as director until 1942.[71]

Although a private institution, the Dromokaiteion provided free hospitalization for the poor while also admitting public patients.[72] In addition to private bequests and charitable donations, one of its principal sources of revenue was the Ministry of the Interior, which by 1921 covered the hospitalization costs of nearly half of the institution's patients. At the end of the 1910s, the Ministry of Military Affairs had committed 40 beds, while 20 beds were reserved by the municipalities of Athens and Piraeus and 58 by the Ministry of Relief.[73] By 1924, the Dromokaiteion had been transferred from the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior to the Health Department of the newly established Ministry of Health and Welfare.[74]

Greece's participation in the First World War (1917–1918) marked the first military conflict to directly involve the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital. During the Balkan Wars, military personnel exhibiting signs of mental illness had instead been referred by the Ministry of Military Affairs to the Aeginition Hospital in Athens.[75] In 1918, the Dromokaiteion allocated a dedicated section to the Ministry of Military Affairs, comprising 40 beds for soldiers and 10 for

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[70] Vangelis Karamanolakis, "Ē anadysē tōn idrymatikōn thesmōn. To Dromokaiteio Phrenokomeio (1880–1903)" [The emergence of institutional institutions. The Dromokaiteion mental hospital (1880–1903)] (Master Dissertation, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 1997), 49.

[71] Kritsotaki, *A Social History of Mental Health Care in Greece*, 48.

[72] Ibid., 47.

[73] Ibid., 61–62.

[74] Despo Kritsotaki, "Psychikē asthenia kai psychiatrikē nosēleia. Koinōnikes proslēpseis kai leitourgies tis psychiatrikēs kai tōn psychiatrikōn idrymatōn stin Ellada kai tē Skotia tōn archōn tou 20ou aiōna" [Mental Illness and Psychiatric Hospitalization. Social perceptions and functions of psychiatry and psychiatric institutions in Greece and Scotland in the early twentieth century] (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Crete, 2009), 106.

[75] Kritsotaki, *A Social History of Mental Health Care in Greece*, 60.

officers.[76] In November 1922, a separate building exclusively for military patients was inaugurated, financed largely through fundraising campaigns and donations from the Greek diaspora in the United States.[77] Admissions to the institution increased sharply following the mass influx of military personnel in 1918 and 1919 due to the First World War. This influx continued during the subsequent years of the Greek-Turkish War, albeit at a lower rate, before gradually declining following the end of the war decade (Table 1).

Table 1: Admissions of Military Personnel to the Dromokaiteion (1914–1930)

Year	Military admissions	Total admissions	Military out of total (%)
1914	3	75	4
1915	9	73	12.32
1916	3	56	5.35
1917	1	69	1.44
1918	75	162	46.29
1919	95	168	56.54
1920	30	156	19.20
1921	51	156	46.36
1922–24	117	528	22.15
1925	24	190	12.63
1926	25	207	12.07
1927	17	174	9.77
1928	1	149	0.67
1929	7	181	3.86
1930	5	212	2.35

Source: Data on military admissions were compiled from the patient registers of the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital. Total admissions are based on data by Fiste, "To Dromokaiteion," 134. Fiste lists the figures for 1922, 1923, and 1924 alongside them, which is why they are shown as totals in the table. Of note, some military patients were admitted more than once; consequently, the number of admissions is slightly higher than the number of individual patients admitted.

[76] Panagiotis Ch. Varlas, "Ta oikonomika tou Dromokaiteiou Idrymatos stēn ekatontaetērida 1887–1987" [The finances of the Dromokaiteio institution over the century 1887–1987], in *Dromokaiteion Therapeutērion 1887–1987+15. Ekato dekapente chronia koinōnikēs prosforas* [Therapeutic center 1887–1987+15. One hundred and fifteen years of social contribution], ed. Nikolaos Tsikis (Athens: 2001), 199.

[77] Ibid.

From Greece's participation on the Macedonian Front until the start of the Asia Minor War, 132 soldiers were admitted, averaging 7.33 admissions per month. During the subsequent Asia Minor Campaign (1919–1922), 153 soldiers were admitted, or 4.02 per month. In the period up to 1925, when the last class of combat veterans was discharged, 71 military personnel were admitted, corresponding to 2.53 admissions per month. In total, 356 members of the armed forces were hospitalized at the institution. Although this figure is small relative to the total number of conscripts, it constitutes a tangible sample of the war's psychological impact on Greek soldiers and allows for the formulation of a series of conclusions. It is possible that veterans of these wars were also treated at other military or civilian hospitals during this period or following their discharge. However, the records of the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital indicate that the Ministry of Military Affairs systematically referred soldiers with mental health conditions to the institution.

