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Gregory T. Papanikos
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The Iphis Incident: Ovid's Accidental Discovery of Gender Dysphoria

By Ken Moore*

This article examines what the author argues is Ovid's accidental discovery of gender dysphoria with recourse to an incident in the Metamorphoses. The author argues that Ovid has accidentally discovered gender dysphoria as evidenced through the character of Iphis in Book IX of the Metamorphoses. It is unlikely that Ovid could have imagined the ramifications of such a "discovery"; however, the "symptoms" described in his narrative match exceedingly closely with modern, clinical definitions. These are explored in the article along with how Ovid may have, through personal experience, been able to achieve such a penetrating, albeit accidental, insight. The wider, epistemological context of this topic is considered alongside Ovid's personal circumstances which may have contributed to his unique understanding of a condition that modern science has only recently identified.

There are relatively few examples from ancient Greek and Roman literature that entail individuals having experienced something like the modern condition of transgenderism. One stands out above the others for sheer detail, along with emotional and psychological depth, that resonates quite well with issues faced by modernity. This is to be found in Ovid's brief narrative about Iphis, at the end of book IX of the *Metamorphoses*. The text of this short episode is crucial in order to come to grips with this subject and I have included most of it here, in quotes as well as in appendices, as I deem it relevant to our understanding. Other aspects to be considered will be how previous scholars have treated this subject, Ovid's apparent views on gender and sexuality, along with known and suspected influences on those views as represented in his cultural context. I will also consider modern, clinical definitions that may be applied as well as Ovid's own curious relationship with Iphis' fictional situation. This article, then, questions whether previous interpretations of the tale are correct and aims at a new interpretation along lines suggested in the title.

While Ovid's Iphis narrative will be the subject of this work, other such instances of mis- or re-gendering/mis- or re-sexing bear some mention by contrast, if only in passing, because they indicate that ancient imaginations contemplated such phenomena. There is, of course, the famous case of Tiresias, born a man, changed into a woman and then back again to a man. He was, in effect, mis-gendered, as a consequence of being re-sexed, by an act of the gods and, while a woman, would have (one imagines) experienced a kind of gender dysphoria until the change was reversed. Something similar may be said of Dionysus' misgendering of Pentheus in the Euripides' *Bacchae* except that the

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king was also forcibly placed into an altered mental state and would perish at the hands of his mother or an aunt before he could fully contemplate his situation. Even so, we know that he dreaded the prospect of donning female attire (899-90) and therefore we may predict that he would have suffered something like gender dysphoria were he in his right mind when made to dress as a bacchant. The tale of Hermaphroditus who became neither male nor female through the infatuation of a meddling nymph is arguably another example. A case could be made for Attys, the priest of Cybele, who in Catullus' poem expresses confusion about his new status as a eunuch after self-castration. A few other examples might be ferreted out; however, Iphis is unique. Her transformation from female to male was something that she desired and the story also has (somewhat unusually in the *Metamorphoses*) a happy ending.

There are a few additional preliminaries that need to be dispensed with before continuing with this analysis. Firstly, I shall refer to Iphis hereafter with the masculine pronouns. Iphis clearly sees himself as male, albeit within a biologically female body. And he eventually gets re-sexed so that his body matches his gender. Following on from that, "gender" will be used here to refer to one's internally perceived gender identity (male, female or intersexed etc.). "Sex" will refer to the anatomical state of being biologically male, female or intersexed etc. and sometimes to the act of sexual intercourse; although, I normally use "sexual relations" or "intercourse" for that. "Sexuality" will be employed in the sense of broader phenomena such as sexual orientation but also at times inclusive of gender and sex. The ancients did not have expressions such as "homosexual" and "heterosexual", and so "same-sex" or "mixed-sex" are the most clinically accurate terms. I will, however, be using the designation "heterosexual" at times for reasons that should become fairly apparent. These terms can cause confusion and, when used improperly, can be offensive. Therefore I aim for clarity of expression in laying them out here in an explicit way.

Ovid's tale of Iphis, and his beloved Ianthe, is fleeting but highly provocative. It is about a girl, raised as a boy, who loves another girl and, by a miracle of the gods, is transformed into a biological male in time for his appointed nuptials. There has been relatively little written about this curious episode; although, in recent years it has garnered increasing attention. In the past, it has been variously approached from the angle of lesbianism, performative sexuality and sexual constructivism, along with being considered within Foucault's zero-sum model. Some of those positions will be considered below as relevant.¹ It is a fact that the tale represents the sole mythological example of female same-sex desire of which we are aware. But I believe it to be significantly more than that.

1. In this, I am particularly indebted to the fine work of D. Kamen, "Naturalized Desires and the Metamorphosis of Iphis", in *Helios* 39.1 (2012). While her interpretation took a different tack on this subject, her excellent research was an illuminating guide for my own in writing this article.

Much of the scholarship has inclined toward discussing Iphis' desire for his beloved, Ianthe, in terms of some kind of lesbianism—inasmuch as Iphis, while still female, is clearly in love with Ianthe, who is also female. A different interpretation is needed. The case of Iphis appears to be the first recorded instance, entailing true psychological depth, albeit fictitious, of gender dysphoria. It also, consequently, illustrates a kind of “therapeutic” approach to this condition, namely female-to-male transformative treatment, in this instance, by divine intervention.² In framing this tale, and quite possibly by serendipitous coincidence as well as factors unique to himself, Ovid seems to have acquired a kind of understanding of gender dysphoria two millennia before it was officially classified by modern medical science. And that requires some further investigation and explication.

Firstly, let us consider the episode itself, in detail. The setting is on the borders of Knossos, in the Cretan land of Phaestus. There Telethusa, the wife of a free-born man named Ligdus', became pregnant. Her husband was not wealthy and he tells her, as Ovid wrote, that:

I am praying for two things: that the delivery should be as easy for you as possible, and that you may have a boy. A girl is more of a burden, and fortune has not given me the means to support one. So, though I pray that it should not happen, if a girl is born, then she must be put to death. It is not that I want to command this: I know what is due to family affection and pray to be forgiven³

According to the Code of Gortyn, ancient Cretan dowries could be as high as a hundred staters and the expectation to pay that sum, or a proportionally comparable one, could have been financially crippling for a poor family.⁴ Exposure of female infants due to economic constraints was a real issue in the ancient world. This is not to say that the parents would not have felt some

2. Although, Iphis ponders whether the “arts of Daedalus” might not re-sex him, see below.

3. Quae voveam, duo sunt; minimo ut relevere dolore, utque marem parias; onerosior altera sors est, et vires fortuna negat. Quod abominor, ergo edita forte tuo fuerit si femina partu, (invitus mando: pietas, ignosce!) necetur (675-79).

4. See R. F. Willetts, ed. *The Law Code of Gortyn*. Walter de Gruyter & Co.: Berlin, 1967, Col. X.14–20. We do not know if Ovid ever studied the ancient Cretan legal system but he did take preliminary studies in Roman law (*Fasti* IV.383-4, *Tristia* IV.10.27 and 34; and see the Elder Seneca *Controversiae* II.1-12 for confirmation of this), and they also had dowries, so he would have been keenly aware of the financial costs incurred by marrying off daughters. Ovid was also personally familiar with arranged marriages, having had one himself (*Tristia* IV.10.69-70), which in his case did not end well.

conflicting emotions about it.⁵ Indeed, both husband and wife break into tears at these fateful words, Telethusa first and then Ligdus. She begs him to change his mind but he will not relent. Later, when the birth is fast approaching, Telethusa has a dream in which the goddess Isis/Io appears to her, accompanied by a host of other deities.⁶ Those with her are Egyptian, appropriate to Isis and the proximity of Crete to Egypt, and they include Anubis, Bubastis, Apis, "the god who never speaks but, finger to his lips, advises silence", Osiris and the "foreign serpent" (presumably Apophis). Isis/Io informs Telethusa not to despair and, "do not hesitate to rear your child, when Lucina has delivered you, whatever it may be". Isis/Io offers some vague assurances of support for those who are faithful to her and then departs.⁷ Telethusa then awakens and praises the gods, hoping that the dream was a true vision.

A child is born, without Ligdus' knowledge of its biological sex, childbirth being a typically all-female business. The child is female and, with the collusion of the midwife, Telethusa pretends it is a boy. He is to be called Iphis, which we are told is a name appropriate for a boy or a girl, and he is raised as if he were biologically male.⁸ The deception is never discovered and, at the age of thirteen, Iphis is betrothed by his father to a beautiful young girl, of the same age, named Ianthe. We are told that "as a result, love touched their innocent hearts and wounded both alike" but, while Ianthe, unawares of Iphis' true sex, was looking forward to their union, Iphis loved a girl whom he despaired of ever being able "to enjoy".⁹ This singular frustration increased his ardour, as is made explicit in

5. See C. Patterson, "'Not Worth the Rearing': The Causes of Infant Exposure in Ancient Greece" in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-2014), 115 (1985), 103-123.

6. On the conflation of these deities in ancient Greek and Roman thinking, see J. G. Griffiths, "Lycophron on Io and Isis" in *The Classical Quarterly* 36.2 (1986), 472-477.

7. *Iamque ferendo vix erat illa gravem maturo pondere ventrem, cum medio noctis spatio sub imagine somni Inachis ante torum, pompa comitata sacrorum, aut stetit aut visa est. Inerant lunaria fronti cornua cum spicis nitido flaventibus auro et regale decus. Cum qua latrator Anubis sanctaque Bubastis variusque coloribus Apis, quique premit vocem digitoque silentia suadet, sistraque erant numquamque satis quaesitus Osiris plenaque somniferis serpens peregrina venenis. Tum velut excussam somno et manifesta videntem sic adfata dea est: "Pars o Telethusa mearum, pone graves curas mandataque falle mariti. Nec dubita, cum te partu Lucina levarit, tollere quidquid erit. Dea sum auxiliaris opemque exorata fero, nec te coluisse quereris ingratum numen."* Monuit thalamoque recessit (684-702).

8. See Appendix A

9. *Hinc amor ambarum tetigit rude pectus et aequum vulnus utrique dedit. Sed erat fiducia dispar:*

coniugium pactaeque exspectat tempora taedae quamque virum putat esse, virum fore credit Ianthe;

Iphis amat, qua posse frui desperat, et auget hoc ipsum flammis, ardetque in virgine virgo (720-725).

the poem. Iphis could scarcely hold back his tears (although, rather “manfully” he does). He no less bewails his fate and the “unnaturalness” of it, clearly in a state of emotional distress.¹⁰

Iphis’ mother, aware that the ruse is soon to be discovered, tries to delay the ceremony with a range of excuses from concocted illnesses to bad omens. But inevitably her tricks are exhausted and, on the day before the appointed ceremony, Iphis and his mother enter the Temple of Isis/Io to pray before her altar. Telethusa tears the ribbons from her and from Iphis’ hair in her extreme state of anxiety and prays to the goddess. The ribbons seem curious. Apparently she had decked Iphis out in some female ornamentation. Assuming that Ovid was describing Roman nuptial ceremonies, though, ribbons were not a traditional part of a bride’s apparel. Greek bridal costumes were somewhat more elaborate but ribbons do not appear to have been part of their attire either.¹¹ Apart from the veil, the white wedding dress, and the “Herculean Knot” (to be undone by her husband after marriage), bridal etiquette at ancient Roman weddings dictated that the bride wore no adornments apart from her engagement ring.¹² We assume that Iphis would have been dressed as a bridegroom, though we are not told, and all they were required to wear was their best toga (or, we presume, the Greek equivalent here, a formal *chiton* with *himation* cloak).¹³ Interestingly, perhaps Ovid imagined that the bridegroom would be mostly nude at the wedding, as males often are in Minoan art, in which case the gig would have been truly up. Otherwise, his secret would only have been discovered by Ianthe during their expected consummation. However, this scene in the temple occurs on the day before the wedding. And ribbons were worn (by women) in their hair for religious purification ceremonies, in both Greece and Rome, that could take place prior to the wedding, which is probably why Iphis was wearing them in the temple.¹⁴ Apparently, in the sacred confines of the holy space, Telethusa had

10. See Appendix B

11. See Hesiod, *Theogony* 573-578, *Works and Days* 72-7; and Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* II.11.

12. See K. K. Hersh, “Introduction to the Roman Wedding: Two Case Studies” in *The Classical Journal*, 109.2 (December 2013-January 2014), 223-232 and <https://www.explore-italian-culture.com/ancient-roman-fashion.html> (accessed 16/07/19).

13. We are told by Ulpian, A.D. c. 170-223, (*Digesta seu Pandectae* XXIII.2.5) that the groom need not even attend the wedding so long as he should send an official notification indicating his assent: “It is settled that a woman can be married to a man who is absent either by means of a letter, or through a messenger, if she is afterwards conducted to his house.” If this custom was practiced in Ovid’s era, he has perhaps omitted it here as it would have hindered his plot progression.

14. R. L. Wildfang. *Rome’s Vestal Virgins: A Study of Rome’s Vestal Priestesses in the Late Republic and Early Empire*, Routledge: London and New York, 2006, 54. And, on

adorned Iphis with appropriately sexed religious ornaments, which she then tore off in frustration. Yet Isis/Io hears her prayer. The altars shift about and the temple door trembles; the horns on the goddess' statue burn with a shining light and the sound of tumbrels can be heard, though Telethusa remains unconvinced. The prayers are nevertheless miraculously answered and, we are told:

Iphis accompanied her as she walked along, and moved with a longer stride than usual. Her face lost its fair complexion; her hair seemed shorter, plain and simple in style, her features sharpened and her strength increased. She revealed more energy than a female has—for she who had lately been a maiden had become a man!

Mother and son then carry offerings to the other temples of the gods and set up the following inscription:

*The tributes promised, as a maid,
Iphis, a boy, has duly paid.*¹⁵

As indicated, much of the existing, modern scholarship on this story has grappled with the sexual psychology of Iphis and his ostensibly same-sex desire for Ianthe. Pintabone, for example, argues that it represents both a positive and negative image of “woman for woman” passion, temporarily questioning normative sexuality and gender roles.¹⁶ Walker has characterised it as some type of “deformulated lesbianism”, albeit one that reverts to normative sexuality with Iphis' divinely imposed morphology.¹⁷ Others are more critical. Lilja summarises her brief reflection on this tale, stating: “The story of Iphis, then, is to be regarded as another negative comment on lesbianism”.¹⁸ Makowski, perhaps informed by a particular agenda, writes that it is “Ovid's most damning denunciation of homosexuality.”¹⁹ And Hallett adds that “Ovid's narrative displays immense

the Greek *tainia*, see Plato *Symp.* 212d.e, 213d; Xenophon *Symp.* 5.9; Pausanias I.8.4; VIII.31.8; X.35.10; Theocritus XVIII.44.

15. Sequitur comes Iphis euntem, quam solita est, maiore gradu, nec candor in ore permanet, et vires augentur, et acrior ipse est vultus, et incomptis brevior mensura capillis, plusque vigoris adest, habuit quam femina. Nam quae femina nuper eras, puer es. Date munera templis nec timida gaudete fide! Dant munera templis, addunt et titulum; titulus breve carmen habebat: DONA·PUER·SOLVIT·QUAE·FEMINA. VOVERAT. IPHIS (786-794).

16. D. Pintabone, “Ovid's Iphis and Ianthe: When Girls Won't be Girls”, in Rabinowitz and Auanger, 2002, 256-85.

17. J. Walker, “Before the Name: Ovid's Deformulated Lesbianism” in *Comparative Literature*, 58.3 (Summer 2006), 205-222.

18. S. Lilja, *Homosexuality in Republican and Augustan Rome*. Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1983, 80.

19. J. F. Makowski, “Bisexual Orpheus: Pederasty and Parody in Ovid” in *The Classical Journal* 92.1 (1996), 30.

sympathy with Iphis' plight, a sympathy contrasting to Iphis' own self-condemnation and negative view of female homoeroticism".²⁰ The last point is, I think, quite apt. But Roman (or Ovid's) attitudes toward female homoeroticism represent only a secondary concern, if a significant one, in the unique case of Iphis. The story reveals anxieties stemming from the "acquisition of gendered identity", as Sharrock states, adding that "the difficulties in the interaction of nature and nurture in sexual identity are exposed as well as fudged."²¹ While, she goes no further in her analysis of this specific tale, on a website devoted to scholarship and thought concerning transgenderism, Scott expands on this theme of gender identity and alludes to an alternative interpretation:

Ovid's story of Iphis and Ianthe became one of the iconic lesbian/transgender plots well into the modern era. Whether one views the story as lesbian or transgender depends on how one interprets Iphis's difficulty in integrating female anatomy with sexual desire for a woman.²²

While this assessment, I think, best approaches the truth, most of the discussions in the scholarship and in popular culture, as indicated, has striven to interpret Iphis and Ianthe as portraying some type of lesbianism. What type precisely remains a subject of much debate. Although, some, such as Scott above, have sought to include the possibility that the tale also represents a version of transgenderism. And it seems quite correct that how one regards this episode does depend much on Iphis' psychology, as presented in Ovid's narrative.

The poet's "immense sympathy with Iphis' plight", in Hallett's words, is not insignificant.

And I shall return to that, along with more on Iphis' psychology, in a moment. It is important to bear in mind that Ianthe does not know that Iphis is female and so she cannot be included in any formulation of being a female who desires same-sex relations with other females, at least not as a conscious participant, which would seem to preclude her from that designation. I suppose that someone could argue that Ianthe really did know about Iphis and did not care because she too was a lesbian. But that is reading far too much into a narrative that never explicitly says such things. In fact we are told that "Ianthe awaits the ceremonial as agreed upon, in confidence and hope, and is quite

20. J. P. Hallett, "Female Homoeroticism and the Denial of Roman Reality in Latin Literature" in *Yale Journal of Criticism* 3 (1989), 217

21. A. Sharrock, "Gender and Sexuality" in P. Hardie ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, 96.

22. Scott, "Queer Fantasy Roots: Gender Transformations In Ovid's Metamorphoses" in *Queer Sci-Fi*, September 17, 2016 <https://queerscifi.com/queer-fantasy-roots-gender-transformations-in-ovids-metamorphoses/?cn-reloaded=1> (accessed 22/01/19).

certain she will wed a man.”²³ Apart from expressing her expectations, Ovid never really gives Ianthe a voice. She is merely the object of (male) sexual desire and a “normal”, probably heterosexual girl who expects to marry a male. It is all down to Iphis and how he processes his own sexuality and gender. But another theme running through the scholarship concerns the performative nature of Iphis’ sexuality: namely, that he has somehow “adopted” heterosexual, masculine desires because he has been reared as a male. Does Ovid imagine that a female child reared in such a manner would take on male characteristics, including the desire to sexually penetrate a female, as in normative heterosexuality (or dominantly heterosexual behaviour)? Based on his earlier poems (the *Ars Amatoria* and the *Amores* in particular), mixed-sex desire is something with which Ovid was fervently familiar and he projects this very successfully onto his fictional characters. Indeed, Habinek has argued that Ovid effectively invented the category of the “heterosexual male”, whose primary object of sexual desire and attraction is women.²⁴ But why might he have regarded gender roles and sexuality as having been, in some major sense, constructed through environmental influences and performative internalisation through *mimesis*?

Aristotle, of course, had famously asserted that (male) same-sex relations were an abnormality that could result from both child-abuse and habituation; though he also included “nature” as a possibility.²⁵ We do not know whether Ovid ever studied Aristotle; although his sixth book of the *Metamorphoses* does appear to challenge Aristotle’s anthropocentric view of society in the *History of Animals* by asserting, contrary to the philosopher’s position, that the ownership of human physical characteristics does not necessarily amount to any innate worth.²⁶ The notion of habituation being a factor in sexual development, derived from Aristotle, might have been a commonplace belief in Ovid’s world. However, there is at least one example of a performative gender model on which Ovid may have more directly drawn. This is significant because we do not have others writing about this so explicitly, whatever most people may have believed, but we can perhaps see in this an epistemological transmission of ideas from Classical Greece to Augustan Rome. It occurs in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazousai* with the fictionalised tragedian Agathon who seems to be illustrating a process that is not unrelated to certain implicit assumptions about gender that informed Ovid in composing his tale of Iphis. In the opening scenes of the play, Agathon is attired and styled as a woman, and is apparently very skilled at playing the feminine

23. 722-3, coniugium pactaeque exspectat tempora taedae quamque virum putat esse, virum fore credit Ianthe.

24. T. Habinek, “The Invention of Sexuality in the World-City of Rome” in T. Habinek and A. Schiesaro eds., *The Roman Cultural Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997, 23-43. And see too D. Kamen, “Naturalized Desires”, 29.

25. Nicomachean Ethics VII.5.1148a-b.

26. A. Dong & R. Block, “Ovid vs. Aristotle” 2013, <https://alicedong.weebly.com/ovid-vs-aristotle.html> (accessed 16/07/19).

role, which is why the character of Euripides wants him to infiltrate the female-only festival as a spy. Agathon declares to the surprised and slightly aroused kinsman of Euripides that:

I coordinate my clothing with my thoughts. To be a poet, a man must adopt the nature of his characters. If, let us say, he is writing plays about women, then he must take on all of their characteristics into his own persona.²⁷

The fictionalised Agathon seems to be saying that dressing and acting like a (traditional) woman—through *mimesis*—is helpful in coming to a deeper understanding of that uniquely gendered, psychological condition, approximating femininity, even if perhaps temporarily. This may well be the first articulation of a performative model of gender, albeit used here for comedic purposes by Aristophanes, along with a process akin to what is today in drama termed the Method, or Method Acting. We certainly know that Ovid too thought a great deal about women. His earlier works focused heavily upon female qualities, including one on the correct application of cosmetics, which suggests an almost transcendental obsession with them and their characteristics, both physical and psychological. Like Aristophanes' Agathon, albeit in a different manner, Ovid seems to have been able to temporarily put himself into the mind-set of his characters, especially female ones, approximating an understanding of their inner workings. And he might also have agreed with this performative model of gender or something very similar to it.

We do not know for certain whether Ovid was familiar with this play but it seems unlikely that he would not have been—far more likely than with Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. That he had read or viewed some of Aristophanes' other works may be evidenced by his Philomela, Procne and Tereus in the *Metamorphoses* (VI.491-674), a narrative which appear to draw upon that which is also detailed in Aristophanes' own adaptation of the myth in *Birds* (115-135, 660 ff. *et passim*). Also, the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone (*Met.* XI.410-748) recollects elements from *Frogs* (186) in descriptions of the river Lethe and the Underworld.²⁸ Ovid may have had some additional familiarity with Agathon, if only by way of Plato. His characterisation of Amor in the *Ars Amatoria* recollects the Platonic formulation of Eros in the *Symposium*, and specifically that from Agathon's

27. Aristophanes, *Thesmophoriazousai* 147-52; ὦ πρέσβυ πρέσβυ, τοῦ φθόνου μὲν τὸν ψόγον ἤκουσα, τὴν δ' ἄλγησιν οὐ παρεσχόμην: ἐγὼ δὲ τὴν ἐσθῆθ' ἅμα γνώμη φορῶ. χρὴ γὰρ ποιητὴν ἄνδρα πρὸς τὰ δράματα ἃ δεῖ ποιεῖν πρὸς ταῦτα τοὺς τρόπους ἔχειν. αὐτίκα γυναικεῖ ἦν ποιῇ τις δράματα, μετουσίαν δεῖ τῶν τρόπων τὸ σῶμ' ἔχειν.

28. Y. E. Kim, A Commentary on Ovid's Ceyx and Alcyone Narrative (*Met.* XI.410-748). MA Dissertation, Duke University 2015.

speech.²⁹ If Ovid read Plato at all, the *Symposium* would seem one of the likeliest candidates. Furthermore, if Agathon's now lost plays were still available in the 1st century B.C., then it is likely that Ovid had encountered them. We do not, of course, know how much Aristophanes' satire of Agathon might have been reflected in that tragedian's actual works; but, there is every indication that he was an individual who was notable for his innovation and unorthodoxy.³⁰ Although Ovid's apparent embracing of a performative model of sexuality with regard to Iphis almost certainly amounts to a synthesis of many such influences produced by his own unique experiences and imaginings, it clearly has some rather specific precursors in the Classical Greek world. What it means for Ovid and his audience seems to be that, by raising a child of one sex as another, that child would then take on the gendered characteristics associated with the sex with he/she has been raised.

Iphis' obsession with the "unnatural" state of his condition is also illuminating. And one can see why such critics as Lilja and Makowski above have regarded this story as a negative comment on female same-sex relations, which, to an extent, it is. And while there is much to credit in that interpretation, there are several additional factors here that bear further scrutiny. Firstly, in keeping with the performative model of gender identity, there is a recurring phenomenon amongst ancient writers of a supposed time before which same-sex relations did not occur because no one was apparently aware of them to imitate. We do not know precisely the era in which Iphis was meant to have lived; but, it seems safe to assume that he existed in the mytho-historical past, long before even the Archaic Age, and was therefore not aware of the proclivities of the famous Lesbian poetess. Suffice it to say that Ovid was familiar with Sappho.³¹ My point here is that a number of references external to Ovid, but likely known to him, maintained a clear sense of "before and after", a time in which same-sex relations did not occur and a time after which they did, usually due to the extraordinary acts of certain noteworthy individuals and their lack of control over their sexual appetites. Herodotus, of course, had famously declared that the Persians learned about sex with boys from the Greeks (I.135) and he apparently presumes (or his audience does, at any rate) that they must not have engaged in such activities before that custom was exported and imitated. Aristotle thought that the Cretans themselves first introduced the practice to the other Greeks.³² Plato, too, in his *Laws*, had written that same-sex relations between males came about as a result of

29. A. Park, "Two Types of Ovidian Personification", in *The Classical Journal*, 104.3 (Feb. - Mar., 2009), 231.

30. Aristotle (*Poetics* 1456a) indicated that the characters and plot of his play, the *Anthos*, were original and did not follow Athenian dramatic orthodoxy by borrowing from mythological or historical subjects.

31. *Ars Amatoria* 3. 329-348; *Remedia Amoris* 757-770; *Tristia* II.361-442. III.7 and *Heroides* 15.

32. Aristotle, *Politics* II.1272a 22-24

Laius' rape of the handsome youth Chryssippus from the court of King Pelops (836b8-c7). Athenaeus (XIII.602f8-603a3) gives essentially the same description and whether he obtained it from Plato or not is uncertain; although, it was also the subject of a now lost play by Euripides (the *Chryssippus*).³³ Athenaeus also reports an alternative version, echoing Aristotle, saying that Timaeus claimed that the Cretans introduced the custom to the Greeks.³⁴ These along with all of the mythical and mytho-historical accounts, such as that of Zeus and Ganymede or Apollo and Hyacinthus or Herakles and Iolaus etc. etc., tend to deal exclusively with male-to-male same-sex relations of one type or another rather than female ones. But Ovid here seems to be operating under the assumption that, perhaps prior to Sappho, female same-sex relations were largely unknown. This is not stated and can only be inferred at best. The truth could be completely otherwise. Certainly Ovid's mentions of Sappho in his other works are mostly positive and probably intended to titillate both himself and the reader, even if they flew in the face of typically Roman sensibilities on the subject. Yet, the notion that same-sex relations may have been introduced and then imitated strongly implies a performative and mimetic dimension to what we would call sexual orientation and Ovid, as I have been arguing, appears to have believed in just such a thing *vis-à-vis* Iphis.

Looking closer at the poet's own historical and cultural context, although the evidence certainly points to a more negative view on the whole, attitudes about female same-sex relations are somewhat difficult to assess. This is not helped when we consider that Ovid's tale of Iphis and Ianthe also happens to be the first and one of the only Augustan-era texts to address the subject. Poetic works contemporary with Ovid tend exclusively to illustrate only male same-sex relations and to reinforce the penetrated role of women. The anonymous and racy *Carmina Priapea*, some of which Seneca the Elder attributed appropriately enough to Ovid himself, repeatedly reinforce the hetero-normative position with regard to the male penetrator. Accepted sexual relations indicated in the *Priapea* are anal and oral sex with men and boys and vaginal, penetrative sex only with women by men.³⁵ No earlier Roman source, of which we are aware, and very few Greek ones prior to Ovid, dared touch the theme of female same-sex relations. Those that do tend to be fairly negative. The Hellenistic epigrammist Asclepiades of Samos (fl. 3rd century B.C.), for example, is very unsympathetic toward female, same-sex relations:

33. See K.R. Moore, *Sex and the Second-Best City*, London & New York: Routledge 2005, 181-3.

34. XVIII.602f7-8 (Timaeus *FGrH* 566 F144).

35. *Priapea* 3, 5, 13, 22, 25, 28 and 30. There is some question as to the dating of these poems but in his *Excerpta Controversiae*, I.2.22, Seneca the Elder refers to them as embodying *Ovidianum illud* ("that Ovidian phrase").

The Samian girls Bitto and Nannion are not minded to meet with Aphrodite on her own terms but desert to other practices and not good ones. Oh Lady of Cyprus, abhor these fugitives from thy bed.³⁶

Compare that with Iphis' own ironic tone which expresses similar disdain for just such a prospect:

Why do you, oh Juno, matron of honour, and you, oh Hymen, come to this ceremony at which there is no bridegroom, where two brides are being wed?³⁷

By way of contrast, we also have the poetry of Nossis of Locris (also fl. 3rd century BC), perhaps a contemporary of Asclepiades, who claimed Sappho as her inspiration, and wrote mostly "homosocial" poetry about erotic attraction between women along similar lines as her exemplar.³⁸ She and Sappho, however, represent virtually the only positive proponents of female same-sex relations.

Ovid, as mentioned earlier, did write favourably of Sappho and may have been sympathetic to that sort of activity; but, if so, then he keeps it to himself in the tale of Iphis and reveals more traditional attitudes. Cunnilingus is certainly implied here but not explicitly stated and this is perhaps because of the social taboos surrounding it. Oral sex of any type was regarded negatively; although, it was acceptable for a man to receive it from a social inferior. That performed on women, by either men or women, was regarded as particularly disgusting due to attitudes about pollution and "because of a misogynistic revulsion at menstrual blood".³⁹ Somewhat after Ovid's time, we have the late-Greek work of Artemodorus' (2nd century A.D.). His *Oneirocritica* was a handbook of dream interpretations that also distinguished between different types of sexual acts. Some are defined as "natural and conventional", including sexual penetration of social inferiors, penetration by other men and masturbation. Considered "unconventional" are incest and oral sex while "unnatural" ones expressly include female same-sex relations.⁴⁰ Winkler has expanded on this, arguing that

36. (AP 5.201), qtd. in T. K. Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome: A Sourcebook of Basic Documents*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, 272.

37. 764-5. Pronuba quid Iuno, quid ad haec, Hymenaeae, venitis sacra, quibus qui ducat abest, ubi nubimus ambae?

38. Nosis AP 5.170 (1 GP), AP 9.605 (6 GP), AP 7.718 (11 GP); see Hubbard, *Homosexuality*, 269-71.

39. M. B. Skinner. *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*. Blackwell Publishing: London, 2004, 1968. See too A. Richlin. *The Garden of Priapus: Sexuality and Aggression in Roman Humor*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1992, 26-7 and C. A. Williams. *Roman Homosexuality*, 2nd edition. Oxford University Press, USA: New York, 2010, 223.

40. See B. J. Brooten. *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism*. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1996. 184-6 and Kamen, "Naturalized Desires", 22

ancient sexual relations were “articulated in the significant terms of the system”, with the emphasis on penetration, such that “woman-woman intercourse is ‘unnatural’ only and exactly insofar as it lies outside that determinate field of meaning”.⁴¹ He is specifically dealing with Greek sexual relations, and I take some exception to his interpretation being broadly applied to multiple cultural contexts; it does, however, seem to work very well for the 1st-century Romans. And it is safe to say that female same-sex relations were regarded in a negative light in Ovid’s era, as Iphis himself demonstrates:

O what will be the awful, dreaded end, with such a monstrous love compelling me?
If the Gods should wish to save me, certainly they should have saved me; but, if their desire was my ruin, still they should have given to me some suffering that is natural to humanity.⁴²

Female same-sex relations were perhaps especially confounding since they did not fit into the accepted, penetrative model. While such attitudes certainly impact upon this tale, I argue that it is less about them and more about Iphis’ implicitly phallocentric heterosexuality which struggles to find expression while he is in a female form.

When we consider such evidence as this, it is clear that female same-sex relations were conceived by the Romans of Ovid’s era along normative lines in terms of what we would call heterosexual, male-female relations, with sexually dominant and sexually receptive pairings.⁴³ But, vitally, it is impossible for two females to engage in normative, penetrative and potentially reproductive sex; therefore, according to this formulation, it is “unnatural”. The “unnaturalness” of his state, underscored by Iphis’ frequent recourse to perceived, if erroneous, animal behaviour is clearly along the lines of the normative male/female sex act and reproduction. That, achieved through penetrative sex, was seen in the ancient Roman world as the prime imperative of a (mixed-sex) marriage. Iphis says:

The passion for a cow does not inflame a cow, no mare has ever sought another mare. The ram inflames the ewe, and every doe follows her chosen stag; so also birds are mated, and in all the animal world no female ever feels loving passion for another female—why is it in me?⁴⁴

41. J. J. Winkler. *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*. New York: Routledge, 1990, 38-9.

42. 727-31, *cognita quam nulli, quam prodigiosa novaeque cura tenet Veneris? Si di mihi parcere vellent, parcere debuerant; si non, et perdere vellent, naturale malum saltem et de more dedissent.*

43. Hubbard, *Homosexuality*, 346.

44. 731-36, *Nec vaccam vaccae, nec equas amor urit equarum: urit oves aries, sequitur sua femina cervum. Sic et aves coeunt, interque animalia cuncta femina femineo conrepta cupidine nulla est. Vellem nulla forem!*

He goes on to discuss “monstrosities” (*monstra*) born in Crete such as the Minotaur, complaining that Pasiphae’s passion was at least for a male, if a male bull, lamenting “but my desire is far madder than hers, in strict regard of truth, for she had hope of love’s fulfilment”.⁴⁵ The latter phrase, “love’s fulfilment”, is clearly a reference to penetrative sexual intercourse between male and female. Iphis cannot impregnate Ianthe, though he longs to do so, to penetrate her with a penis rather than a prosthesis, however obliquely expressed through animal analogies as it emerges in his diatribe of self-loathing. This formulation, as Kamen indicates, is a uniquely “Roman conception of *sexual acts*”.⁴⁶ Therefore his passionate desire for Ianthe, and the whole concocted charade of masculinity and impending marriage, are “unnatural” as they can never result in penetration or the production of offspring and, most crucially, Iphis can never actualise his sexual identity and desire for his beloved as a biological man would do with a biological woman. And that may account in no small part for the poet’s rather emphatic compassion for Iphis. Ovid’s works partook of an immersive “dialogue with the most powerful contemporary signifiers of the masculine order: Augustus, *arma* (war and epic), and political life”.⁴⁷ There is then an implicitly masculine ideal which Iphis can never achieve in female form. Whatever negativity the Romans may have felt about female same-sex relations, and the female sex more broadly, Iphis’ burning desire to join the masculine order, so to speak, would probably have elicited a sympathetic response from its membership. But, from a modern perspective, his condition also strikes me as being an almost textbook example of gender dysphoria.

According to the NHS (UK) guidelines, gender dysphoria may be defined as: “...a condition where a person experiences discomfort or distress because there’s a mismatch between their biological sex and gender identity... sometimes known as gender incongruence.”⁴⁸ As we have seen, Iphis has wished that he had never been born. This is more than discomfort; it is clearly a state of distress. Individuals with this condition can feel trapped inside a body that does not correspond with their true gender identity. They may feel so severely depressed about “conforming to societal expectations” that they choose to live as if they were their anatomical sex, rather than outwardly expressing the gender that they ardently feel themselves to be; but, that course of action only makes matters worse, which Iphis amply illustrates:

45. 737-8, *meus est furiosior illo, si verum profiteamur, amor!*

46. Kamen, “Naturalized Desires”, 22, emphasis in original.

47. Sharrock, “Gender”, 102.

48. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/gender-dysphoria/> (accessed 24/01/19). N.B. I am using the NHS UK guidelines here but I am also including a link to the American Psychiatric Association’s information page on gender dysphoria as well (<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gender-dysphoria/what-is-gender-dysphoria--accessed-12/07/19>) which gives a virtually identical description.