The hospital records make it possible to reconstruct the military profiles of the hospitalized personnel. As in other belligerent countries, the overwhelming majority were soldiers. Of the 356 cases, 226 involved enlisted men, 27 non-commissioned officers, and 66 officers; the rank of the remaining cases was not recorded. In some cases, the clinical files explicitly linked the onset of mental illness to wartime experiences. For instance, 20-year-old soldier NK from Chania, Crete, was admitted on May 27, 1921, with the first line of his record noting: "He has been serving in the army for a year, and the disease manifested itself two months ago during the battle of Uşak."[78] An important piece of information is the date of admission to the Dromokaiteion. Although seemingly of limited value for reconstructing a soldier's wartime experience, a closer examination of admission patterns reveals significant correlations with major military operations. Notably, admissions increased approximately two months after critical and deadly battles on the Macedonian Front, such as Skra-di-Legen (May 1918) and Doiran (September 1918). For example, in August 1918, 27 soldiers were admitted, followed

[78] Archive of Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital (hereafter AD), patient registers (hereafter PR) 1920–1921, case number (hereafter CN) 1921/1448. During the military operations of March 1921, no major battle took place at Uşak itself. Rather, the town served as a base from which elements of the Greek Army advanced towards Afyonkarahisar during the spring offensive, an operation that lasted only a few days. The reference in the patient's record may therefore relate not to a major engagement but to smaller-scale clashes between Greek and Turkish forces in the Uşak region, particularly during the subsequent withdrawal of Greek troops to their original positions. See Army General Staff, *Epitomē istoria tis Ekstrateias en Mikra Asia 1919–1922* [Concise history of the Asia Minor campaign 1919–1922] (Athens: Army History Directorate Publication, 1967), 86–134.

by 10 in September and 23 in December 1918, with high numbers continuing through the first half of 1919. A similar pattern is observable during the war in Anatolia. Following the summer campaigns of 1921 in Asia Minor, 30 military personnel were admitted between September 1921 and January 1922.

Diagnoses were expressed through categories already well established within Greek psychiatry and routinely employed at the Dromokaiteion. No distinct nosological category comparable to shell shock was introduced to describe conditions arising from military service, a finding that is consistent with the writings of Papastratigakis. Specifically, during the period under review, the quantitative distribution of diagnoses at the Dromokaiteion was as follows: 65 cases of dementia praecox, 61 of mental confusion, 53 of mental agitation, 33 of degeneration, 17 of manic agitation with delusions of persecution, 13 of melancholia, 12 classified as feeblemindedness, 11 of intense agitation, 7 of organic encephalopathy, 5 of epilepsy, and 4 of neurasthenia. Additionally, there were 27 diagnoses accounting for fewer than four cases each, and eight military personnel identified as malingerers.

The patient registers permit a more nuanced reconstruction of the clinical profiles of the military personnel treated at the Dromokaiteion. CHM, a soldier admitted in September 1918 and diagnosed with dementia praecox, remained inactive, pensive, and expressionless throughout the day, exhibiting slowed perception and memory impairment.[79] AK, a 22-year-old soldier in the Second Artillery Squadron with the same diagnosis, was apathetic to his surroundings, alternating between calmness and pacing, while "refusing to talk." He expressed delusions of grandeur, claiming to be a marshal.[80] Other patients were diagnosed with mental agitation or epileptic frenzy. Among those with mental agitation, 30-year-old MM would intermittently laugh or cry, frequently sing, and tear his shoes and bedding.[81] In the epileptic category, a 27-year-old soldier experienced four episodes – one in Thessaloniki and three at the Dromokaiteion – characterized by convulsions, loss of consciousness, and urinary incontinence.[82] Additional symptoms reported across diagnoses included lethargy, inappropriate laughter, memory impairment, and slow responses to physicians' questions.[83]

The records also document instances of violent behavior among patients. Major PG, a 27-year-old, was mostly bedridden with a melancholic demeanor

[79] AD, PR 1918–1919, CN 1918/1000.
[80] AD, PR 1918–1919, CN 1919/1084.
[81] AD, PR 1918, CN 1918/932.
[82] AD, PR 1918, CN 1918/956.
[83] AD, PR 1918, CN 1918/964; AD, PR 1918–1919, CN 1918/1001 and 1007.

and often cried when he "suddenly fell into a rather irritable mental state with obvious loquacity and effusiveness," occasionally exhibiting symptoms of negativism. He attacked nurses, "pulling down their pants."[84] LA, a 30-year-old from Ioannina diagnosed with "cyclothymic disorder in the form of manic agitation," attacked the doctors,[85] while a 22-year-old man from Agiasos, Lesvos, suffering from mild mental agitation, verbally abused the nursing staff.[86] Other files contain briefer references to violent conduct. 24-year-old soldier IP was admitted after attacking a fellow soldier with a razor, diagnosed with mild mental agitation and depression;[87] 22-year-old soldier IM "committed acts of violence";[88] SB from Chios Island exhibited "violent behavior";[89] and soldier AB displayed "criminal tendencies."[90] A notable case involved Major PS, who, following a prior hospitalization in 1922 at an unidentified private clinic for signs of mental illness, experienced a manic episode in 1928. During this episode, he developed persecutory delusions concerning his brother, escaped from the private clinic, and shot him with a revolver, leading to his arrest. Following his admission to the Dromokaiteion, physicians observed "intense manic psychomotor agitation," during which he broke window panes, tore bedding, struck doors and walls, and shouted continuously.[91]