Compose yourself, Iphis; be firm and shake off this foolish, useless emotion. Consider what you were born, unless you are deceiving yourself along with everyone else; seek what is permitted to you and fasten your affections on what a woman should love... But Nature is unwilling. She alone bars the way, but she is more powerful than all the rest. See, the time for which I prayed has come! My wedding day is at hand, and now Ianthe will be mine; yet she will not be. I shall thirst in the midst of the waters (745-63).

Ovid appears to project onto Iphis an awareness that “the Roman male was often defined by his relationships with the women in his life”, that to actualise his role as a man, Iphis must have a penetrative relationship with Ianthe.⁴⁹ It is Ovid’s fundamentally heterosexual outlook that has been mapped onto Iphis, almost in a kind of hypothetical thought-experiment. And while it is Ovid projecting his own experiences onto his subject, it no less suffices remarkably well to produce a fictional individual with gender dysphoria. What he intended, what was going through his mind, we may never know. What he has produced for us to interpret is another matter. The NHS guidelines also indicate that “Gender dysphoria isn’t the same as transvestism or cross-dressing and isn’t related to sexual orientation. People with the condition may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or asexual, and this may change with treatment.”⁵⁰ It seems clear that Iphis has been born as a biological female who identifies psychologically as what we would call a heterosexual male, thus eliciting the poet’s genuine pity and enhancing Iphis’ verisimilitude as a fictional character. We would say today that the performative element, being raised as male, had little or nothing to do with Iphis’ self-identified gender and sexuality; although, Ovid and his contemporary readers probably thought otherwise.

It is, of course, impossible for Iphis to actualise his masculinity in any accepted, Roman manner while he has a female body. And he reproves himself with forced *bravura* for daring even to hope to do so. Note, as alluded to above, that he speaks in a way that Ovid’s audience might expect from a male elegiac lover, actually recollecting some of the poetry of Catullus, with a voice that is “gendered male”.⁵¹ It is ironic that he uses masculine language to try and talk

49. A. N. Petersen, “Ovid’s Wife in the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*: Transforming Erotic Elegy into Conjugal Elegy”, A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts, Athens, Georgia, 2005, 6. See too: Tom Hillard, “On the Stage, Behind the Curtain: Images of Politically Active Women in the Late Roman Republic,” in B. Garlick, S. Dixon and P. Allen, eds. *Stereotypes of Women in Power: Historical Perspectives and Revisionist Views*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1992, 37-64.

50. Ibid.

51. K. Ormand, “Impossible Lesbians in Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*”, in R. Ancona and E. Greene eds., *Gendered Dynamics in Latin Love Poetry*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

himself into accepting his lot as a cis-female. The line quoted above, "Compose yourself, Iphis; be firm and shake off this foolish, useless emotion", compares quite well with one from the neoteric poet of Verona:

Why don't you make firm your heart and lead yourself out of this?⁵²

This seems to indicate that Ovid thought of Iphis in masculine terms. And we, the readers/audience are evidently invited to regard him as having intrinsically male qualities, as defined by Ovid's cultural context. It is not unlike Aristophanes putting courtroom and assembly speeches into the mouths of his female characters such as Lysistrata and Praxagora in order to paint them in a more dominant, traditionally masculine role. I argue that it goes further and deeper in the case of Iphis.

But the beleaguered character's language not only recalls Catullus, probably self-consciously, it is also consistent with Ovid's own, later work in exile. Such a comparison is useful here, despite his *relegatio* having occurred after the composition of the *Metamorphoses*, partly to illustrate Ovid's own emotional range and partly because the similarities between the exiled poet and his earlier subject, Iphis, are more than minor.⁵³ Indeed, the whole of the *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto* painfully illustrate the theme of yearning for what is eventually perceived to be an impossible, if intensely desired, ambition that is out of reach: to return to his beloved life and dearest ones in the City.⁵⁴ Ovid, as an outcast, had himself undergone a kind of change of gender, becoming an "*exclusus amator* [excluded

University Press, 2005, 96. Interestingly, Ovid has chosen to use another Iphis later on (*Met.* XIV.698 ff.) to portray the misery of unrequited love.

52. Catullus 76.11, *quin tu animo affirmas atque istinc teque reducis*.

53. There is a vanishingly small possibility that Ovid revised some of the *Metamorphoses* in exile. We know that he brought some of his books with him to Tomis. While he claims to have burnt one manuscript when he found out about his punishment (*Tristia* I.7.19-24), he was aware that several copies had survived. And one has to wonder whether the final transformation in book XV, that of Julius Caesar into a god and on the destiny of Augustus (alluded to at *Tristia* II.1.61-5) might not have been added later. He mentions the fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses*, "lately saved from my exequies" (*Tristia* I.1.117-18) and mourns his own recent and unpleasant "transformation". He repeats this again at *Tristia* III.14, also indicating that the *Metamorphoses* had had gone out to the public "uncorrected" (19-24). If he did correct that manuscript in exile, then it is a tantalising prospect that could impact quite profoundly on the tale of Iphis; but, without further evidence, I must sadly relegate it only to a footnote.

54. There are many examples of this, too numerous to recount here, but I list a few by way of illustration: *Tr.* II.340, where he laments the fate brought on by his own poetry and error; *Tr.* III.3 where he urges his wife to take heart (much as Iphis has done for himself); *Ep.* I.1, where he laments his "index of sorrows" and *Ep.* II.1, one of many where he longs for the sights and sounds of his perpetually denied homeland.

lover] of elegy and an abandoned heroine of the *Heroides*", denied what he most desired since he had roused a god's wrath.⁵⁵ The very essence of his masculinity having been metaphorically raped, the only power left to him is to evince the anguish of his state through his poetry so that he might receive some salutary compassion from his readership, though clemency from the divine Augustus would ever be lacking. A leitmotif (from *Tr.* III.3.35 ff. onwards) that seems to arise from his darker moments in exile is that Ovid has wished for his own death, not unlike Iphis wishing never to have been born, rather than to have to face the impossibility of return.⁵⁶ When his frequent entreaties ultimately fell on deaf ears, though they had made up the bulk of that work, a recurring theme in his final poems (especially *Epistles* IV.16) is that Ovid considers himself to be effectively deceased. It is clear that he can commiserate, that he would have intimate acquaintance, with intense yearning contravened by *force majeure*. In many ways, Iphis' fictional tale, amongst others, demonstrates that Ovid was well prepared to comprehend his altered circumstances, if not to accept them.

It is worth noting too that Iphis meets yet another significant criterion of gender dysphoria. People with that condition may also "have a strong desire to change or get rid of physical signs of their biological sex, such as facial hair or breasts."⁵⁷ Painfully contemplating the seemingly impossible prospect of just such a change, Iphis declares: "though all the world's talent were concentrated here, though Daedalus himself were to fly back on waxen wings, what could he do? Could all of his magical arts change me from girl to boy? Or could he change Ianthe?"⁵⁸ The last thought about changing Ianthe seems the manifestation of sheer desperation, which is evidenced by the lines that follow it, quoted above, where Iphis tells himself to abandon such nonsense and be firm in his heart. But Iphis clearly and explicitly desires to change his physical form from female to male, even to the point of contemplating impossible solutions to that problem.

Here too is an additional parallel with Ovid's exilic work. In *Tristia* III.8.5-12, he longs to borrow Daedalus' wings to escape his *relegatio*; but then scolds himself, not unlike Iphis, for being such a "fool" as to "pray in vain like a child for these yearnings".⁵⁹ One wonders whether he was contemplating Iphis' pre-transition conundrum as he languished in that Black Sea outpost, brooding over his own misfortunes. In many ways, the tale of Iphis was prescient with regard to Ovid's fate. The *émigré* poet was in effect un-manned in his exile, deprived of his

55. Petersen, "Ovid's Wife", 7.

56. He even claims to have attempted suicide, *Epistulae Ex Ponto* I.6.40 ff. and composed his own epitaph, *Tristia* III.3.72-76: "...may Ovid's bones lie soft."

57. Kamen, "Naturalized Desires", 22.

58. 741-4, *Huc licet e toto sollertia confluat orbe, ipse licet revolet ceratis Daedalus alis, quid faciet? Num me puerum de virgine doctis artibus efficiet? num te mutabit, Ianthe?* These lines come just prior to the ones quoted above where Iphis, like Catullus, urges himself to be brave in the face of his seemingly impossible situation.

59. Stulte, *quid haec frustra votis puerilibus optas, quae non ulla tibi.*

dear wife and his other beloved, Rome—which also defined his masculinity in no small part—and relegated to yearn perpetually for that which he could never obtain. Even though some hope for reprieve clearly endured until near the end, no god intervened on the poet's behalf. In that respect, Iphis was the more fortunate one.

Ovid may or may not have believed in a performative model of gender identity and sexuality. It seems likely that he did at least to some extent, as likely also did his audience. And he has certainly embedded his culture's sense of negativity toward female same-sex relations, alongside a heteronormative, masculine ideal, within his narrative. But, regardless of this, he has managed to produce a fictional case of an individual who conforms remarkably closely to modern definitions of gender dysphoria. As this article has sought to demonstrate, he has done this through a combination of an imperfect understanding of how gender and sexuality work (as, indeed, our current understanding of these things is also imperfect) and by projecting onto his subject much from the depths of his own experiences with sexuality, perhaps imagining what it would be like if he himself could never physically actualise his innermost sexual desires. It is a testament to his boundless imagination and particular sensibilities. But the end result is no less a biological female who loves women and who identifies as male. Iphis is not a lesbian; he is a heterosexual male in an anatomically female body who, by the grace of the gods, is changed to his true sex. The story of Iphis has been, and continues to be, a beacon for those with gender dysphoria since antiquity. And, prior to the modern age, his example must have offered some hope, if slim, to those in the same condition. So too does Ovid, however limited his comprehension of gender identity may have been, deserve no small credit for his extraordinary, if perhaps accidental, illustration of, and empathy for, those who suffer at least one type of gender dysphoria. In the poet's own words, as if there was ever any doubt, Ovid has produced a work that is truly "worthy to be read".⁶⁰

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60. *Epistulae Ex Ponto* IV.16.45-46, ...dicere si fas est, claro mea nomine Musa atque inter tantos quae legeretur erat.

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Appendix A

As her pains increased, and the burden that she carried forced itself of its own accord into life, a female child was born, without its father's knowledge. The mother pretended it was a boy, and ordered it to be reared. Her order was not doubted and no one but the nurse knew of her deception. The child's father made good on his vows and named the baby Iphis, after its grandfather. The mother was pleased with the name as it was used for both boys and girls, and in this regard, at least, she was not deceiving anyone. From this time forward, the pretence that she had practiced was kept secret by various ruses, well-justified in the sight of heaven: the child was dressed as a boy and its features, whether those of a male or female, would have been accounted handsome in either.

Ut dolor increvit, seque ipsum pondus in auras expulit et nata est ignaro femina patre, iussit ali mater puerum mentita: fidemque res habuit, neque erat ficti nisi conscia nutrix. Vota pater solvit nomenque inponit avitum: Iphis avus fuerat. Gavisa est nomine mater, quod commune foret nec quemquam falleret illo. Inde incepta pia mendacia fraude latebant: cultus erat pueri, facies, quam sive puellae, sive dares puero, fuerat formosus uterque (704-713).

Appendix B

What is to be the end of this for me, caught as I am in the snare of a strange and unnatural kind of love which none has known before...cows do not burn with love for cows, nor mares for mares. It is the ram which excites the ewe, the hind follows the stag, birds too mate in the same way, and never amongst all the animals does one female fall in love with another. How I wish I had never been born! That no monstrosity might be lacking in Crete, the daughter of the sun fell in love with a bull—but at least she was a woman, and he a male! If the truth be told, my love is more madness than hers, for she at least pursued a desire that offered some hope of fulfilment...but, though all the world's talent were concentrated here, though Daedalus himself were to fly back on waxen wings, what could he do? Could all of his magical arts change me from girl to boy? Could he change you, Ianthe? No! Compose yourself, Iphis; be firm and shake off this foolish, useless emotion. Consider what you were born, unless you are deceiving yourself along with everyone else; seek what is permitted to you and fasten your affections on what a woman should love. It is hope that conceives and nourishes desire: and your own case denies you any hope...the one you love does not refuse you her favours when you ask. Still, she cannot be yours, nor can you be happy, whatever happens, though gods and men should strive for you. Even now, none of my prayers go unanswered: the gods are kind and have given me

all they could. My father, my sweetheart too, and her father, all wish the same as I. But Nature is unwilling. She alone bars the way, but she is more powerful than all the rest. See, the time for which I prayed has come! My wedding day is at hand, and now Ianthe will be mine; yet she will not be. I shall thirst in the midst of the waters. Why do you, oh Juno, matron of honour, and you, oh Hymen, come to this ceremony at which there is no bridegroom, where two brides are being wed?' After that Iphis fell silent.

Vixque tenens lacrimas "quis me manet exitus" inquit, "cognita quam nulli, quam prodigiosa novaeque cura tenet Veneris? Si di mihi parcere vellent, parcere debuerant; si non, et perdere vellent, naturale malum saltem et de more dedissent. Nec vaccam vaccae, nec equas amor urit equarum: urit oves aries, sequitur sua femina cervum. Sic et aves coeunt, interque animalia cuncta femina femineo conrepta cupidine nulla est. Vellem nulla forem! Ne non tamen omnia Crete monstra ferat, taurum dilexit filia Solis, femina nempe marem: meus est furiosior illo, si verum profitemur, amor! Tamen illa secuta est spem Veneris, tamen illa dolis et imagine vaccae passa bovem est, et erat, qui deciperetur adulter! Huc licet e toto sollertia confluat orbe, ipse licet revolet ceratis Daedalus alis, quid faciet? Num me puerum de virgine doctis artibus efficiet? num te mutabit, Ianthe? Quin animum firmas, teque ipsa reconligis, Iphi, consilii que inopes et stultos excutis ignes? Quid sis nata, vide, nisi te quoque decipis ipsa, et pete quod fas est, et ama quod femina debes! Spes est, quae capiat, spes est, quae pascit amorem: hanc tibi res adimit. Non te custodia caro arcet ab amplexu nec cauti cura mariti, non patris asperitas, non se negat ipsa roganti: nec tamen est potiunda tibi, nec, ut omnia fiant, esse potes felix, ut dique hominesque laborent. Nunc quoque votorum nulla est pars vana meorum, dique mihi faciles, quidquid valuerunt, dederunt; quodque ego, vult genitor, vult ipsa socerque futurus. At non vult natura, potentior omnibus istis, quae mihi sola nocet. Venit ecce optabile tempus, luxque iugalis adest, et iam mea fiet Ianthe—nec mihi continget: mediis sitiemus in undis. Pronuba quid Iuno, quid ad haec, Hymenaeae, venitis sacra, quibus qui ducat abest, ubi nubimus ambae?" Pressit ab his vocem. (726-765)

Promotion of Atheism as a Principle of the Communist Ideology - Case Study: Romania

By Alin Goron*

The Communist ideology called for the denial of Christianity as a form of "mysticism" filled with "superstitions", but particularly as one of the factors that impeded social, economic and cultural progress. Scientific socialism, however, was meant to awaken class consciousness, setting Romanian society on a path towards true modernity. Thus a real battle ensued on the ideological front between two entities, the secular and ecclesiastical authorities, arising from the divide between traditional religious beliefs and atheist Marxism. The actions of the authorities against religious propaganda included both practical measures, which involved activities that filled the free time of the villagers, but also coercive measures consisting in political pressure or arrests. In spite of the communist regime's efforts to impose its own cultural agenda, the effects were long overdue, with rather modest results. Romania's forced development was faced with some inherent problems of the process of modernization and industrialization. The forced imposition of a foreign ideology to a conservative Eastern European area relying on obsolete mindsets, a society where 80% of the population lived in rural areas as of the end of the Second World War, required a longer period of time than the regime had originally planned.

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people."¹ Only the second part of this famous statement of Karl Marx is usually quoted. However, the antagonism between Christianity and Marxism did not remain the same during the evolution of the two concepts, which thus distinguishes several stages.

In 1843, a group made up of German progressive intellectuals arrived in Paris. Some of the most significant members included Arnold Ruge, Moses Hess and Karl Marx. In his diary, Ruge recalled in astonishment how their French counterparts agreed with most of the ideas expressed, with just one exception: the atheism embraced by the German group. Lamennais, Blanc or Cabet were Christians who saw communism as the forefather of Christianity, or its pragmatic incarnation to be precise, and Jesus as the first communist. However, this concept did not last long, as the Christian Churches became ever more conservative, peaking in the *Syllabus Errorum* of Pope Pius IX, which condemned liberalism.

The drive to resume the dialogue between the two dogmas came from Christians, particularly the Protestant theologians from Germany.² Later after World War II, their relationship with the communist regime in East Germany became strained, culminating in the events of 1989, sometimes referred to as the

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1. Robert R. King, "Religion and Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe," *BYU Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 3 (1975): 323-347.

2. David McLellan, *Marxism and Religion* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Press, 1987), 1-2.

"Protestant Revolution", thus emphasizing the important political role of this Church.³

Returning to Marxist dogma, whose basic principle consists in the relationship between structure and superstructure, Christianity falls within the superstructure, and is thus outside reality. According to this paradigm, we can relate to the fierce critique of religion in Marxist writings.⁴

To expand somewhat the topic of the relationship between Christianity and Marxism, I would like to recall the vision of F. Engels on this relationship, which was later embodied in the Latin American version.

"Christianity, like every great revolutionary movement, was made by the masses", wrote Friedrich Engels. Thus, primary Christianity represented a spiritual-religious expression of the oppressed that fought for emancipation. Therefore, similarly to Socialism in the modern era, Christianity exercised control over the masses, since it offered them the awareness of being part to a social category deprived of rights, which was opposing a ruling class that only sought to perpetuate the current status quo.⁵

The overlapping of the religious theme with revolutionary socialism is an old topic, but one that still remains current today. The similarities between the two are obvious to a certain extent, where the two theories of creationism and evolutionism are set one against the other. In this matter, I note the study of Michael Lowe and Mariana Ortega Berna dedicated to the history of the communist movement in Latin America.⁶

But religion also played an important role in building the nation-states of Central and Eastern Europe in the interwar period, on the ruins of ancient empires. In the multinational universe of Greater Romania, the idea of nation and the building of the social, ethnic and cultural Romanian identity in the new geographical space revolved around the religious imaginary of the "sacred nation."⁷

The 1939 New York World's Fair also included a Romanian pavilion with an inscription in large letters on a marble column: "Romania has over 20 million people united unto language, tradition and culture." In 1940, shortly after this

3. Peter Molloy, *The Lost World of Communism, An Oral History of Daily Life behind the Iron Curtain* (BBC Books, 2017), 134.