The records thus contain numerous references to violence, aggression, and criminal behavior among military patients. Significantly, however, the clinical files rarely provide detailed information concerning family history, hereditary predisposition, or other constitutional factors. This absence contrasts with the emphasis that Papastratigakis placed on heredity and degeneration. While these records do not permit firm conclusions regarding causation, they suggest that war-related psychological disorders were generally interpreted through established psychiatric categories rather than through a distinct diagnostic framework of war trauma. In this respect, the Dromokaiteion cases reveal how military experience was incorporated into existing psychiatric understandings of mental illness.

Among the military patients admitted to the Dromokaiteion, one case provides particularly compelling evidence of the relationship between wartime

[84] AD, PR 1918–1919, CN 1918/1039.
[85] AD, PR 1918–1919, CN 1918/958.
[86] AD, PR 1918, CN 1918/976.
[87] AD, PR 1923(2), CN 1923/1935.
[88] AD, PR 1918–1919(2), CN 1919[1920]/1124.
[89] AD, PR 1925(2), CN 1925/2164.
[90] AD, PR 1923(2), CN 1923/1951.
[91] AD, PR 1928, CN 1928/2639.

experience, mental disorder, and subsequent violent behavior. Significantly, this case constitutes the sole instance in which a diagnosis of "post-traumatic psychosis" was explicitly documented in the Dromokaiteion. The case concerns KZ, a 25-year-old sergeant, who served in the 5/42 Evzone Regiment.[92] In January 1922, he was transferred to the Dromokaiteion following a violent assault against actors during a theatrical performance in Athens. His military record indicates that he sustained injuries on August 15, 1921 during the Battle of the Sakarya.[93] Subsequently, on January 4, 1922, KZ received a provisional discharge from military service. The medical report attributed his condition to post-traumatic disturbances resulting from a head wound and specifically noted aphasia, amnesia, and hemiplegia, concluding that he was unfit for further military service.[94]

Less than three weeks later, on January 22, 1922, during a performance of "The Apaches of Athens" at the Kotopoulē Theatre in Athens, KZ abruptly appeared on stage armed with a double-edged sword, dressed in a khaki uniform and proceeded to stab two actors. Members of the audience eventually subdued him and handed him over to the police. Newspaper reports described him as being "in a pitiful state" and noted that, while at the police station, he remained silent and stared blankly ahead.[95] KZ was subsequently admitted to the Dromokaiteion on January 30, 1922 for a forensic psychiatric evaluation of his condition. The director of the institution, Michalis Gianniris, attributed his behavior to the physical trauma he had sustained during the military operations. According to his medical file,

> On August 15, 1921, he sustained a serious cranial injury during the Battle of the Sakarya River, when a bullet perforated his skull. The injury was followed by a comatose state, complete anesthesia, and subsequent neurological and psychiatric sequelae, including aphasia, hearing impairments, and cognitive disturbances.[96]

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[92] The Evzones were a type of light infantry unit in the Greek Army; today, they serve a primarily ceremonial role.

[93] The battles along the Sakarya River during the Greek campaign toward Ankara in August 1922 represented the most intense and costly confrontations for the Greek Army in Asia Minor. The number of military personnel killed in action totaled 4,269, while 19,344 were reported wounded. Army General Staff, *Epitomē istoria tis Ekstrateias en Mikra Asia*, 205–301.

[94] "Paraphrōn sphazōn treis" [A madman slaughtering three], *Eleutheros Typos*, January 23, 1922, 4.

[95] "Aimatēron drama eis theatron" [A bloody drama at the theater], *Empros*, January 23, 1922, 4; "To nykterinon drama tōn Apachēdōn" [The nighttime drama of the Apaches], *Ethnos*, January 23, 1922, 4.

[96] AD, PR 1921–1922, CN 1922/1543.

KZ was subsequently transferred to the Second Military Hospital in Athens, where physicians documented mental confusion, amnesia, and persecutory delusions. He misinterpreted the behavior of others, perceiving them as mocking him. These persecutory beliefs extended to his superior, as he imagined that his captain was ridiculing him. Consequently, he carried a knife with the intent to attack his superior at their next encounter. Believing that the performers at the Kotopoulē Theatre were mocking and insulting him, he eventually turned his aggression against them. According to his own testimony,

> the actors were calling him "Kostas the Prince," referring to him by name, and that both the performers and their program were speaking about him. He emphasized that his initial purpose for attending the theater was not related to them. He had carried the knife with the intent to harm his captain; however, upon perceiving the theater performers as mocking him, he climbed onto the stage and assaulted them.[97]

The doctor's report concluded that "the defendant became mentally ill as a result of organic brain damage caused by the injury sustained during the battles of Sakarya." Consequently, "due to the nature of his condition, he is dangerous to others and must be subjected to appropriate treatment in a specialized hospital." The sergeant from Larissa was eventually discharged, although no further details regarding the course or outcome of his case were documented.[98] This case illustrates the profound psychological impact of war – particularly the operations beyond the Sakarya River in August 1921 – as well as the physical trauma sustained in combat, on the life of a soldier. His condition rendered him a danger to his social environment due to violent behavior, necessitating hospitalization in a psychiatric institution.