4. David McLellan, *Marxism and Religion*, 1987, 1-2.

5. K. Mathew Kurian, "Marxism and Christianity," *Social Scientist* 2, no. 8 (1974): 321.

6. Michael Löwy and Mariana Ortega Brena, "Communism and religion: José Carlos Mariátegui's Revolutionary Mysticism, Latin American Perspectives," *Reassessing the History of Latin American Communism* 35, no. (2008): 71-79.

7. Zsuzsánna Magdó, "Mass Enlightenment, Atheism and the Romanian Socialist Nation: The Society for Dissemination of Culture and Science, 1949-1963," in *Politici Culturale și Modele Intellectuale în România*, ed. Lucian Năstasă and Dragoș Sdrobiș (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2013), 121.

event, Romania lost large parts of its national territory to the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Hungary⁸.

The national and cultural universe that brought Romanians together under the umbrella of the largest territory they had ever known, with the major contribution of religion, was now collapsing. This *status-quo* has never been restored after the end of the Second World War.

In this study, I am not seeking to consider the institutional relationship between the Church and the State, since the subject has been long debated so far⁹. What I will follow is the transformation of the Romanian society after the Second World War under the leadership of the new communist regime. I am particularly interested in how the atheist ideology of communism came into being and what was the response of an agrarian and conservative society marked by a strong religious sentiment, where the left movement never truly had the support of the masses. I will be then going down to the microsocial level to reveal attitudes, contradicting reactions, but also changes in power structures.

I am also capturing descriptions Christian expressions in the Romanian space, with a differentiated emphasis on Catholics, evangelicals and Protestants¹⁰ in terms of exposure and analysis, also reflecting on measures taken by the authorities under the umbrella of the new ideological reality.

The documentary research was based on resources such as as Central National Historic Archives, the collections of Sedition and Propaganda, *Ministry of Propaganda*, *The Society for the Promotion of Science and Culture*, and the resources of the Alba National Archive Service, *the Romanian Workers' Party fund*. I also included several articles from the most important journal of the Communist regime, the *Scântea newspaper*.

The subject was approached by many researchers during the post-war years. Thus, Richard T. D. George and James P. Scanlan¹¹ discussed various forms of Marxist philosophy in Eastern European states, but also the relationship between Communist regimes and the Church. Later, Trond Gilberg spoke about the

8. Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Cornell University Press, 1995), 9.

1. 9. See Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în Primul Deceniu Comunist* (The Romanian Orthodox Church during the First Communist Decade) (București: Editura Curtea Veche, 2013); Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin. Biserica Greco-Catolică în Timpul Regimului Comunist* (Between Vatican and the Kremlin. The Greek Catholic Church during the Communist Regime) (București: Editura Curtea Veche, 2013); Lucian N. Leuștean, *Orthodoxy and the Cold War Religion and Political Power in Romania, 1947–1965* (Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

10. In Romania, the term of *neoprotestants* is used to designate the following cults: baptists, pentecostals, adventists or Jehova witnesses. I will use the terms *protestants*.

11. Richard T. D. George and James P. Scanlan, *Marxism and Religion in Eastern Europe* (Dordrecht-Holland and Boston: D. Riedel Publishing Company, 1974).

relationship between nationalism, then between Nationalism and Communism in a volume edited by Pedro Ramet.¹²

Robert R. King also noted that one reason for the divide between Christianity and the Communist regime in Eastern Europe was the struggle for influence over peoples' faiths. Therefore, the contradiction between the two views led to the emergence of ambivalence between the political and ideological motivations of the campaigns against the Christian religion.¹³

The rift between Communist regimes with religion was consistent with the Soviet version of Socialism, particularly in the 1930s, when Magnitogorsk became the model of a new city inspired by a the new ideological meaning, founded not on ignorance or superstition, but on education and science. The city was to become a symbol of hope and progress.¹⁴

Magnitogorsk became the first city to ban the building of churches in a formerly Christian country. The newspapers rarely mentioned religious holidays and practices such as the Ramadan or the Orthodox Christmas or Easter.¹⁵

More recent studies, such as that of Zsuzsánna Magdó,¹⁶ focusing on the role of the "Society for the Promotion of Science and Culture" in the education of the masses, whose mission was to promote science at the expense of religious education, emphasizes the failures of the Communist system in its early stages, i.e. before the national-communism, whose causes were found in the assignment of tasks to a large number of organizations of the Romanian Workers' Party.¹⁷

In this research, I used both theoretical methods, i.e. the discourse and comparative analysis of official documents of the Romanian Workers' Party or the main newspaper of the regime, but also empirical methods, i.e. observing the social transformations of post-Communist Romania.

Beginning with 1948, the monarchy was abolished in Romania, and power was taken over *de facto* by the Communist authorities. The Romanian realities revealed a deeply agrarian society, where nearly 80% of the population lived in rural areas.

12. Trond Gilberg, "Religion and Nationalism in Romania," in *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. Pedro Ramet (Durham, N.C.: Duke Press Policy Studies, 1984), 170-187.

13. King, *Religion and Communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, 1975, 325.

14. Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1995), 108.

15. Ibidem, 188.

16. Zsuzsánna Magdó, "Mass Enlightenment, Atheism and the Romanian Socialist Nation: The Society for Dissemination of Culture and Science, 1949-1963," 2013, 120-157.

17. I will use the PMR abbreviation or the term of "party", since it became the only political party in the Romanian People's Republic after 1948. Until 1948 it was referred to as the "Romanian Communist Party", and was outlawed from 1924 and during the inter-war period. It became legal after the coup of 23 August 1944.

The Cult Law, adopted on August 4, 1948 and enacted by Decree no. 177, provided for wide religious freedom, which also included Protestant cults, whose activity had been banned during the Antonescu regime.¹⁸ Thus, the first article stated that "The state guarantees the freedom of conscience and religious freedom throughout the Romanian People's Republic. Anyone may belong to any religion or embrace any religious faith, provided that its exercise is not contrary to the Constitution, security and public order or morality."¹⁹

In order to function, however, the cults needed the approval of the Praesidium of the Grand National Assembly,²⁰ following a proposal by the Government and a recommendation from the Ministry of Cults. The appointment of the leaders of the cults followed the same procedure, which ended with taking an oath before the ministry that had offered the recommendation.

By comparison, the Soviet Constitution of 1936 offered "freedom for religious manifestations, but also freedom to engage in anti-religious propaganda, for all citizens."²¹ Such a paragraph was missing in both the 1948 Constitution and the Cult Law of the same year, while several provisions left room for interpretation, as, for example, Article 6, which read that "Religious cults are free to organize and may function freely if their practices and ritual are not contrary to the Constitution, security or public order and morals."²²

Communist ideology identified both religious dogmas and the Church as the main culprits for the economic, social and cultural underdevelopment of most of the masses. Scientific socialism, on the other hand, was meant to awaken class consciousness, setting Romanian society on a path towards true modernity. The great dilemma boiled down to the methods by which the regime was to impose its own vision in one of the most religious states in Central and Eastern Europe.²³ For the Romanian Workers' Party, which took power with the support of the Soviets, this was a huge challenge. This was followed by the training of party cadres, who were tasked with educating the masses, chiefly among which was thwarting religion. Despite the freedoms granted by the Cult Law, state control became almost total, compounded at the same time by a permanent competition

18. The General Ion Antonescu ruled Romania from 1940 to 1944, his regime being considered a military dictatorship. See Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940–1944* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).

19. <http://www.anrp.gov.ro/>. [Accessed 6 May 2020.]

20. The Great National Assembly represented the unicameral legislative power of the Romanian People's Republic and later of the Socialist Republic of Romania, during 1947-1989.

21. <https://www.departments.bucknell.edu/>. [Accessed 19 May 2020.]

22. <http://www.anrp.gov.ro/>. [Accessed 19 May 2020.]

23. Institutul Cultural Roman, *Religion and Identity in Interwar Romania: Orthodoxy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.icr.ro/pagini/religion-and-identity-in-interwar-romania-orthodoxy>. [Accessed 19 May 2020.]

between different local or state power structures. While the Orthodox Church was tacitly tolerated by the regime, with the exception of some clerics, the Greek-Catholic Church²⁴ was to return to the Orthodox Church, with the opponents subjected to pressures and arrested, while the Roman Catholic Church was to abide by the Vatican. Protestant cults received special attention from the regime and were under constant pressure, particularly the Jehovah's Witnesses or the Adventists who rejected military service.

Catholics and Protestants

On the path to asserting their own ideological agenda, the Communist authorities launched a broad campaign to monitor religious cults and their activities. It targeted mostly Catholics and Protestants, although the Orthodox did not escape the regime's supervision either. These actions emphasized the fierce competition between the two opposing entities, the Communist regime and the Church authorities, for the minds of the people. The central authorities repeatedly mentioned that religious processions and any other cult activities hindered the proper conduct of agricultural work, and became a barrier to economic recovery efforts.

The official reports dedicated a separate section to these issues, but the events were described with errors and confusion, sometimes deliberately. PMR documents highlighted the regions of Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina as having the largest Catholic and Protestant religious communities.²⁵ The deliberate ambiguity of official accounts was due either to the poor training of the party cadres, or to the purposeful inclusion of arguments meant to suggest false conclusions and assumptions, in order to subvert certain religious cults.

24. *The Romanian Church United with Rome* came about following an unification of a large share of clerics and believers from the Transylvanian Orthodox Metropolis with the Church of Rome. Some of the believers refused to join, but most of them stayed faithful to the united bishops. Based on the 1930 census data, 31.1% of the Transylvanian population was Greek-Catholic, while 27.8% was Orthodox. In Crișana-Maramureș, 36.8% of the population was Orthodox and 25.2% Greek-Catholic, while in Banat, 56.1% of the population was Orthodox and 3.6% Greek-Catholic.

25. Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina are three historic provinces that were formerly part of the Austrian Empire, then of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It included significant ethnic minorities such as Hungarians and Germans, as well as Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Lutherans, Reformed and Neo-Protestants, with the latter arriving in the early twentieth century. During the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, scores of Transylvanian Romanians left to the United States.

Given the lack of activities in cultural homes,²⁶ the priests offered an alternative in the religious education for the masses (Sălaj County), which consisted of church songs, with the authorities thus blaming the cultural homes who were said to be led by "inappropriate elements" who made the homes available to the clergy for religious activities."²⁷

A real ideological and political struggle was thus beginning, where the Communist regime initially struggled with lack of funds and party cadres required for organizing mass cultural activities in rural areas, which offered wide room for manoeuvre to Church authorities in their effort to maintain their legitimacy. Another example is that of the Făgăraş county, where in the absence of cultural initiatives of cultural homes, the priests would organize Church choirs.²⁸

The "reaction"²⁹ was accused of distributing religious materials with the help of US-funded missionaries, which was deemed as propaganda action.³⁰ Article 42 of the Cult Law stated that "Aid or offerings received from abroad by domestic religious cults or sent by them abroad shall be controlled by the State."³¹ This article was intended to prevent the provision of support by the Vatican and the US. The "religious sects"³² were blamed for spreading apocalyptic rumours, which unsettled the peasants and at the same time thwarted agricultural activities.³³ The billboard from a commune³⁴ (Botoşani county) displayed an announcement which predicted the coming of God on Earth.³⁵

With the tacit consent of some Orthodox priests in the commune of Răchitosu (Putna County), young people were told about the superiority of the

26. The cultural homes had been established during the interwar period, by an initiative of the "King Carol" Royal Foundation, and were taken over by the Romanian People's Republic after 1947. They operated mostly in rural areas and were the main institutions tasked with cultural activities such as conferences, balls, theatre plays, movies or contests.

27. ANIC, collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 15/1948, f. 220.

28. Ibidem, file 18/1948, f. 18-19.

29. A term used by the communist regime to designate both the regime opponents and the social groups that did not fit the new ideological tenets.

30. Collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 4/1948, f. 13.

31. <http://www.anrp.gov.ro/>. [Accessed 19 May 2020.]

32. The name was used by Communist authorities for protestant cults, particularly the *Jehova's witnesses* and the *pentecostals* or *adventists*.

33. Collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 2/1949, f. 174-175.

34. Commune (from the French *commune*; plural "communes") is a basic economic-administrative unit made up of one or several villages.

35. Ibidem.

Catholic religion and were urged to join the "Army of the Lord"³⁶. In the Nămolosă commune (Galați county), a "chiabur"³⁷ became the pastor of a "sect" with the support of the priest, and in several communes such as Ruginești, Păulești or Movilița, the activities of the "cults" increased significantly.³⁸ These are just some of the situations where the PMR members who dealt with the propaganda action mixed the information in order to discredit the religious cults as a whole. The Catholic religion had nothing to do with the "Army of the Lord" organization, which belonged to the Orthodox Church, but it is even less likely the Orthodox clergy would support Protestant cults.

Many young people went from the Orthodox to the Adventist cult (Tecuci county), in an attempt to evade military service.³⁹ The 1948 Cult Law stated in Article 37 that, "If at least 10% of the believers in a local cult pass to another cult, the local religious community of the abandoned cult shall forfeit its assets proportionally with the number of leaving believers, with such assets being transferred by law to the local cult embraced by the new believers."⁴⁰ The law aimed to ensure the transition of large numbers of believers to Orthodoxy, with the assets of the cult being transferred to the Orthodox Church. The existence of many religious denominations also divided the believers and implicitly hindered the regime in imposing its control and authority.

The priests (in Suceava and Bacău counties) were accused of holding too many services in a week (four or more), thus preventing the peasants from engaging in agricultural work, and Catholic priests (Faraoani and Doja communes, Bacău county) forbade believers from engaging in political activities. A member of the UFDR⁴¹ withdrew from the organization, and the number of PMR member dropped due to the arrest of two priests⁴². Since the communist regime was in a process of earning its legitimacy, the PMR needed as many members as possible, and such situations were unacceptable. The consequences were usually felt by the clergy.

At the "Ștefan cel Mare" High School (Suceava), Protestant students were accused of reading the Bible at night, hidden under pillows, and Jewish female students refused to come to school or write on Saturdays.⁴³ In such a case, control over young people became essential for the further evolution of the regime, and secularization of education becomes a priority.

36. The "Army of the Lord" was a reformist movement within the Romanian Orthodox Church which emerged in 1923, at the initiative of the Transylvanian priest Iosif Trifa.

37. A term describing well-off peasants, similar to the "kulak" in the Soviet vocabulary.

38. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition* section, file 2/1949, f. 174-175.

39. Ibidem.

40. <http://www.anrp.gov.ro/>. [Accessed 6 May 2020.]

41. Romanian Union of Democratic Women.

42. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition* Section, file 2/1949, f. 174-175.

43. Ibidem, f. 189.

Most of the problems continued to occur in Transylvania, which held significant Protestant and Catholic communities. On May 1st, the priest in the Dobra commune, Deva county, did not comply with the religious service period initially agreed with the authorities, attempting to prevent the villagers from taking part to events organized by the authorities. The villagers (Năsăud county) were invited to various lectures held by protestant cults on Saturdays, thus hindering farming works. The priest Ioan Isaac (Săliște commune, Sibiu county) urged the villagers to take part in religious celebrations spanning six days, while in the Făgăraș county, the priests would organize prayers for rain.⁴⁴ A pretext often used to minimize religious cult activities was that of not hindering farming works. Absent leisure alternatives for the villagers in the wake of taking power, the authorities were limited to enforcing coercive measures with the help of party propaganda officials.

The protestant cults found ways to remain active by organizing religious debates in forests (Târnava Mică County), with young people agreeing to take part in the cultural activities of the authorities on condition they were allowed to sing religious songs. A religious leader was also named, a certain Cozma, who travelled from Brașov county to support the "sects."⁴⁵

The religious nerve centre of Jehovah's Witnesses (Mureș County) was deemed a threat by the authorities because, despite their meetings had been banned, they still met in small groups of 7-8 people.⁴⁶ Loopholes in the same Cult Law were opened to abuse, and Jehovah's Witnesses were targeted by the authorities because of their refusal to perform military service.

A significant number of believers of this cult were found in the Niraj Valley (Mureș county), because their leader, Marton Magyaros,⁴⁷ was based in Târgu Mureș.⁴⁸ Party members would hinder the activities of certain religious organizations in places such as Chiherul de Sus, Sovata or Reghin (Mureș county). However, despite regime pressures, Protestant cults found ways to carry on with their activities.⁴⁹

The regime's attention was also aimed at the Greek-Catholic priest, mainly those who refused to change to Orthodoxy and held clandestine masses. They prepared the young people from neighbouring areas (Brașov county), for the religious pilgrimage from Ciuc,⁵⁰ while in Ditrău commune (Mureș county), the

44. Collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition section*, file 18/1949, f. 6-7.

45. Ibidem.

46. Ibidem.

47. Regional administrative seat.

48. Collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 54.

49. Collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 54.

50. The pilgrimage from Șumuleu Ciuc is first and foremost a religious event, held for several days during the Catholic Pentecost, and is also a ritual merging Roman Catholic liturgy with popular religious beliefs. The theologic foundation of the Șumuleu Ciuc pilgrimage is the veneration of Virgin Mary. The Șumuleu Ciuc

Catholic priest announced the participation of party organizations at the Easter service⁵¹. The attempt to legitimize the regime in the eyes of the faithful by participating in religious life has a double meaning. On one hand, the priest attempted to gain support from believers and the goodwill of the authorities.

On May 1, the Catholic Church would organize services for the sanctification of wheat, and a priest from Remetea (Mureş County) rang the bells to call parishioners to the service; when they failed to arrive, he approached the people who participated in party activities and convinced 50 villagers to join him in service⁵². Such actions were seen by the regime as provocations aimed at diverting people from Labour Day events.

The rural collective mind, still prone to mystical beliefs, remained attached to traditional values and strongly rejected the new atheistic ideology. This mystical character combines both pre-Christian and post-Christian elements⁵³.

Official documents relay various miracles claimed by the believers. The claim that a woman was turned into a donkey (Trei Scaune county) caused panic among the peasants, who started to refuse working the field on holidays⁵⁴.

A worker established a new "sectă" (Prahova county), named the "Tudorists", while in Bobocu (Buzău county), a woman was venerated as saint and people came in hundreds to see her. She was subsequently declared mentally insane and committed to a mental hospital. The locals protested because the continued drought was attributed to that woman's disappearance. The authorities would react by public⁵⁵ "denunciations"⁵⁶.