In the days that followed, the KZ case acquired an additional public dimension through extensive press coverage. Newspaper accounts portrayed the veteran sergeant in highly stigmatizing terms, variously describing him as a "wounded madman,"[99] "unbalanced,"[100] and "insane,"[101] while at times employing overtly derogatory labels such as "despicable criminal" and "monster."[102] It should be noted, however, that the use of such language was not

[97] AD, PR 1921–1922, CN 1922/1543.
[98] AD, PR 1921–1922, CN 1922/1543.
[99] "To nykterinon drama tōn Apachēdōn."
[100] "Teleuthaiai eidēseis" [Latest news], *Thessalia*, January 23, 1922, 1.
[101] "Drama" [Drama], *Patris*, January 23, 1922, 4.
[102] "Paraphrōn sphazōn treis," 4.

unique to crimes committed by veterans but constituted a common journalistic practice in the reporting of violent crime during this period.[103] Such representations, which approached the level of public shaming, provoked strong reactions among his fellow soldiers, particularly given that the individual in question had been wounded in service to his country. This discontent was explicitly articulated in a letter sent from the front to the newspaper *Empros* by Sergeant Elias Smyrnis of the 5/42 Evzone Regiment. In his correspondence, Smyrnis expressed both his own indignation and that of his comrades, criticizing what he perceived as the press's failure to accord due respect to KZ. He underscored the symbolic significance of "the medal he wore on his head," referring to the wound inflicted by an enemy bullet at Asia Minor, and highlighted KZ's decorations, which included the Cross of Valor, the War Cross, and formal commendations for his conduct in battle and military service more broadly. Smyrnis concluded by asserting that greater respect was owed to "a hero of yesterday" who, in the service of his homeland, had sacrificed "the most precious thing he had: his life."[104]

The KZ case constitutes a distinctive instance within the Greek war years of 1912–1922, in which multiple and often competing discourses converged around the question of a soldier's mental health. The incident bears a degree, albeit on a much more limited scale, of theoretical resemblance to the case of Pierre Rivière, who murdered his mother and two siblings in France in 1835. As analyzed by Michel Foucault, this case brought together a wide array of documentary sources – including judicial records, press accounts, witness testimonies, the defendant's own narrative, psychiatric evaluations, police and administrative reports, and trial proceedings – thereby illuminating the tensions and intersections between legal, medical-psychiatric, journalistic, and popular discourses surrounding the crime.[105] A comparable configuration emerges in the Kotopoulē Theatre incident, which is mediated through multiple discourses: journalistic accounts (including testimonies of victims and bystanders), criminal and police narratives, medical-psychiatric evaluations and military perspectives. The latter

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[103] For instance, contemporary newspapers also used these and similar terms for homicides committed by individuals with no apparent military background, such as those described in "Thyma parafronos" [Madman's victim], *Empros*, February 4, 1921, 3; "Aimatēro drama. Parafrōn foneuōn" [Bloody drama. Madman kills], *Empros*, June, 3 1923, 2.

[104] "O antiktypos enos epeisodiou eis to metōpon" [The impact of an incident on the front], *Empros*, February 17, 1922, 2.

[105] Michel Foucault, ed., *I, Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister and my brother. A Case of Parricide in the 19th Century*, transl. Frank Jellinek (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982). For more on the various discourses, see Ibid., x–xiv, 229–249.

encompassed both the official view reflected in military documentation and the informal discourse articulated by fellow soldiers.

The coexistence of these perspectives highlights the complexity of mental illness among veterans in postwar Greece. On the one hand, the incident involved a serious criminal offense; on the other, the perpetrator was a decorated combat veteran whose condition was understood to be closely connected to his wartime service. Furthermore, what the newspaper *Empros* described as the "impact of the incident on the front" – as reflected in the publication of a letter of defense sent by KZ's comrades – introduces an additional dimension to the case. This reaction underscores the potential for discontent and internal divisions within the ranks, arising from perceptions of ingratitude, contempt, and the stigmatization of a soldier who had, until that point, been recognized for his loyal service to the nation. All of the aforementioned phenomena ultimately stem from war experience and especially the brain injury this sergeant suffered, which continues to affect not only his life, but also the postwar society.