In Odorhei county, during the Catholic Easter, the clergy organized a pilgrimage to the Satu Mare commune that was attended by more than 1,500 people. A woman, also said to be insane, foretold the future there⁵⁷.

In Morisloveşti commune (Baia county), during the popular assessors elections, several people, including PMR members, demanded to bring a saint

pilgrims express their gratitude to Virgin Mary by means of donations and plaques, and at the same time pray to her for protection against the vagaries of life (*Maria advocata*, *Maria mediatrix*), [https:// patrimoniul.ro/images/imaterial/Pelerinajul-de-la-Sumuleu-Ciuc.pdf](https://patrimoniul.ro/images/imaterial/Pelerinajul-de-la-Sumuleu-Ciuc.pdf). [Accessed 9 May 2020.]

51. Collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 6-7.

52. Ibidem.

53. See Kenneth Jowitt, *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940, A Debate in Development of a European Nation*, Institute of International Studies (Berkeley: University of California, 1978).

54. Collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 6-7.

55. The term of "denunciation" had been taken over from the Legionary Movement's terminology, a Romanian interwar right-wing party, and later used by Communist authorities to expose regime enemies.

56. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 72.

57. Ibidem, f. 123-125.

woman to the village, thus disturbing the peace.⁵⁸ A former member of the party with mental problems was venerated as a saint, and religious processions were organized with the support of the clergy to worship him. He was also accused of anti-communist propaganda.⁵⁹

A token of the cultural gap between urban and rural areas is the statement of an employee of the Triaj factory in Brasov, who said that she "believes in God, but does not believe that saints appear on the windows of the most deprived women in the neighbourhood."⁶⁰

Building miracles or the veneration of people as saints was part of the daily life of the postwar era, especially in rural areas, being based on the religious mysticism otherwise characteristic of the Romanian space. The regime would cleverly use such cultural and social realities to build an ideological discourse.

In the Răducăneni commune (Fălciu county), during Easter celebrations, the Catholics organized religious processions by moving icons and the church choir through the village to mobilize the villagers, while the Protestants were accused of using drought to spread false rumours.⁶¹ It was rumoured that 54 countries were at war, with the endorsing of military records for officers and soldiers being blamed on a general mobilization Botoșani county.⁶² The rumours forecasting an imminent catastrophic military conflict became prevalent during the postwar period. Some representatives of religious cults spread such information in order to attract believers, although it is difficult to tell whether such moves were deliberate or based on own convictions.

The party members tasked with propaganda had to follow closely the religious manifestations on Christian holidays, such as Easter, with the mission to "thwart any enemy provocations from class enemies."⁶³ For that purpose, secular and religious activities were organized in order to attract the "working people". "The trade unions and the UTM will organize trip for the working people on Easter days. Such trips will be supervised by activists to prevent any unhealthy manifestations."⁶⁴

"As regards winter holidays, large parts of the masses are ingrained with certain customs and rites. Party organizations, with the support of mass organizations and cultural institutions, will give these events a progressive content reflecting the spirit of class struggle, dissemination of the conquests of the working people on the path to strengthening popular democracy and building socialism in our country."⁶⁵ As Sonja Luehrmann also noted, several post-war

58. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 107-108.

59. Ibidem.

60. Ibidem, f. 123.

61. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 33.

62. Ibidem, f. 34.

63. Ibidem, file 2/1950, f. 74.

64. Ibidem, f. 75.

65. Ibidem, file 37/1948, f. 30.

communist parties had to accept a policy of compromise in their relations with religious communities. With the exception of Albania, which declared itself the world's first atheist state, all communist governments provided a legal framework for the conduct of certain religious activities, but kept them under close scrutiny.⁶⁶

During 22-29 May (Timiș and Buziaș counties), young people would celebrate the "youth week" by not going to work, and the baptist church of Timișoara had 300 young people and a publication called *Christian Baptist Guidelines*,⁶⁷ printed in Bucharest. The UFDR meetings (Arad county) were also attended by "shakers"⁶⁸ who obstructed the activities.

The Catholic Easter saw the organization of religious processions also attended by some party members, with more than 4,000 participants. A Greek-Catholic priest tried to attract Orthodox believers, and Protestants were accused of having thrown church bells in fountain wells or sacrificing animals to stop the drought.⁶⁹ As the party was unable to ensure the ideological purity of its own members, it has to lead both an internal and an external fight. Under such circumstances, the regime's only solution was to adapt to the existing realities. This will combine methods such as publicly shaming cults accused of immoral behaviour, like orgies or animal sacrifices, supplemented by growing surveillance practices.

The participation of villagers in party activities was carefully recorded by the authorities, which recalled that during a representation by cultural teams (Oradea county), no one left although the bells were ringing in the church.⁷⁰

In the north of the country (Iași county), "sects" organized night religious processions, while priests used icons during religious events, and in Bacău county the Catholic clergy enforced an order of Bishop Durcovici,⁷¹ threatening excommunication to those who requested the service be performed in Hungarian. Protestant cults (Botoșani County) organized an activity attended by over 500 people, addressed to Pastor Alexandru Panaitescu,⁷² who recommended the

66. Sonja Luehrmann, "Antagonistic Insights: Evolving Soviet Atheist Critiques of Religion and why they Matter for Anthropology," in *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology* 59, no. 2 (2015): 97-113.

67. See <https://istorieevangelica.ro/indrumatorul-crestin-baptist/>. [Accessed 9 May 2020.]

68. Another term used by Communist authorities for protestant cults.

69, Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 88.

70. Ibidem, f. 97-98.

71. <http://www.durcovici.ro/>. [Accessed 9 May 2020.]

72. Decree no. 883 of 9 November 1946 offered cult status to Evangelical Christians in Romania, similar to other faiths. The same legislation also approved the Cult's internal statutes. It established the Union of Romanian Christian Evangelical Assemblies, based in 18 street, Ploiești, at the second floor of Alexandru Panaitescu's

faithful to refrain from political activities. In the end, religious materials were distributed that had been brought from Ploiești, the latter being recognized as a place of origin for such materials.

At a meeting organized by the Hungarian People's Union (UPM),⁷³ the priest raised the issue of equality between people, with quotes from the Bible, and at the end requested a place of worship for the religious services.⁷⁴ Members of Protestant communities (Mureș County) predicted, according to biblical writings, great periods of social unrest followed by the recovery of lost fortunes. Against this background, the number of Protestants rose to 1,000 members in the neighbouring county of Târnava Mare.⁷⁵

In Miraslău (Alba County), the priest was accused of boycotting a UFDR meeting, while in Sălișteștea commune (Făgăraș county), the leader of the religious community told the parishioners that Lenin and Stalin were faithful Christians and that priests were not exactly "chiaburs" as the Communist authorities claimed due to the clergy rejecting the agrarian reform.⁷⁶ This attempt to legitimize the regime, coming from representatives of the Church authorities, can be attributed to the awareness of the new social and political realities, and obviously to an attempt to find appropriate methods for coping with the new ideology. The same can be said of the decision of some young Protestants to take part in activities of cultural homes.⁷⁷ The students of the Faculty of Theology from Suceava would travel to rural areas to hold conferences on religious subjects, or plays and poems. Such activities took place on Sundays, while the middle of the week was left out to scientific meetings.⁷⁸

In the Jiu Valley mining region, the PMR organization was reprimanded for failing to take action against a Protestant party member who was organizing religious activities.⁷⁹ The encouragement of whistleblowing became one of the regime's go-to methods, with the repercussions being directed at both the accused and the abettors.

The reactions from the Catholic communities, particularly in predominantly Hungarian-speaking areas, also took violent forms. Such an incident was

house, where it functioned until 1958, at which time it was moved to Bucharest, *apud* <https://roev.wordpress.com/2015/07/01/crestinii-dupa-evanghelie-115-ani-in-romania-repere-cronologice-bogdan-emanuel-radut/>. [Accessed 9 May 2020.]

73. See Stefano Bottoni, *Transilvania Roșie. Comunismul Român și Problema Națională 1944–1965* (Red Transylvania. Romanian Communism and the National Problem 1944–1965) (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului Pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale, 2010), 69–74.

74. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 123.

75. Ibidem, f. 123–125.

76. Ibidem.

77. Ibidem, f. 141.

78. Collection Ministry of National Propaganda, file 2937/1946–1947, f. 3.

79. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition section*, file 18/1949, f. 123–125.

recorded in the Ghelnița commune (Trei Scaune county), where 70 villagers armed with clubs and hoes waited to meet the party car, and at the same time manufactured spare keys for the bell tower in case the bell ringer was arrested. However, the violence had already started to spread after some local priests were arrested, but only in isolated cases.

The same commune was a venue for an Easter pilgrimage, attended by several party members and the wives of some important state officials. Incidents also occurred in Târgu Secuiesc (Trei Scaune county), where PMR members received threats from the clergy.⁸⁰ The ambivalence of some party members has already been proven in other cases, therefore such events did not come unexpected. There were also cases when opinion differed within a family, usually between the husband and wife. On the other hand, priests, when wholly supported by local communities, would go on the offensive to isolate party members.⁸¹

Anti-fascist actions, as part of Allied policies after the war, were used by the authorities to eliminate far-right manifestations. Anti-Semitism or xenophobia did not completely disappear from the social and cultural space, but merely from the public discourse. The legislation enacted after the 1948 Constitution severely punished such actions. The effort of discerning the truth in the midst of manipulation was however a difficult task. In a village from Trei-Scaune county, the Catholic priest was accused of spreading anti-Semitic ideas and Nazi books, while in Lunga commune (Trei Scaune county), 700-800 people attended the vespers⁸² as the Securitate⁸³ arrested a "chiabur" who illegally owned weapons. When trying to transport him to Covasna, the Securitate troops were stopped by 200 people who released the man. The Militia⁸⁴ later arrived in the area, at which time the villagers were organizing a riot to protect the commune priest. The entire blame for the event was attributed to the reformed priest, while the Romanians who took part were later exonerated.⁸⁵ Private ownership of weapons was entirely restricted and punishable under the law. Another riot subsequently took place in another predominantly Hungarian-speaking area. The taking into custody of some local priests was seen as an offence against the Hungarian people as a whole, hence the facts can be judged in that context. The creation of the Magyar Autonomous Region in 1952 will somewhat mitigate the social tensions.

80. Ibidem.

81. PMR members tasked with agitation and propaganda.

82. In Slavonic, the word "veceri" means evening. It is an evening prayer.

83. *The General Directorate of the People's Securitate* was established by Decree no. 221 of 30 August 1948. The usual name was Securitatea.

84. On 23 January 1949, the *General Directorate of the Militia* was established within the Ministry of the Interior (with the disbanding of the Police and Gendarmerie), with a specific structure and powers.

85. Collection C.C. of P.C.R., *Propaganda and Sedition section*, file 18/1949, f. 149.

The number of "sects" climbed from 60 to 300 (Braşov county) with the support of the Orthodox and Catholic churches, according to official data. Preachers from other regions went to the Jiu Valley, biblical quotations were written on the CFR cars,⁸⁶ while in Şura-Mică commune (Sibiu county), the priest urged the villagers to pray as war would come in the next two weeks.

Official reports (the Făgăraş, Târgu Mureş or Cluj counties) mentioned financial support and prayers against the drought. The anti-fascist committee was deemed accountable for having prevented believers from taking part in religious services.⁸⁷ Given the ideological war, financial support and religious services were essential in difficult times in order to defend positions, while the anti-fascist committee was merely a scarecrow that represented the regime's interests.

The note sent to the Sedition and Propaganda Section⁸⁸ included a statement that village intellectuals were attracted to religious cults. The church choirs were led by teachers from rural areas (Suceava region), and the personality of Prince Stephen the Great⁸⁹ was evoked by combining both nationalist and religious imagery.⁹⁰ At the same time, the lower peasantry began to join Protestant cults (Năşăud county).⁹¹

The administrative units that owned radios, such as Costesti district (Piteşti region), functioned throughout the week, but the radio station was switched off on Sunday mornings either to save electricity or due to power outages.⁹² The central authorities saw this as manifest sabotage against the week-end activities planned for the villagers.

An article in the *Scântea* newspaper reported on the "snake cult" that was being practised in the United States, where a venomous snake farm three hours away from Washington D.C. allowed cultists to let themselves bitten by the snakes or consume their blood. The survivors were thought to be saints, while those who died did so for lack of faith. It was an example of mystical practices set against the official scientific dogma.⁹³

The multitude of situations and data mentioned by party activists in official documents can mislead the reader, offering them with an image filled with too

86. Romanian Railways.

87. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 149.

88. The Sedition and Propaganda Section was a structure of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party tasked with drafting the cultural policies during the Communist regime in Romania.

89. Prince of Moldavia (one of the Romanians' medieval states, then a historic province) during the Middle Ages (1439-1504), he remained a historic symbol thanks to the fight against the Ottoman Empire and the building of many churches and convents in northern Moldavia.

90. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 10/1957, f. 87-88.

91. Ibidem, file 18/1949, f. 149.

92. Ibidem, f. 87-88.

93. *Scântea*, issue 1156 of 28 June 1948, p. 3-4.

many factual details. However, my intention is to substantiate the conclusions and convey the social imaginary of that time. It goes without saying that the regime was not supported by most people in rural areas, and was seen as foreign to the realities of that world. This was another reason why some party members discreetly took part in church life. By separating itself from the national component from an ideological standpoint, the regime will have gained its legitimacy only when it migrated to what was later known as national-communism. Undoubtedly, the central decision-makers were aware the only solution lied in a compromise, which promised a relative social harmony.

Political and Social Actions of Communist Authorities

Describing problems in official reports was not enough. The regime needed hard actions, but only had the required means after 1949.

The 6 July 1947 report of the Ministry of Intelligence (Arad County) set out the economic and political duties of religious denominations, that were to support the collection of produce,⁹⁴ peaceful coexistence with "cohabiting nationalities,"⁹⁵ or defending friendly relations with neighbouring states during religious services. The villagers were urged to comply with labour discipline and take part in the cultural and education events organized by the authorities.⁹⁶ All these measures were intended to rally the cults behind the new ideological direction. The collection of produce from villagers was the prelude to the scourge of collectivization that was to begin in 1949. Assigning this task to the church authorities would have attracted the fury of the peasants, hence it is hard to believe such instructions were actually followed by the clergy.

In official documents, the activists recalled the main religious organizations that were deemed as threats to the state. These included "The Army of the Lord", which belonged to the Orthodox Metropolis of Sibiu, The Blaj United Metropolis Blaj and the "Former Magyar reactionary centre with the Bethlen college in Aiud."⁹⁷ They became enemies of the regime, with guidelines for the following period being thus set by the regime. The measures to "fight mysticism" or "religious propaganda" included conferences on various scientific topics in towns

94. After the Communist regime set in, it enforced agricultural quotas ranging from 20% to 60% of the household produce. **They were lower for the poor and higher for mid-income and high-income peasants. They were also enforced to indirectly pressure the villagers into renouncing their lands and join collective farms. They were dismantled after 1957, according to** <http://www.rador.ro/>. [Accessed on 26 May 2020.]

95. Name used by the Communist regime to designate ethnic minorities.

96. Collection *Ministry of National Propaganda*, file 2951/1946-1948, f. 65.

97. Ibidem, f. 66.

or villages, events that usually complemented health or illiteracy eradication campaigns.

Conferences such as "Science and Superstitions" or "Why People Speak Different Languages" were held at the University of Cluj.⁹⁸

The authorities provided cultural alternatives intended to eradicate mysticism and illiteracy other regions as well (Bihor county).⁹⁹ A party report (Odorhei county) reminded that in the Catholic communes that organized the Ciuc pilgrimage, PMR led a joint action across several counties (Trei Scaune, Odorheiu and Ciuc) to prevent believers from travelling to this religious event.¹⁰⁰

There were also reactions from the communities, so that when the priest would ask for money to pay his taxes, as it happened in Henig commune (Alba county), he was "exposed and the peasants no longer let him in their homes."¹⁰¹

The concerns of the authorities in response to religious activities included the endowment of libraries or the organization of "popular science conferences."¹⁰² Beginning with 1949, more activities were being organized to promote science and reject "mysticism and superstition." They were supported by newspaper articles or brochures in the *CGM Cultural Book*¹⁰³ or the *Cultural Digest*.¹⁰⁴ Short plays or conferences were also organized on such topics, with the support of party organizations.

One of the most important institutions tasked with promoting scientific socialism in the fight against religion was the "Society for the Promotion of Science and Culture" (SRSC), which followed the Soviet model of the "Union Association for the Promotion of Political and Scientific Knowledge."

"The Association for the Promotion of Science and Culture" was established by a decision of the Council of Ministers, issue 264 of 24 January 1949, and was subordinated to the Ministry of Arts. Its destination was to "promote science among the popular masses, fight obscurantism, mysticism and superstitions."¹⁰⁵ The leadership consisted in a committee of 29 members, among which the literary

98. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 18/1949, f. 164.

99. Ibidem, file 15/1948, f. 220.

100. Ibidem, file 18/1949, f. 56.

101. Ibidem, f. 123-125.

102. Ibidem, f. 164.

103. The General Labour Confederacy Publishing House was established in 1945. It published many collections of brochures: Engineering, Trade Union library, Soviet People at Work, Cultural Books, Theatre, according to <https://aluiann.wordpress.com/>. [Accessed 26 May 2020.]

104. The *Cultural Vanguard* was first published in Bucharest in 1949 and had a German version (*Kultureller Wegweiser*, led by the journalist Heinrich Simonis) and a Hungarian version (*Művelődés*). It was intended as a guide for culture homes and was edited by the Nicolae Bălcescu culture home, according to <https://ro.wikipedia.org/>. [Accessed 26 May 2020.]

105. Collection *Association for the Promotion of Science and Culture*, file 1/1951, f. 2.

historian Paul Cornea, the writer Geo Bogza and regime ideologists Leonte Răutu and Mihail Roller.