The descriptions of all cases indicate that, despite the diversity of diagnoses, the symptoms were generally consistent: inactivity, pensive or expressionless demeanor, catatonia, delirium, screaming, negativism, bedwetting, delusions of grandeur, "stupid expressions," hallucinations of persecution, epileptic episodes, and so forth. Although these soldiers came from diverse social and geographical backgrounds, they shared the experience of military service and, in many cases, exposure to combat. However, no umbrella term was employed in Greece at the time to encompass these conditions among military personnel or to establish an explicit causal link with war; instead, older diagnostic categories remained in use. Particularly noteworthy is the absence of hysteria, and especially its subtype pithiatism, a diagnosis widely employed in France to describe war-related psychological disorders.[106] This absence is striking given that many leading Greek psychiatrists, including members of the Dromokaiteion staff, had received part of their medical training in France.[107] Similarly, the diagnosis of neurasthenia appeared only rarely in the Greek context, largely limited to certain private clinics, such as that of Simonidis Vlavianos.[108] In contrast, dementia praecox, which was the most common diagnosis for military personnel during First World War,

[106] Thomas, *Treating the Trauma of the Great War*, 106–107.

[107] Tzanaki, "Dromokaiteion," 66–67, 77. At the Aeginition Hospital, however, only a single case involving a soldier diagnosed with "traumatic hysteria" was recorded during this period. See Kritsotaki, *A Social History of Mental Health Care in Greece*, 144.

[108] Dimitra Vassiliadou, "Men of disordered passions on the Belle Époque of Neurasthenia," *The Historical Review* 18, no. 1 (2021): 116–117.

remained the predominant diagnosis across psychiatric institutions in Greece from the beginning of the century,[109] as well as in the Dromokaiteion during the 1910s.[110] Rather than generating a distinct category of war trauma, the psychological consequences of military service were generally incorporated into pre-existing psychiatric frameworks, including dementia praecox, degeneration, melancholia, epilepsy, and mental confusion.

The sudden influx of soldiers to the Dromokaiteion during the First World War and its aftermath undoubtedly contributed to the use of already established scientific concepts. Yet institutional inertia alone may not fully explain this pattern. Although no direct testimonies from physicians exist, developments in other belligerent countries suggest additional considerations. The approach of Greek psychiatrists may have reflected a conscious effort to avoid establishing claims for postwar compensation, as well as to protect the army's reputation, which could have undermined the war effort. While the Dromokaiteion remained a civilian institution, it worked in close cooperation with the Ministry of Military Affairs in the treatment of military patients and clear channels of communication existed between the hospital staff and the Medical Corps. The use of "neutral" military and political terminology, rather than new terms explicitly linking war experiences to mental disorders, may have delayed discussions concerning compensation and, in practice, facilitated the restriction or denial of such claims.

What became of these individuals? The final piece of information provided by the Dromokaiteion records concerns the patient's length of stay and clinical outcome. Patient records provide the date of discharge for only a portion of the sample (173 individuals). Lengths of stay at the Dromokaiteion ranged from a few weeks to several decades. Among the cases for which the duration of hospitalization is known, the majority, 97 patients (56.06%), were hospitalized for less than six months. The longest-term cases involved 25 soldiers who remained at the facility for more than a decade, with 12 of them staying for over twenty years (Table 2). Among the 218 individuals for whom outcomes were recorded, 84 (38.53%) were simply noted as "discharged," 77 (35.32%) were "received" (63 of these by the Second Military Hospital of Athens and 6 by their families), 51 (23.39%) died at the Dromokaiteion (Table 3).

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[109] Kritsotaki, *A Social History of Mental Health Care in Greece*, 128.
[110] Fiste, "To Dromokaiteio," 115, 178.

Table 2: Duration of Hospitalization of Military Patients at the Dromokaiteion Hospital

Duration	Number of cases	Out of total (%)
Up to 1 month	31	17.92
1 to 3 months	23	13.29
4 to 6 months	36	20.81
6 months to 1 year	27	15.61
1 to 5 years	22	12.72
5 to 10 years	8	4.62
10 to 20 years	16	9.25
21 to 23 years	10	5.78
Total	**173**	**100**

Source: Data were compiled from the patient registers of the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital.

Table 3: Outcomes of Military Patients Treated at the Dromokaiteion

Outcome	Number of cases	Out of total (%)
Discharged	84	38.53
Transferred / Received by another authority	77	35.32
Death	51	23.39
Escape	3	1.37
Transfer to Corfu Psychiatric Hospital	2	0.97
Suicide	1	0.45
Received by the Rehabilitation School for Disabled Veterans "Stegi Patridos"	1	0.45
Total	**218**	**100**

Source: Data were compiled from the patient registers of the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital.

To sum up, military personnel who exhibited violence associated with mental illness were frequently admitted to the Dromokaiteion. In some cases, individuals were transferred directly from the army, whereas in others, they were admitted after committing acts of violence, most commonly homicide or attempted homicide, in order to undergo psychiatric evaluation. Within the institution, the therapeutic approaches employed during this period for them

included occupational therapy and hydrotherapy, while fever therapy being introduced in 1925.[111] No records survive concerning the specific treatments administered to individual military patients. Nevertheless, it is likely that most received one or both of the former therapeutic approaches, which constituted the standard treatments employed at the Dromokaiteion at the time. Irrespective of the patients' clinical condition or the specific treatment selected by the attending physicians, the "taming" of war-related violence among mentally ill soldiers in Greece was primarily achieved through their institutional confinement at the Dromokaiteion.