A transcript of a public conference held in Moscow by the central lecturer of the "Union Association for the Promotion of Political and Scientific Knowledge", published in the Pravda newspaper in 1951, titled "On the liquidation of religious relics in the minds of the people" was to establish the main directions of similar organizations in Romania. Its ideas included the "overcoming religious prejudices and all beliefs is part of the communist education of the working people", and "Religion is a form of social consciousness; it represents a fantastic and distorted reflection of reality". Moreover, "all religions admit and suggest to believers that there are good and bad supernatural beings who change people's lives and occupations for the better or worse."¹⁰⁶

These were followed by public conferences on Marxism-Leninism, the printing of books and periodicals, radio shows, the displaying of slides and scientific films, and the organization of exhibitions.¹⁰⁷

Moreover, a commission travelled to Suceava County, where Protestant cults had many believers, with the support of SRSC, which was to establish branches in all county seats and sub-branches in large enterprises. But the results were unsatisfactory by far, particularly in view of the intense activities expected during the winter, a season when farmers are less involved in agricultural work. References were made to the unsatisfactory "fighting against superstitions" during winter, when the focus was mainly on political and cultural activities, while shortcomings were addressed during bimonthly conferences.¹⁰⁸ The poor results were due to both the superficial training of party cadres and the lack of well-organized cultural activities intended for the rural population.

In response to the annual Ciuc pilgrimage (Ciuc county), the authorities would organize several cultural and sports activities. These involved the local party branches (UTM, UFDR, UPM) and the Ministry of Arts. They included four local and national stages. There were also sports competitions under the "Youth Cup", with the final to be held in Bucharest.

The prizes were offered by the Ministry of Arts and included movie projectors, radio sets or books for the endowment of libraries. The Hungarian-speaking population was provided with entertainment by Hungarian State Theatres, with the support of local newspapers. "Popular science conferences to fight mysticism" were also organized.¹⁰⁹

These efforts to thwart the religious pilgrimage were successful, according to official reports. As regards the number of participants, there were 3,500 spectators and 300 participants in the Gheorgheni division (Ciuc county) alone. The

106. Ibidem, file 32/1953, f. 39-41.

107. Ibidem.

108. Collection C.C. of P.C.R., *Propaganda and Sedition section*, file 7/1950, f. 180-181.

109. Ibidem, f. 186.

motorcycle contest (Ciuc county) was attended by more than 12,000 participants, and the final (Ciuc county) there were more than 15,000 people, who stayed to watch despite unrelenting rain. The contests also represented an occasion for the two communities to come together. UFDR organized "home art" exhibitions. The PMR reports mentioned a decrease in the number of believers participating in the Ciuc pilgrimage, from 70,000 in 1947 to 50,000 in 1948 and 25,000 in 1949. In order to secure achievement of the objectives, a growing number of activists were assigned in the county from the central Magyar school of the party, combined with the removal of those who failed to efficiently perform their tasks.¹¹⁰

In the Mureș county, although the Ciuc pilgrimage was prepared two weeks in advance, the party's actions caused a decline of participants to 200 from 800 in previous years.¹¹¹

Heartened by the satisfactory results, the party organization leaders received further tasks. The main objective was to remove the influence of the Catholic religion on the peasantry by isolating Bishop Aron Marton,¹¹² who was an enemy of the regime.¹¹³ The Catholic bishop was "exposed" and thus an outlaw for the regime, but was still supported by Catholic believers, so that manifestos were spread the Cristur square (Ciuc county) asking believers to take a stand on his behalf, with demonstrations also organized for that purpose. The reports mentioned that "triumph arches were made" or "mostly youths took part, who were made to swear they will protect the faith."¹¹⁴ The Catholic youth, despite taking part in state-sponsored events, kept their loyalty for the religious leaders in an act of cultural-religious compromise. As far as the party activists conveyed the information, exaggeration was part of the norm.

Religious leaders were arrested in an overt attempt to intimidate believers. In Alba county, two Baptist preachers were "exposed" and taken in custody in the Benic and Mihalț communes, who arrived there from other area (Turda town), on allegations of supporting American interests. As a result, 13 families who sought to join the Baptist cult renounced to do so.¹¹⁵

The Cultural Vanguard magazine published 13 peace conferences, out of which two conferences were intended to fight "superstitions", and ten were scientific. In addition, the central press published articles defending the authorities' measures. These included "Vatican, an agency of American Imperialism" or "On superstitions, shakers and enchanted windows". The

110. Ibidem, f. 187.

111. Ibidem, file 18/1949, f. 149.

112. See József Marton, *Cartea Memorială Márton Áron la 100 de Ani de la Nașterea Sa* (Marton Aron Memorial Book at 100 Years from his Birth) (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Gloria, 1996).

113. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition section*, file 7/1950, f. 187.

114. Ibidem, file 18/1949, f. 149.

115. Ibidem, f. 123-125.

workers' clubs in cities and rural cultural homes were tasked with organizing such conferences.

County party committees trained activists and then worked in communes that had Protestant communities. All these were complemented by "exposing" actions, with the authorities gloating that "cultists left their sects."¹¹⁶

Hungarian publications also joined the fray. The party's report, "Certain Wrong Trends in the UPM Press Addressing Issues Concerning the Catholic Church and Clergy in Transylvania", mentioned the role of UPM publications in Transylvania that published written materials from the Catholic clergy or the "working people" on relations between the state and Catholic Church. The *Nepujság* newspaper of Târgu Mureş published 31 articles, while the *Világosság* of Cluj-Napoca published 22 articles in one calendar month. Praise was given to regime support in removing Vatican influence and in the fight for peace, but the mistakes made in public communication were also castigated.

The authorities feared a raising influence of Catholicism among the masses, since the newspaper articles showed appreciation and unwarranted interest for the Catholic clergy.¹¹⁷

Therefore, the newspaper *Szabadzso* of Timișoara, mentioned that "Catholic workers and priests are united for the defence of peace", while *Világosság* from Cluj-Napoca published a letter of a Cluj university professor regarding the contribution of the Catholic clergy, stating its admiration "for the standing of the Catholic Church, which has had a significant role in the life of our people". In Târgu Mureş, *Nepujság* quoted a collective letter of Catholic workers, who stated that "the Roman Catholic Church must find a way to join the fight for peace".

According to the same document, the Catholic clergy used Hungarian-language publications to obscure their past and build a new, positive image, as "some letters are meant to give certificates of good behaviour to priests".

The communist authorities resented that such letters were not "combative", avoided naming the "enemies of peace", and painted Catholic priests as "defenders of peace". They failed to "expose Imperialism and its accomplices in the Vatican."¹¹⁸

Rural cultural institutions were accused of failing to "contain the religious and mystical propaganda strongly promoted by the Church and various sects". The most vulnerable regions were Arad, Baia Mare, Suceva, Bucharest, Timișoara or the Magyar Autonomous Region.¹¹⁹ The causes were said to be the poor quality of the science conferences and the insufficient "perceptive and visual" propaganda tools used in exhibitions or movies. All these provided a clear

116. Ibidem, file 7/1950, f. 211-212.

117. Collection C.C. of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition section*, file 65/1950, f. 14-16.

118. Ibidem.

119. See Stefano Bottoni, *Stalin's Legacy in Romania. The Hungarian Autonomous Region, 1952-1960* (New York, London: Lanham, Boulder, 2018).

advantage to protestant cults, whose sound logistics, including the availability of establishments or the organization of brass music choirs, leveraged the "ignorance of an underdeveloped part of the peasantry."¹²⁰

This led to proposals for measures such as "stepping up scientific propaganda" via the conferences organized by the SRSC, support from the UTM Central Committee, and clear position-taking by the regime relative to religion within party schools. The regional political lecturers were tasked with travelling to villages to "promote science and atheism."¹²¹

A 1951 report (Alba district) mentioned failures of SRSC conferences due to lack of logistical means, and proposed measures such stepping-up class struggle against regime opponents, as the latter kept "the working population in a the state of cultural backwardness, mysticism and superstition."¹²²

Against this background, theatre plays were proposed by the *Scânteia* newspaper, which in the *CGM Cultural Book no. 5* emphasized the cultural and educational materials of the publication. One example was the play "Don't Believe in Charms", by Russu-Şirianu Vintilă, which showed how a worker tried to convince the peasants of the importance of medicine instead of "charms and superstitions", with the latter eventually acknowledging the obvious superiority of science. This would later become a model for other theatre plays.¹²³

The communist authorities employed a wide range of actions to deter what they called "religious propaganda", trying to provide alternative past-times such as science presentations or more practical events such as theatre plays, film screenings or various competitions. Concurrently, the regime also enforced coercive measures ranging from pressure on religious communities to public "exposures", followed by arrests of religious leaders. However, all these actions, as I will later show in the conclusions, amounted to barely a few gains for the regime at local level, and none at national level.

Conclusion

In spite of the communist regime's efforts to impose its own cultural agenda relative to mass cultural policies, the effects were somewhat overdue, and the results were rather modest. Romania's forced development was met with the inherent problems of modernization and industrialization. The forced imposition of a foreign ideology to a rather conservative Eastern European area relying on obsolete mindsets, in a society where 80% of the population lived in rural areas as

120. Collection C.C of P.C.R, *Propaganda and Sedition Section*, file 33/1958, f. 137.

121. Ibidem, file 10/1957, f. 87-88.

122. Collection *Regional Committee P.M.R Alba*, file 1/1951, f. 18.

123. *Scânteia*, issue 1156 of 28 June 1948, p. 3-4.

of the end of the Second World War, required a longer period of time than the regime had originally planned.

The rural population was definitely reluctant to embrace the new atheist ideology for several reasons. First, the Church still held considerable influence on the education, health conceptions and on people's lives in general. Priests still enjoyed a privileged status and, next to teachers, made up the intellectual rural elite. A partial uncoupling from rural traditions will only come about after mass migrations to industrial cities in need of labour. In no way would the new "town people" and industrial workers become "new people" as the regime heralded at the beginnings of the cultural revolution, but some deep social and cultural changes were definitely bound to happen.

The Communist regime, in spite of sustained anti-religious campaigns, achieved only modest results in the secularization of the society and culture. Interestingly, many PMR members, although formally embracing the new ideology, seemed to remain discreetly involved in religious life. The secularization of a society is contingent on a lengthy process of gradual modernization. The communist regime took major steps through commendable efforts, including a successful literacy campaign,¹²⁴ the establishment of many well-endowed libraries, especially in rural areas where they had been sorely missed, or disease eradication campaigns. But this phase of mass education needed time and particularly a more careful approach, which some communist leaders such as Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej understood from the beginning. This gave rise to a so-called "partnership" with the dominating Orthodox Church. The regime line adopted from the first days of power ensured, to a certain extent, its survival and subsequent earning of legitimacy.

The second phase of the Communist regime, which began with Nicolae Ceaușescu taking power, a nationalist leader who would build what was later called national communism, also saw the uprooting of religious symbols, with Santa Claus becoming Moș Gerilă, and the Christmas tree becoming the "winter tree."¹²⁵

This state of fact will be maintained, with various changes between periods, until the end of the Communist regime. The post-communist period marked a return to religious life, particularly in Orthodox countries, somewhat similar to what happened in Russia.¹²⁶ This was due to the insecure economic and social situation after the fall of Communism, a transition which left deep scars. Then, a

124. See Alin Goron, "Alfabetizarea în Cadrul Educației Adulților sub Regimul Comunist 1948–1956" (Alphabetization of Adults during the Communist Regime 1948–1956) *B.C.Ș.S.*, no. 24 (2018): 239-265.

2. 125. See Tom A. Jerman, *Santa Claus Worldwide: A History of St. Nicholas and Other Holiday Gift-Bringers* (Jefferson, NC, USA: McFarland & Co Inc, 2020), 199.

126. See Sonja Luehrmann, "Evolving Soviet Atheist Critiques of Religion and why they Matter for Anthropology," 2015.

rise in living standards, particularly in the latter decade, mainly due to an increase in consumption, embarked Romanian society on a process of steady secularization.

Today, most Romanians declared themselves as Christian Orthodox, although few of them are practising this religion. Most of those who regularly attend Church service are in their sixties, and some are former members of the Communist party. Public atheism remains a controversial topic, particularly in relation to public persons, and many young people are agnostic and at the same time openly critical of the authoritarianism of the Orthodox Church.¹²⁷

The public space is currently subject to a dispute between the defenders and opponents of two major subjects: the maintenance or the elimination of the study of religion in public schools, and the introduction of sex education in schools. Today, these topics paint the picture of a modern society that is taking significant steps towards secularization.

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127. See Lucian Turcescu and Lavinia Stan, "Religion, Politics and Sexuality in Romania," *Routledge, Europa-Asia Studies* 57, no. 2 (2005): 291–310.

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The Mis-education of the African Child: The Evolution of British Colonial Education Policy in Southern Nigeria, 1900–1925

*By Bekeh Utietiang Ukelina**

Education did not occupy a primal place in the European colonial project in Africa. The ideology of "civilizing mission", which provided the moral and legal basis for colonial expansion, did little to provide African children with the kind of education that their counterparts in Europe received. Throughout Africa, south of the Sahara, colonial governments made little or no investments in the education of African children. In an attempt to run empire on a shoestring budget, the colonial state in Nigeria provided paltry sums of grants to the missionary groups that operated in the colony and protectorate. This paper explores the evolution of the colonial education system in the Southern provinces of Nigeria, beginning from the year of Britain's official colonization of Nigeria to 1925 when Britain released an official policy on education in tropical Africa. This paper argues that the colonial state used the school system as a means to exert power over the people. Power was exercised through an education system that limited the political, technological, and economic advancement of the colonial people. The state adopted a curricular that emphasized character formation and vocational training and neglected teaching the students, critical thinking and advanced sciences. The purpose of education was to make loyal and submissive subjects of the state who would serve as a cog in the wheels of the exploitative colonial machine.

Introduction

In his memoir, *My Odyssey*, the anticolonial nationalist, and Nigeria's first President, Nnamdi Azikiwe, tells the story of his days as a student at Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar. There, he learned from a fellow student about a great Negro liberator who was planning the liberation of Africa. As a son of a civil servant who worked for the colonial state, Azikiwe had no knowledge or awareness that Africa needed liberation. He boisterously told this student that their education was to prepare them to take over the positions of their parents. Realizing his ignorance, one of the students told him he was indeed a "hopeless, worthless idiot," words students used to refer to their school, "Hope Waddell Institute." Angry that the friend used these words to refer to him, he complained to his father when he returned home. His father informed him that some Africans were indeed "hopeless, worthless idiots," and that is why "they tolerated alien rule without organised resistance."¹ This was a pivotal moment of awakening in the life of the young Azikiwe. He wanted to know who this Negro liberator was and how he could redeem himself? His friend gave him an old mutilated copy of *The Negro World*, a newspaper that was published by Marcus Garvey. In it Garvey wrote, "God almighty created each and every one of us for a place in the world;

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1. Nnamdi Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 33.

and for the least of us to think that we were created only to be what we are, and not what we can make ourselves, is to impute an improper motive to the creator for creating us."² Azikiwe found these words inspiring, and he was determined to learn more about Garvey. He shared his findings with his dad, who promptly told him that Garvey's writings were considered seditious by the colonial authorities and that he should be careful not to be caught with any of Garvey's literature. The encounter with Garvey and *the Negro World* changed his perspective, and he became a "social rebel." After graduating high school and taking a job as a civil servant, Azikiwe understood his economic insecurity in a colonial system that was exploitative of the labor of the colonized. He saw the unequal distribution of wealth, with most of it concentrated in the hands of the white supremacists ruling class who controlled mining, banking, and shipping. He also recognized that the colonial school system trained him to be subservient to the European class. Reflecting on this time in his life, he writes: "The first step towards my escape from being a perennial wage-earner was to become mentally equipped. I thought that I was not sufficiently educated to know how to seek for food, shelter, clothing and other amenities of life without slaving and vegetating. I planned to go to the United States and be re-educated from my mis-education."³

Azikiwe and other Nigerian students who went to school prior to 1925 were primarily educated in Christian Mission schools because western education was primarily the preserve of the missionaries and the colonial authorities made little investments by way of grants-in-aid to education. Britain's reluctance to invest in education in the colonies was rooted in the metropolitan practice of leaving education in the hands of the different Christian confessions, and it was also a way of running empire on a shoestring budget. The failure of Mission education to provide Azikiwe and his peers the intellectual skills they needed to reach their highest potentials led them to conclude that the school system has miseducated them. British colonial officials were also concerned about the quality and purpose of education that the missionaries were providing to African children and they took steps to formulate policies that would guide education in the colonies. This paper looks at the evolution of education policy in British colonial Africa, using Southern Nigerian provinces as a case study. In designing an education policy for Africa, colonial officials who were members of the Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa drew lessons from India, where secular education became the culprit for the nationalist uprisings and unrests. This chapter historicizes the processes leading to the 1925 White Paper that laid out education policy in British tropical Africa. The essay argues that the greater involvement and intervention of the Nigerian colonial authorities in education resulted from the failure of the Mission schools to train personnel that will be a cog in the wheels of the colonial exploitative machinery; and the desire of the

2. Ibid, 34.

3. Ibid, 45.

colonial government to train subjects that would be subservient, or what they called "good citizens."

Christian Missionaries and Education

Christian missionaries came to Nigeria in the sixteenth century. However, they never introduced a school system until around 1842 when Rev. Thomas Freeman and some Wesleyan Methodists arrived to begin a mission and a school.⁴ The first missionary school was established in 1843 by William de Graft and his wife in Badagry as the Methodist mission school.⁵ In the same year, King Eyo Nsa II of Creek Town in Efikland invited the British to begin a school. He said to them, "I can't sell slaves and don't know what to do for them. If I can get some cotton and coffee to grow, and men for teach me ... I be very glad. Mr Blyth tell me England glad for send me to teach book and make we understand God all same white man do."⁶ His request granted, Scottish Presbyterian missionaries from Jamaica established their mission in Calabar. Later, these missionaries established the Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar which Azikiwe and a host of many famous Nigerians such as Kingsley Mbadiwe, and Akanu Ibiam attended. The period between the mid-19th century and the official colonization of Nigeria in 1900 was a time of intensive missionization. Different European missionary groups were proselytizing their religious beliefs, and the practical means of achieving their objective was through Christian education. Education was inseparable from religious faith, and it became almost synonymous with missionization. With little or no input from the students, pupils enrolled in the school received baptism from ministers of whichever Christian denomination established the school they attended.

Concerns about the quality of education that was offered in the Christian mission schools emerged in the late 1890s and early 1900s. In 1892, Henry Rawlinson Carr was named the Inspector of Schools for the Colony of Lagos.⁷ Carr is a significant figure because he was the highest-ranking African in the

4. Uche Uwaezuoke Okonkwo and Mary-Noelle Ethel Ezech, "Implications of Missionary Education for Women in Nigeria: A Historical Analysis," *Journal of International Women Studies* 10, no. 2 (2008): 186.