Conclusion

First World War brought Greek society into contact, on an unprecedented scale, with the psychological consequences of modern warfare. The management of military personnel suffering from mental illness, including individuals who exhibited violent behavior, emerged as a significant concern, as contemporary forensic psychiatric reports and hospital records clearly demonstrate. During this period, the treatment of such servicemen became increasingly bureaucratized through their systematic admission, primarily to the Dromokaiteion Psychiatric Hospital. The impact of both First World War and the Greek-Turkish War on the institution is evident in its records, which reveal how physicians sought to understand and manage these cases using the medical concepts and diagnostic frameworks available at the time.

At the same time, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution. The number of military admissions identified in the Dromokaiteion archives is relatively small when compared to the size of the Greek armed forces. Other servicemen may have been treated in military hospitals, civilian institutions, or private clinics, while some cases may have remained undiagnosed or emerged only after discharge from military service. Moreover, soldiers who developed psychological disorders during combat may have been killed before receiving psychiatric treatment. Consequently, neither the overall scale of war-related mental illness nor its precise relationship to violent behavior can be established with certainty.

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[111] G. Theotokas, "Peri tēs pyretotherapeias tēs proiousēs katholikēs paralyseōs" [On the treatment of progressive general paralysis with fever therapy], *Iatrikē Proodos* 33, no. 1 (January 1926), 4; Konstantinos Papastratigakis, *Genikē Therapeutikē tōn neurikōn kai psychikōn pathēseōn* [General therapy of nervous and mental disorders] (Athens: G.X. Pergamali Printing House, 1929), 46–54; Fiste, "To Dromokaiteio," 95–97.

Despite these limitations, the Dromokaiteion material provides valuable insights into the ways in which mental illness and violence were understood and managed in wartime and postwar Greece. The evidence suggests that Greek psychiatry did not develop a distinct diagnostic category comparable to shell shock. Nor did it systematically adopt concepts such as hysteria, pithiatism, or neurasthenia, which played an important role in other national contexts. Instead, military patients were generally incorporated into existing psychiatric classifications, including dementia praecox, degeneration, melancholia, epilepsy, and mental confusion.

The writings of Papastratigakis and the records of the Dromokaiteion further point to the continuing importance of heredity, constitutional predisposition, degeneration, and neurological explanations in the interpretation of mental illness. Although physicians clearly recognized the psychological and emotional pressures associated with military service and combat, these experiences were rarely treated as sufficient explanations. Rather, war-related psychological disorders were generally interpreted through established psychiatric and neurological frameworks that emphasized individual vulnerability and organic pathology. Within this framework, violent behavior was understood primarily as a manifestation of mental illness rather than as a direct consequence of wartime experience. Even in the exceptional case of KZ, where "post-traumatic psychosis" was explicitly diagnosed, psychiatrists primarily attributed the disorder to organic brain damage sustained on the battlefield.

The Greek case highlights the diversity of medical responses to war-related mental disorders in the early twentieth century. Rather than creating a distinct category of war trauma, Greek psychiatrists incorporated the psychological consequences of warfare into pre-existing psychiatric and neurological frameworks. The Dromokaiteion simultaneously functioned as a site of treatment, classification, and institutional management, through which military patients were observed, confined, and cared for. The Greek experience therefore demonstrates that the psychological consequences of modern warfare and their possible relationship to violence were neither universally understood nor uniformly classified, but were instead filtered through national psychiatric traditions, medical cultures, and institutional priorities.

BOOK REVIEWS

Sandrine Kott, Eva-Maria Muschik, and Elisabeth Roehrlich, eds.,
International Organizations and the Cold War: Competition, Cooperation, and Convergence. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025. 272 pages.
ISBN 978-1-3504-1649-9.

Historiography long ago moved beyond the interpretation of the Cold War as a conflict fought exclusively between East and West. Scholarship produced over the past several decades has demonstrated that the Cold War era, conventionally bounded by the onset of the US-Soviet great power competition in the late 1940s and the collapse of the Soviet bloc at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, was far more complex and multilayered than that.[1] A wide range of actors participated in the international affairs of the time and their interactions were not solely antagonistic but involved diverse forms of cooperation, negotiation, and exchange.

International Organizations and the Cold War, a volume edited by Sandrine Kott, Eva-Maria Muschik, and Elisabeth Roehrlich, focuses on international organizations during the Cold War. It is a significant contribution to the broader reassessment of the period. The editors have each made substantial contributions in the past to scholarship on international organizations, internationalism, and the global Cold War. This collection is the outcome of a joint intellectual endeavor developed in the course of two conferences devoted to those issues. The first was organized online as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the second was convened at the University of Vienna, where Eva-Maria Muschik and Elisabeth Roehrlich are based. The chapters of the book originated as papers presented at those events, which were subsequently revised and expanded for publication.

The volume is built around the concept of internationalism. Not coincidentally, this structure links the book to the wider Histories of Internationalism series published by Bloomsbury, which explores "international cooperation and internationalizing ambitions in the modern world" (p. ii). The authors' central concern is the manner in which various actors transcended political, geographical, and ideological boundaries. As they argue, there is a certain paradox here: the Cold War and internationalism were not mutually exclusive phenomena but, in many respects, reinforced each other (pp. 4–6). Both of the opposing blocs aspired to appeal to states and societies across the globe, promoted universal models of social organization, and employed international organizations as vehicles for disseminating their respective visions. Indeed, some important international institutions emerged not despite the Cold War but because of it, including the International Refugee Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and many

[1] See, for example, Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War. Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Westad is the series editor of the prominent *New Cold War History* series (https://uncpress.org/series/new-cold-war-history/) at the University of North Carolina Press, which supports authors with a similar approach. In the Czech scholarly environment, this new approach is represented primarily by the work of the Cold War Research Group, a research cluster affiliated with Charles University (https://cwrg.ff.cuni.cz/index.php/en/about).

others. Therefore, according to the editors, internationalism was not the antithesis of the Cold War, but one of its constitutive elements. These theses largely draw on Sandrine Kott's earlier research on this topic.[2]

The book's contributors distinguish between intergovernmental organizations whose members are states (such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization) and non-governmental organizations, which include professional, student, humanitarian, and other associations. Just as the Cold War blocs themselves were far from monolithic, the authors present international organizations as highly heterogeneous institutions in which different actors pursued their own interests and agendas. The international arena brought together not only state officials but also independent experts, civil servants, activists, and specialists whose objectives often diverged from those of their governments and the superpowers. By drawing on a wide range of sources, including organization archives, diplomatic records, personal papers, and other collections, the contributors paint a rich and nuanced picture of international organizations, along with the individuals who operated within them and frequently exercised a considerable degree of autonomy.

The authors' perspective challenges older interpretations that tended to view international organizations merely as extensions of superpower influence. In traditional Cold War narratives, such institutions functioned primarily as platforms for promoting official positions emanating from Washington and Moscow.[3] The contributors instead emphasize the institutions' active role in international politics. International organizations served not only as arenas of ideological confrontation and propaganda battles, for example during debates and voting on resolutions, but also as mediators of conflict and bridges connecting otherwise hostile political camps. The first sections of the volume explore those three functions – competition, mediation, and bridge-building. The following sections focus on global issues such as human rights and response to natural disasters, as well as on international organizations as fora where experts exchanged specialized knowledge and fostered transnational professional networks.

The individual chapters should be understood less as comprehensive histories of specific institutions than as illustrations of how the history of international organizations can be approached through the lens of internationalism. Likewise, the volume as a whole offers more of a starting point for further research than a definitive account of internationalism within Cold War international organizations. The potential of this approach has already been demonstrated in subsequent scholarship. For example, Mikuláš Pešta, together with Matthieu Gillabert and Lidia Leshykh, contribute a chapter on student internationalism and the International Union of Students (pp. 131–144), a theme that

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2 Sandrine Kott, *A World More Equal: An Internationalist Perspective on the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2024).

3 For the traditional Cold War narrative, see, for example, John L. Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005); Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945–2006* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2008); Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007); Martin Walker, *The Cold War: A History* (London: Fourth Estate, 1993).

Pešta has subsequently developed in a monograph-length study.[4] The editors should also be commended for moving beyond a narrow focus on a handful of major organizations like the UN, and attempting to cover a broader spectrum of international institutions. Nevertheless, institutions in some important sectors are missing from the selection, particularly organizations concerned with international trade, finance, and military-security affairs.

The volume is firmly situated within recent historiographical developments associated with decolonization studies and global history.[5] The contributors emphasize that the Cold War cannot be reduced to East–West competition alone. It must also be understood in the context of the tensions between the developed Global North and the developing Global South. Consequently, it devotes considerable attention to actors such as the Non-Aligned Movement and their roles in the international system. In this respect, the volume builds upon influential scholarship, particularly Akira Iriye's work on globalism, the proliferation of international and non-governmental organizations, and the emergence of an imagined global community in the post-war era.[6]

A particularly illustrative example is Christian Methfessel's chapter on the debates concerning the emergence of new states in former colonial territories (pp. 51–66). Earlier scholarship often emphasized the stabilizing influence of Western democracies and the broader international order, portraying the superpowers as generally hostile to separatist movements and border revisions. Methfessel seeks to integrate these perspectives by demonstrating that while the Cold War established the broader framework within which decolonization took place, international organizations (especially the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity) provided fora in which actors from the Global South could articulate and advance their interests. His chapter contends that those organizations influenced the shape of the emerging international order to a much greater extent than has traditionally been acknowledged. At the same time, Methfessel's contribution reveals a certain unevenness within the volume. Examining conflicts in Bangladesh, Biafra, and West Papua, he develops an argument that the influence of the superpowers within the UN was limited and the agency of postcolonial states was growing. In doing so, he engages directly with larger historiographical debates on decolonization and the global Cold War.