5. Babs Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (Ibadan: NPS Educational Publishers Limited, 1974), 82.

6. William H. Taylor, *Mission to Educate: A History of the Educational Work of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in East Nigeria, 1846-1960* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 52.

7. Prior to 1906, Nigeria was governed as three separate entities; the Crown Colony of Lagos, the Northern and Southern Protectorates. Lagos and the Southern Protectorate were amalgamated in 1906 and were now governed as the Southern Protectorate. The Northern and Southern Protectorates were amalgamated in 1914 creating for the first time the colony known as Nigeria.

colonial education service in Nigeria. As a distinguished scholar and an astute official, he rose through the colonial ranks and retired in 1924 as a Resident of the Colony.⁸ In 1899, Sir William McGregor, the Governor of the Lagos Colony, asked Carr to inspect schools in Calabar and Bonny. At this time, southern Nigeria (which was then a part of the Niger Coast Protectorate) was in transition from the administration of the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office, and Sir Richard Moor was the High Commissioner. After his inspection of the schools, Carr concluded that the results of the missionary efforts were small. The reason, he notes, is that "the missionaries look upon schools as the instruments for making converts, other men view as instruments for making good and useful citizens."⁹ Providing education was not the primary goal of the missionaries but a secondary goal. Education was incidental as it served the sole purpose of being the vehicle for conversions. As Babs Fafunwa has rightly noted, "if Christianity could have been implanted in Nigeria without the use of the school, most missionary groups would have tried to do so."¹⁰

The poor quality of education provided by the Christian missions necessitated the colonial government to begin taking steps toward regulating the sector. The education provided by the missionary groups served the purpose of helping the converts read the bible and sing Christian hymns.¹¹ An attestation to this is the curriculum, which was heavy on religion and light on other aspects such as mathematics and the sciences. For example, at Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar, the daily schedule looked like this:

9:00–9:15	Prayers. Roll call
9:15–10	Arithmetic
10–10:15	Scripture texts in Efik. (Read, repeat, memorize.)
10:15–11	Reading and spelling in Efik
11–11:15	Pupils tested to ensure that Biblical texts had been learnt.
11:15–11:30	Merit tickets awarded to most worthy pupils. Prayers and roll call.
11:30–3PM	Break. Manual labor in mission compound or parents compounds.
3–3:15PM	Prayers. Roll call.
3:15–4PM	Writing. Geography twice a week for standard 7.
4–5PM	Reading and Scripture in English. The bible being the most common textbook.
5–5:15PM	Merit tickets awarded. Calabar catechism recited. Hymn / prayer.

8. Adewumi Fajana, "Henry Carr – Portrait of a Public Servant," *Ilorin Journal of Education* (1984).

9. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1899-1900* (HMSO: 1901), 12.

10. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 1974, 91.

11. Folasade R. Sulaiman, "Internationalization in Education: The British Colonial Policies on Education in Nigeria, 1882-1926," *Journal of Sociological Research* 3, no. 2 (2012): 85.

5:15–5:30PM Roll call & Dismissal.¹²

Education focused primarily on religious conversion because the missionaries saw their work as saving Africa's "benighted savages."¹³ The focus of education was catechetical formation and this deprived the students of learning critical thinking and scientific skills prized in developing the society and bringing it to the industrial age that Europe was experiencing. For example, students educated in elementary schools operated by the churches were intellectually unprepared to attend a proposed high school and they were also unqualified to serve as clerks to the colonial governor. The impoverished nature of this education elicited a media outcry from newspapers such as the *Anglo-African*.¹⁴ The public pressure faced by the colonial state forced it to begin taking steps toward addressing the weaknesses of the school system. Thus, in 1877 the colonial government provided its first grant-in-aid of £200 to each of the three major missionary groups that were operating in Lagos.¹⁵ In spite of the colonial state's interest in intervening in education, nevertheless it remained low in its priorities. For example, in the 1880 budget of the colony of Lagos which was £45,000, the colonial administration allocated £700 for education and £16,000 for prisons.¹⁶ These numbers reveal the priorities of the colonial state. The budget shows that the imprisonment of colonial bodies took precedence over their intellectual formation and this reveals one of the contradictions of colonial rule. It undoubtedly needed educated citizens for the state's prosperity, yet it was reluctant to invest in the education of the people. The colonial state abdicating its responsibility to the missionary groups was an attempt to run an empire on the cheap. If the missionaries were going to pay for the work of educating the colonial people through missionizing approaches, why intervene? Though both the missionary groups and the colonial state shared a broad goal of "civilizing the natives," their practical interests differed, and this had an impact on the education offered. For the missionaries, the conversion of souls was their primary interest, and they needed the number of converts to show their benefactors back in Europe of how they were saving the souls of "pagan babies." For the colonial state, they needed human power in both

12. Taylor, *Mission to Educate: A History of the Educational Work of the Scottish Presbyterian Mission in East Nigeria, 1846-1960*, 1996, 82.

13. Stephen J. Ball, "Imperialism, Social Control and the Colonial Curriculum in Africa," *Journalism of Curriculum Studies* 15, no. 3 (1983): 238.

14. Uyilawa Usanlele, "Development and Education in British Colonial Nigeria, 1940-55," in *Developing Africa: Concepts and Practices in Twentieth-Century Colonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 252-253.

15. Immaculata Nnenna Enwo-Irem, "Colonialism and Education: The Challenges for Sustainable Development in Nigeria," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 5 (2013): 164.

16. Usanlele, "Development and Education in British Colonial Nigeria, 1940-55," (2014), 252.

the technical and secretarial services for the smooth running of the colonial machine. The inability of the missionaries to satisfy the immediate interests of the colonial state meant that the state must be more actively engaged in what happened in the education sector.

There was no clear consensus in the British colonial bureaucracy on the best approaches to intervention. The question was whether the colonial state should support secular education over mission education. Colonial officials, such as Frederick Lugard, were wary of secular education that did not have a specific goal of educating the pupils for good citizenship. The belief was that a secular education more concerned with intellectual abilities, rather than "integrity and good citizenship" was a failure.¹⁷ Reflecting on the Indian experiences of western education, the journalist, Valentine Chirol wrote in the early 1900s that while education is vital for the intellectual emancipation of the Indian, if this powerful medicine is not administered correctly, it could lead to other disorders. This is because education "acts upon the frame of an antique society as a powerful dissolvent, heating weak brains, stimulating rash ambitions, raising inordinate expectations of which the disappointment is bitterly resented."¹⁸ Chirol blamed education for the political and social unrests India was experiencing at the time. He notes that secular education was granted to a people who lived within primitive cultures and in an autocratic system, and western ideas of equality and freedom of speech were taught to them in the school system and now those Indians were using these ideas against the British.¹⁹ Avoiding the supposed "mistakes" of Indian education became of paramount interest to colonial officials as they attempted to craft an educational policy for Britain's territories in Africa.

Nigeria, Britain's most populous African colony was at the forefront of the development of education policy and one of the key architects of the 1925 *White Paper*, Frederic Lugard was the High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria from 1900 to 1906 and then the Governor of Nigeria from 1912 to 1919.²⁰ Lugard's experiences in Nigeria shaped the education policies that he advocated in the 1920s. Before delving into the White Paper, it is crucial to first lay out the evolution of mission education policies and practices in the southern provinces of Nigeria.²¹

17. Frederick Lugard, *Education in Tropical Africa*. The National Archives (Hereafter, TNA): CO 879/123/2, 3-4.

18. Victor Chirol, *Indian Unrest* (London: Macmillan, 1910), 7.

19. Ibid.

20. Before the Northern Protectorate and the Southern Protectorate of Nigeria were amalgamated in 1914 by Lugard, he was the Governor of both Protectorates from 1912 to 1914.

21. This paper focuses on the Southern provinces of Nigeria. Education in the Northern provinces developed along different paths because of the presence of Arabic schools and the policy of Indirect Rule which was focused on maintaining the existing religious and political structures in Northern Nigeria. The implication of this policy is

Mission Education in the Southern Provinces Nigeria

In the southern provinces of Nigeria, many of the schools were operated by missionary groups. In 1882, the colonial administration introduced the first education ordinance because they wanted schools to educate pupils that would respond to the needs of the colonial state. This ordinance established a board of education, government approval for the opening of new schools, an annual examination of pupils in schools, the training and qualification of teachers, and provisions for grants-in-aid awarded to schools.²² Be that as it may, the proprietors of the missionary schools resisted some of these modest reforms because they were wedded to the religious orientations of their curricula. They did not see government efforts as ways of improving the quality of education provided but as attempts to change the religious orientation of their institutions.²³ Nevertheless, the colonial government continued to support missionary schools and allowed them a free range in establishing new institutions. In the early 1900s, education in the Southern provinces of Nigeria (the Southern Protectorate and the Lagos colony) remained primarily the affair of the missionary organizations that operated in the region. The role of the government in education was limited to providing grants-in-aid and supervision of the schools. The missionary societies operating in the provinces were the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and the Roman Catholic missions. These schools provided elementary education, and the focus was on teaching the children to read the Bible in the vernacular.²⁴ The government realized its efforts at improving the scope of education by providing Mission schools limited grants-in-aid that met some basic standards set by the government. In 1902, for example, the government provided £1238 in grants to some of these schools.²⁵ The colonial government itself did not own or operate any schools in the protectorate. Nevertheless, the colonial administration partnered with Hope Waddell Institute, Calabar.

Hope Waddell Institute was founded in 1894 by the United Free Church Mission. Hope M. Waddell was a missionary with the Scottish Missionary Society who arrived Calabar in 1846 to carry out evangelization work. The focus of this school was industrial, or vocational training as students acquired skills in printing, tailoring, and carpentry. In the early 1900s, students at Hope Waddell were primarily boarding students and they received some form of secondary

that Christian missionaries did not open as many schools in the Northern provinces as they did in the southern provinces.

22. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 1974, 94.

23. Usanlele, "Development and Education in British Colonial Nigeria, 1940-55," (2014), 253.

24. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1902* (HMSO: 1903), 27.

25. *Ibid*, 28.

education. Though a mission school, the colonial government provided the school grants and had some government students enrolled there.²⁶ Without a government secondary school in the Southern Protectorate, the colonial administration took steps to expand the relationship with Hope Waddell Institute by not only enrolling government students at the school but also establishing a high school within the campus under the administration of the institute. The purpose of the High School was to provide industrial education and also general education of a higher level beyond what was currently offered at the institute or by any other school in the provinces. According to the plan, the High School will have both day and boarding students. All students were required to attend daily prayers but students could be exempted from religious instructions if their parents or guardians objected.²⁷ These were attempts by the colonial administration to maintain a balance between secular education and religious education, accommodating non-Christian children in a school run by Presbyterian missionaries. This approach was more pragmatic than that taken in some provinces of Northern Nigeria. There, Frederick Lugard insulated a large part of the region from Western education for fear that its profoundly Christian influence will undermine the Islamic faith, thus eroding the religio-political structures upon which the colonial state in Northern Nigeria depended on for effective administration.

The cost of establishing a High School at Hope Waddell was £15,000 and over a third of this money was expended on new buildings that would house the school.²⁸ Given the current state of the schools in the provinces, the colonial administration wanted to attract good students to fill the rolls of this school. A new education code, the Education Proclamation No. 19, came into effect on June 1, 1903.²⁹ The goal of the new education policy was to ensure that proper education was provided at the primary and intermediate schools to better prepare the pupils for the High school. One of the incentives of this new policy was that the allocation of grants-in-aid should take into consideration students' school attendance and performance at annual examinations.³⁰ The new Code also empowered the Board of Education to draw up a syllabus of instruction for primary schools and to set the standards of exam for both the intermediate and high schools.³¹ In order to expand education in the territory, the code called for an extension of the system of district primary schools, and they were expectations they would evolve into government schools in the future. To support these schools, their funding came from three sources: government grants, trading firms

26. Ibid, 28.

27. Ibid, 28.

28. Ibid, 28.

29. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1903* (HMSO: 1904), 25.

30. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1902* (HMSO: 1903), 28.

31. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1903* (HMSO: 1904), 26.

and local chiefs, and tuition charged to the students. A district in need of a school was required to contribute an amount that was equal to the government grant and also provide a site for the school. If the school in question was a primary school, the locals were required to also pay for the building of the school and provide living quarters for the teacher.³² Within this district school system, education was a partnership between the colonial administration, the native administration, the trading companies, and the local people. Such cooperation is reflected in the local school committees that exercised some administrative role over the schools. By 1904, the Education Code was amended to vest control of schools on the High Commissioner instead of the Board of Education. With this change, the local boards lost control over school expenditures, though it still has a role overseeing the administration of the schools. The revenues generated by the schools were now going into the public purse and the schools were supported directly from the public purse.³³

During this decade of the 1900s, education in the Southern provinces remained primarily in the domain of the missionary groups, while the colonial administration assisted the schools. The poor quality of education that was provided by the Christian missions necessitated the colonial government to begin taking steps toward supervision and intervention in the education sector. There was a realization that the mission groups were not able to meet the needs of the colonial state, and the colonial administration was no longer satisfied with limiting its intervention to grants but wanted to operate the schools. As the process of the colonial state's intervention in education unfolded, there were concerns among missionary groups that the colonial administration was encroaching into their domain. For example, the state started this process by providing grants to some of the mission schools, and then it began requiring standardize exams and class attendance. Over time, attendance and exam performance became yardsticks for assisting schools. Then assisted schools were subjected to the supervision of the government, and the government began insisting on the curricula for assisted schools. By 1908, the colonial government designed a new code to move the Nigerian school system from the English Education code because it believed that the code was not suitable for West Africa. The goal of this new code was to do two things, the provision of both a "liberal literacy education" and a "useful and practical education."³⁴ The code mandated the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) to be taught in vernacular to children from infant to Standard II. At the primary school level (which began from infant to Standard VII), the 3Rs were to be taught in the English language in addition to other subjects such as drawing, shorthand, hygiene, manual training, and the science of common things. At the secondary level, students took classes in

32. Ibid, 26.

33. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1905* (HMSO: 1906), 29.

34. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1908* (HMSO: 1909), 23.

geometry, natural science, history, geography, language (one language besides English) in addition to the subjects that they took in Standards V to VII.³⁵

The secondary school was the highest form of education received by the students in the provinces. In terms of the curricula and education offered, these secondary schools were not comparable to those in Britain. In practical terms, these were higher grades of "elementary schools containing classes in which instruction is given in the subjects of the higher Standards of the Education Code, together with a somewhat enlarged curriculum of literary or technical subjects."³⁶ Tuition fees at the secondary schools were higher, and the teachers were better qualified than those at the elementary schools. Also, students at the secondary schools took extra subjects such as Latin, Greek, French, elementary algebra and geometry, book-keeping, shorthand, and typewriting.³⁷ The last three skills were in high demand by the colonial administration and also by the different trading firms that operated in the colony. Parents or communities were willing to pay higher tuitions for their wards in the secondary schools because these were pathways to more "professional" jobs in the colonial service or industry. Before 1909, only two government secondary schools existed in the southern provinces, and these were the Hope Waddell Institute in Calabar and the Ogugumanga Industrial Institute, Bonny.

The turning point for secondary education in Nigeria was the 1909 government's establishment of King's College in Lagos to set a higher standard of secondary education in the colony.³⁸ It is not coincidental that it was only after the establishment of this school that the Cambridge Local Examinations took place for the first time in the colony. Of the six students from King's College that entered the junior examination in 1909, three of the boys were successful.³⁹

The Future of Education in Africa

King's college was an important step by the colonial government to expand its footprints in the education sector. By the end of 1911, the government was operating about sixty schools and with a total enrollment of 5,399 boys and 238 girls and total expenditures of £27,159.⁴⁰ The competition between the different Protestant Missions in Africa and the expanding government role in the education sector necessitated the missionary groups to rethink their strategies in Africa. At the 1910 World Missionary Conference (also the Edinburgh Missionary

35. Ibid, 23.

36. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1907* (HMSO: 1908), 17.

37. Ibid, 17.

38. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1908* (HMSO: 1909), 25.

39. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1910* (HMSO: 1911), 23.

40. *Annual Report, Southern Nigeria 1911* (HMSO: 1912), 20.

Conference) that Protestant and Anglican groups gathered to consider challenges in the missionization of the Non-Christian world, a consensus emerged that missionaries in Africa should coordinate their efforts in areas of education and medicine. After the conference, a select committee on education headed by A. H. L. Fraser was established.⁴¹ This committee proposed a memorandum addressing the future of education in West Africa to the Colonial Office in April of 1914. The memorandum "asked for a general policy on education in the African colonies, general policy outlining the role of the colonial Governments and the establishment of a commission to examine the policy."⁴² The Colonial Office rejected the suggestion of a commission on the basis that the colonies knew what their educational needs were. Nevertheless, they asked the committee to propose a policy on education.⁴³ People at the International Missionary Council understood that many at the Colonial Office were sympathetic to their cause, and a cooperative arrangement with colonial governments was, in the long run, beneficial to their missionization work. Such arrangements will allow the government to exercise some supervisory role over the mission schools without necessarily becoming competitors. In sum, there were two reasons why the missions needed a policy on education in tropical Africa. The first was to align policy with the metropolitan approach of cooperation between church and state and invariably to avoid the American approach of separation between church and state. The second reason was to ensure that African education was not merely scholastic but adapted to the interests and needs of the African people.⁴⁴ Work on coming up with a policy took a hiatus between 1914 and early 1920 because of the First World War which interrupted activities both in the metropole and colony as efforts were directed toward the war.

The Phelps-Stokes Commission Report

Following World War I, there was renewed interest on education in Africa, most especially from the American missionary groups. One group interested in Africa was the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. In order to expand its education mission on the continent, the missionary group saw it necessary to study the state of education in Africa. The Phelps-Stokes Fund was approached

41. Clive Whitehead, "Education Policy in Tropical Africa: The 1925 White Paper in Retrospect," *History of Education* 10, no. 3 (1981): 195.

42. Matthew B. Gwanfogbe, *Changing Regimes and Educational Development in Cameroon* (Spears Media Press, 2018), 84.

43. *Ibid*, 84.