Trudy Huskamp Peterson's chapter on the archives of the International Refugee Organization (pp. 13–32) offers a fascinating account of how Cold War security concerns shaped archival practices and document management. Still, it is difficult to draw any broader implications from the chapter. A similar observation may be made regarding

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[4] Mikuláš Pešta, *Student Internationalism and the Global Cold War: The International Union of Students in Socialist Prague* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2026).

[5] For example, Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016); Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York, London: The New Press, 2007); Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

[6] See, for example, Akira Yriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Michel Christian's contribution on the International Centre for the Child (pp. 117–130). While it provides valuable institutional history, its connection to the overarching conceptual and methodological concerns of the volume is not entirely clear beyond its concluding remarks.

The volume is further organized around three key concepts highlighted in its subtitle: competition, cooperation, and convergence.[7] Competition is perhaps the most familiar of the three and has long been associated with the role of international organizations during the Cold War. These international fora frequently hosted intense debates on issues ranging from human rights and energy policy to decolonization and economic development. Disagreements often culminated in contentious votes and vigorous diplomatic efforts aimed at persuading opponents either to support, abstain from, or veto particular resolutions.

Equally important, however, is the concept of cooperation. The contributors repeatedly demonstrate that even the superpowers had substantial incentives to collaborate in areas such as public health, scientific research, and humanitarian assistance. In many cases, practical concerns and shared interests outweighed ideological rivalries, which were often confined to the political sphere without impeding practical cooperation.

The third concept, convergence, receives comparatively less explicit attention in the volume, although it remains one of its most intriguing themes. According to the editors, international organizations facilitated mutual adaptation and exchange between political systems that publicly presented themselves as fundamentally incompatible. Through recurring encounters in international fora, experts exchanged knowledge, adopted certain administrative practices and technological solutions, and participated in forms of mutual learning that gradually narrowed some of the differences between the opposing blocs. However, while competition and cooperation are extensively discussed throughout the volume, convergence would benefit from further conceptual elaboration. One notable exception is Marek Eby's chapter on the World Health Organization (pp. 145–160), which demonstrates how Soviet and Western malaria experts influenced one another through transnational professional exchanges.

The final chapter, authored by Sandrine Kott herself, examines the history of anti-fascist traditions within international organizations (pp. 231–245). Here Kott develops one of her broader arguments: that the functioning of international organizations after 1945 cannot be understood solely through the prism of the Cold War. Other political and intellectual currents existed alongside the East–West conflict, which significantly shaped the post-war international order. One of the most important among them was the anti-fascist tradition. Kott argues that many international organizations were profoundly influenced by transnational networks of anti-fascists, social democrats, socialists, and trade unionists. These actors transcended the boundaries of the emerging blocs and, for several decades, fostered an alternative form of internationalism. Their networks predated the

[7] The aforementioned concepts are explored in detail on pages 7–9, while the individual contributions further refine and expand upon them.

Cold War and cannot be classified as exclusively liberal, Western, or communist. Rather, they represented a distinctive model of international cooperation. In Kott's interpretation, the United Nations and its predecessor, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), rank among the most significant institutional products of anti-fascist internationalism. Kott's chapter reinforces her broader contention that international organizations constituted an alternative space of globalization that cannot be reduced to another scene of the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Ultimately, *International Organizations of the Cold War* should be read as both a research agenda and a methodological guidebook. Rather than offering a comprehensive history of international organizations during the Cold War, it proposes new ways of conceptualizing their role and significance. At the same time, as noted above, it serves as a valuable reminder that the Cold War was not only an era of confrontation, but also a period of intensive negotiation, cooperation, and transnational interaction in which a remarkably diverse range of actors participated in shaping the international order.

Ladislav Beneš
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A submitted manuscript must contain the following items: abstract, keywords, and main text, with appendices (if any) included separately. In a covering letter, the authors must provide their full names, institutional affiliations, ORCID (if registered), and their contact information, as well as acknowledgments, information on financial support received, and a disclosure statement on possible conflicts of interest. Submissions by more than one author must designate a single contact person as the corresponding author.

Words in a language using other than the Latin alphabet must be Romanized into the Latin alphabet. Bibliographic items in footnotes must be transliterated in accord with an accepted transliteration table such as the ALA-LC Romanization Tables. A simple phonetic transcription should be used for foreign terms and names in the main text.

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All articles must contain references. References should be in the form of footnotes formatted in accord with the Chicago Manual of Style for Notes. No separate bibliography or reference list at the end of the text is required.

Citations should always include a DOI (Digital Object Identifier), if the cited material has one.

Electronic sources should be cited including the date of last access, if appropriate.

6. Reference Examples

Books

One Author or Editor

Philipp Ther, *The Outsiders: Refugees in Europe since 1492* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2020), 121–123.

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Adapted from *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 17th ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2017), 741–890.

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