44. James F. Clatworthy, *The Formulation of British Colonial Education Policy, 1929-1961*. Report for Office of Education (DHEW) (Washington, DC: Office of Education (DHEW), 1969), 9.

to provide support for this study.⁴⁵ Before this time, the Fund had not done any work on education in Africa. However, it was the intention of the founder of the Fund that the money should be used "for educational purposes in the education of Negroes both in Africa and the United States."⁴⁶ The Phelps-Stokes Commission visited Africa between 1920 and 1923 to examine the state of African education and Nigeria was one of the colonies visited. A key proposal in the Commission's first report was the adaptation of African education. The report argued that the failure to adapt to Native education is partly responsible for the failure of education in Africa.⁴⁷ The report notes that like in India, African schools prepared clerks for the state and reproduced teachers to the neglect of "activities that are more fundamental in the economic and social development of their country."⁴⁸ The report also highlights the complaints of African chiefs that their educated children have become estranged from their culture.⁴⁹ In proposing a policy of adaptation of African education, the Commission adopted a policy that has an agrarian bias, arguing that "the future of all organizations in Africa depends more upon the effective use of the soil than upon any other of the numerous resources in the continent."⁵⁰ By pushing agriculture as the path to development for African states, the Commission's report ideologically aligned itself with the colonial administrations that did not envisage an industrialized Africa but an Africa that was the producer of primary products for European industries.

Rather than providing African children with an education that was at par with their European counterparts, the Phelps-Stoke Commission proposed a policy of adaptation that undercut the progress of African people under the guise of helping Africans develop along their native lines. It is for this reason that the Commission strongly recommended the teaching of such things as African crafts rather than the sciences that could have provided African children with the knowledge base to industrialize and produce higher scientific research. There was nothing uniquely African that prevented Africa from embracing the industrial age as the Europeans given that not many decades earlier, conditions in Europe were similar to those in Africa. While the Commission's report opened up by speaking positively about African people and their level of intelligence, in its recommendations, it quickly defaulted to the condescending attitudes Euro-American white supremacist powers have about Africans and treated Africans as helpless subjects in need of foreign tutelage. Although the National Congress of British West Africa had demanded an institution of higher learning in the early

45. Phelps-Stokes Commission, *Education in Africa*. Report of the Phelps-Stokes Commission (New York, 1922), XII.

46. Ibid, XII.

47. Ibid, 16.

48. Ibid, 17.

49. Ibid, 17.

50. Ibid, 17.

1920s, the Phelps-Stokes Commission argued that it was premature to establish a full-fledged university in West Africa. The Commission recommended that the lone college in West Africa that offered university degrees in the humanities, the Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, should alter its programs toward technical education.⁵¹

In pushing for technical education for Africans, the Commission was aligning itself with the Tuskegee Style of education promoted by Booker T. Washington in the United States. Washington promoted this style of education at Tuskegee Institute, where he was founder and principal from 1881 to 1915. He advocated vocational and industrial training for African Americans over liberal arts education. In his Atlanta Compromise Speech of 1895, he said, "Cast it down in agriculture, mechanics, in commerce, in domestic service, and in the professions. ...No race can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is at the bottom of life we must begin, and not at the top."⁵² W. E. B. Dubois was critical of Washington and considered his ideas on industrial and vocational education misguided. Dubois argued that Washington's program at Tuskegee "practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races."⁵³ The lone African member of the Commission, James K. Aggrey, agreed with the proposal. Thomas Howard argues that Aggrey, like Washington, was an accommodationist and he embraced Book T. Washington's philosophy.⁵⁴ Aggrey was not looking for radical transformations in the African education system but a "gradual evolutionary reform within the framework of the British Empire."⁵⁵ The ideas proposed by the Phelps-Stokes Commission were well received by missionary groups working in Africa and these made their way into the 1925 White Paper that became *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa*. This was made possible because J. H. Oldham, the secretary of the International Missionary Council cooperated with the Phelps-Stokes Commission in its work.⁵⁶

51. Thomas Howard, "Black Missionary Influence on the Origins of University Education in West Africa," in *Black Americans and the Missionary Movement in Africa*, ed. Jacob Sylvia (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 97.

52. Booker T. Washington, *Atlanta Compromise*. Retrieved from: <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/multimedia/booker-t-washington.html>. [Accessed 10 March 2020.]

53. Robert J. Norrell, "Booker T. Washington: Understanding the Wizard of Tuskegee," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 42 (2003-2004), 96.

54. Howard, "Black Missionary Influence on the Origins of University Education in West Africa," 1982, 99.

55. Ibid, 99.

56. Phelps-Stokes Commission, *Education in Africa*, 1922, XXII.

The 1925 White Paper

Following the Commission's visit to Africa, Oldham approached the Colonial Office requesting that there should be a policy on education in the colonies. The Colonial Office asked Oldham to prepare a memorandum on this initiative to be provided to the colonial governors in the impending conference of governors of African colonies.⁵⁷ Oldham's memorandum was well received by the governors, who agreed that an advisory committee should be set up in London to look into cooperation between the Missions and the British colonial governments.⁵⁸ The Advisory Committee that was put together comprised of people who were either affiliated with the Christian Missions or officials who were sympathetic or supportive of the missionary cause in the colonies.⁵⁹ It was this committee that put together the 1925 White Paper. Frederick Lugard was the author of the White Paper's draft, as he took the initiative to draft it in collaboration with Oldham even before the assignment was given to him.⁶⁰ Many of the ideas in the White Paper are similar to those in the Phelps-Stokes Commission report. Some examples include the adaptation of education, character formation, Christian moral education, the emphasis on African education.

This essay considers two key policy ideas contained in the White Paper: the idea of adapting the education of African children along "native lines" and the idea of education for character formation/good citizenship. The policy states:

Education should be adapted to the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the various peoples, conserving as far as possible all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of their social life; adapting them where necessary to changed circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. Its aim should be to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of agriculture, the development of native industries, the improvement of health, the training of the people in the management of their own affairs, and the inculcation of true ideals of citizenship and service.⁶¹

While a cursory look at this policy might seem sensitive to the needs and conditions of the African child, in reality, it was a racist policy. Educated Africans at the time argued for European curriculum because they saw adaptation as a

57. Clive Whitehead, "Education Policy in Tropical Africa: The 1925 White Paper in Retrospect," (1981): 196.

58. Ibid, 197.

59. Ibid, 197.

60. Ibid, 197.

61. W. Ormsby-Gore, A.G. Church et al., *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa*. Cmd. 2374 (London: HMSO, 1925), 4.

sign that Africans were intellectually deficient and unable to comprehend and absorb what their European counterparts were taught.⁶² The curriculum proposed for African children was not at par with what children in Europe were taught. Adapting education to the African culture and environment had the effect of keeping African children in their 'backward, tribal, agrarian' status. Frederick Lugard argued that adapting education would help combat any forms of agitation and this was good for the stability of the empire. In a nutshell, Lugard wanted Africans to be kept in "their place" by limiting literacy so that they would not be hostile to the colonial state.⁶³

The expansion of colonial education was to be achieved through the village school. In his commentary on the White Paper, Lugard explained that the village school was going to be a mission school with a native teacher. He wrote, "The first object of the school should be to make the pupils more efficient in the every-day work of village life - in village arts and crafts and in agriculture and animal husbandry."⁶⁴ The emphasis here is on vocational education such as learning crafts, hygiene, sanitation, and farming. The colonial school system was not intended to help Africans think critically but to enable them do things with their hands. When the children were introduced to literary content, emphasis was on rote memorizations over comprehension and this defeats the critical thinking purpose of education.

In his essay, *The Purpose of Education*, Martin Luther King, Jr. writes, "It seems to me that education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life. Education must also train one for quick, resolute and effective thinking. To think incisively and to think for one's self is very difficult. We are prone to let our mental life become invaded by legions of half truths, prejudices, and propaganda. ...The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically."⁶⁵ Colonial education emphasized the functional aspects of education over the critical thinking aspects. Limiting the education of African children was not an accident but a racist policy to keep Africans submissive to the colonial machine. A colonial official in southern Africa wrote in 1902 that, "The black peril will become a reality when the results of our misguided system of education have taken root and when the veneer of European civilization struggles with the innate savage nature [of the African]."⁶⁶

62. D. N. Sifuna, *British and French Colonial Education Policies and Educational Changes in Africa* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kenyatta University College, 1977), 6.

63. Ibid, 2.

64. Lugard, "Education in Tropical Africa." *The Edinburgh Review* 493 (1925): 6.

65. Martin Luther King Jr., *The Purpose of Education* (Atlanta, Ga: Maroon Tiger, 1947), 10.

66. Dickson A. Mungazi, *The Underdevelopment of African Education: A Black Zimbabwean Perspective* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 16.

This official believed that substandard mission education was too generous to the colonial people. In a letter to the Rhodesia Herald, a white person wrote, "I do not consider it right that we should educate the native in any way that will unfit him for service. He is, and always should be a hewer of wood and drawer of water for his [white] master."⁶⁷ There is no doubt that racial pseudo-scientific notions that blacks were not mentally capable of absorbing liberal arts education and the higher sciences were some of the reasons for denying African children a good education.⁶⁸

A vocational education system was economically advantageous to the colonial state because a highly educated elite will refuse to be a cog in the exploitation machine of the colonial state. The crafts and agricultural products produced by the people were commodities of trade in Europe, where they generated revenues for the colonial state. Most colonial governments in West Africa did not rely on plantation agriculture for exports but subsistent agriculture. Teaching farming to the people and helping them to increase yields was an effective means of raising revenues for the provincial coffers. Thus, the emphasis on agricultural education and extension programs. Furthermore, by failing to educate the people to think critically and to think for themselves, it was a colonial suppressive strategy to prevent the colonized from challenging the shaky foundations upon which colonial rule rested. If colonial rule is a benevolent civilizing mission why the exploitation of the colonized? Colonized subjects trained in the art of critical thinking and exposed to the ideas of liberty and equality, the very foundations of western democracies will sooner or later begin to challenge the basis of colonialism because the system was based neither in the equality or liberty of the people but on exploitation and dehumanization.

The second policy idea is character education/good citizenship. The curriculum emphasized teaching the students the true ideals of citizenship. The intellectual and moral bankruptcy of this policy becomes even more glaring when Lugard's commentary is analyzed. Lugard wrote, "The fundamental principle of the education policy now advocated is that the training of character is more important than the training of the intellect - that the development of the quality of integrity, self-reliance, and a sense of responsibility as an individual and as a citizen, is of greater moment both to the individual to the state than high proficiency in the passing of examinations."⁶⁹ The formation of character is an essential aspect of every education system. Babs Fafunwa identifies seven cardinal goals of traditional African education, and he says the objective of these was "to produce an individual who is honest, respectable, skilled, co-operative and conforms to the social order of the day."⁷⁰ These goals are the development of

67. Ibid, 16.

68. Ibid, 6.

69. Ibid, 10.

70. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria*, 1974, 20.

physical skills, character, respect for elders, intellectual skills, acquisition of vocational training, development of a sense of belonging to the community, and the understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage.⁷¹ Traditional African education did not preclude the formation of character; neither did it make intellectual formation a secondary matter. It was the narrowness and the motive of the colonial regime's idea of "character" and "good citizenship" that is problematic. What did the colonial system mean by good citizenship? In liberal democracies, citizenship is often associated with rights and privileges guaranteed by the state and endowed with certain electoral franchises. The colonial state did not guarantee its subjects (citizens) these rights. As Emma Hunter has argued, the colonial state was envisioning a new political state in which citizenship was understood in relation to one's duties to the state. What the colonial state promised its subjects were neither the electoral franchises nor liberty and equality, rather security and some progress.⁷² The expectations were that good citizens would humbly submit themselves to the colonial state, which exercised both paternal and maternal roles over them and would also dutifully pay their varied forms of taxes to the state. The idea of Indirect Rule championed by zealous colonial officials such as Frederick Lugard aimed at depriving Africans of citizenship as understood in liberal democracies.

The question then is this, how is good citizenship taught to people denied the basic tenets of citizenship? The primary motif of education for good citizenship is social control. Education is an ideological state apparatus, a way state power is exercised.⁷³ Schools were places of moral training, and religious ideologies such as respect for authority were vital tenets for this.⁷⁴ For some in the colonial state, they were lessons to be learned from the Indian experience where they had spent substantial resources on an educational system that produced "bad citizens." They were termed "bad citizens" because they opposed Britain's exploitation and were agitating for more inclusive governance and rights, a civic duty in a democratic state. At the turn of the twentieth century, Septimus Smet Thorburn a long-serving British colonial official in the Punjab frontier district of India, castigated the colonial form of education as being responsible for the agitations by Indian nationalists. The offense of these "westernized Indians" is that they were demanding more places in the political leadership of their state. Thorburn writes, "That Westernized Indians, believing themselves fully equipped for place and power in the administration of their own country, should push their claims, has long been recognized as one of the inevitable consequences of our

71. Ibid, 20.

72. Emma Hunter, "Dutiful Subjects, Patriotic Citizens, and the Concept of 'Good Citizenship' in Twentieth-Century Tanzania," *The Historical Journal* 56, no. 1 (2013): 267.

73. Rugano Jones Zuobgu, *Colonialism and Education in Zimbabwe* (Harare: SAPES Books, 1994), 2.

74. Ibid, 2.

educational system in India, ... That the teachings of some of the leaders in the movement should become seditious was, doubtless also foreseen, but that those teachings should excite anti-English disturbances has taken most of us by surprise."⁷⁵ He went on to argue that the colonial system of education in India has failed because "the literate are few and discontented, the masses are still illiterate."⁷⁶ His solution to the problem was for the government of India to provide a comfortable residential club for Indian students in London and appoint for them an English gentleman who is "thoroughly sympathetic" as a managing secretary or their guardian. He said that Indian students who enjoyed the club's hospitality "would return to their motherland with feelings of gratitude to their Government, and with a decided bias towards good, not bad, citizenship."⁷⁷ Absent in this argument is the colonial state providing the colonized fundamental rights and privileges of citizenship. Inherent in Thorburn's argument was the belief that Indian education, which focused mostly on the urban elites to the neglect of the rural dwellers did not do enough to train the people to be good citizens of the state. Education for citizenship thus will mean teaching colonial people to be pliant and submissive to the white supremacist overlords who reigned over them. Central to the mission of this form of education is social control.

The colonial school system was not interested in developing Africans to usher in their progress. The assumption of the colonizers was that in the foreseeable future, Africans will stay under the tutelage of their European masters. So, the Advisory Committee on Education advocated a policy of education that will educate Africans as messengers, clerks, tradespeople, and agricultural assistants.⁷⁸ For example, In Nigeria, Yaba Higher College established in 1932 was to provide "training of a university or professional character, although as a great deal of attention will be devoted to the practical side ... the course will not be so wide, especially on the theoretical side, as would be necessary to obtain university or professional qualifications in the United Kingdom."⁷⁹ Theoretically, students who went to Yaba College could obtain equivalent qualifications as European students; in practice, the system maintained the subordination of Africans to the Europeans. For instance, African medical assistants who graduated from Yaba College made £120, whereas their European counterparts working in Nigeria performing similar duties made £400. Ajayi et al. note that "Success in examinations was tied more to vacancies and character evaluation than to performance. Registration for overseas examinations was

75. S. S. Thorburn, "Education and Good Citizenship in India," in *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* 39 (Royal Commonwealth Society, 1908), 134-135.

76. Ibid, 139.

77. Ibid, 142.

78. J.F.A. Ajayi, L.K.H. Goma and G.A. Johnson, *The African Experience with Higher Education* (London: James Currey, 1996), 44.

79. Ibid, 46.

discouraged and courses essential for such examinations were often eliminated from the curricula, thus ensuring that the College Diploma remained strictly of local significance."⁸⁰ By design, the colonial system of education was to limit the success of African children. By using character rather than performance in evaluating students, the colonial state wanted to exclude potential "troublemakers," i.e., those who may challenge the exploitative tendencies of the colonizer.

While colonial policy attempted to improve the standards of mission schools by putting in place education policies and also creating government schools, the two school systems were two sides of the same coin. Mission schools advanced the imperialistic objectives of the colonial state by tilling the soil that made it possible for colonial rule to thrive. Christian mission education achieved this aim by preparing "Africans spiritually and mentally for physical domination."⁸¹ Mission schools educated African children to abandon their religious rituals, reject their cultural history and traditions, and to perceive these as backward and superstitious, while wholeheartedly embracing European history and culture as superior. It was not uncommon for African children to look down on their own cultures while gracefully assuming the second-class status that the colonial state conferred upon them. As Magnus Bassey notes, participants at a conference on the Review of the Educational System of Eastern Nigeria in the 1950s were without a doubt in agreement that colonial mission education did not "adequately meet the needs of the country."⁸² When Nnamdi Azikiwe confesses that as a young man, he was ignorant of Africa's need for liberation, it attests to the success of the missionization and colonizing nature of the British colonial school system in Africa. A person not aware of their imprisonment has no need to fight for freedom. The imperial school system did what it was supposed to do, mis-educate African children.

Conclusion

Britain's colonial education policy in Nigeria evolved in the period between 1900 and 1925 and continued to evolve thereafter. In the early years, the colonial state failed to invest in the school system because it saw education as the preserve of the different Christian missionary groups that were in Nigeria. It was when the school system run by the Christian missions failed to respond to the needs of the colonial state that necessary interventions were made. These interventions included grants in aid, standardized curriculum, school supervisions, government schools, and policies on the purpose of education. The paper argues that

80. Ibid, 46.

81. Magnus O. Bassey, *Western Education and Political Domination in Africa: A Study in Critical and dialogical Pedagogy* (Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey, 1999), 40.

82. Ibid, 41.

Christian missions were more interested in converting Africans than providing the education that the colonial state wanted and that African children needed. For the colonial state, the purpose of education was to form good citizens who would serve the needs of the colonial state in clerical, vocational, and agricultural fields. The expanding role the government undertook during this period, elicited fears in the minds of the Christian mission groups leading them to find areas of cooperation with the Colonial government. It was this cooperative arrangement that led to the 1925 White Paper on education policy.

This essay has shown that the miseducation of African children happened in several ways: the colonial government underinvested both financial and human resources in education; missionary societies delivered a program of miseducation as their primary interest or emphasis was on the conversion of African children and making them reject their religious and cultural traditions. In conclusion, the African colonial school system was a system of deformation where African children were taught not to think critically but to be cogs in the wheels of the European White supremacist colonial exploitative economic system. This was not education but a program of mis-education.

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The United States Position towards the Battle of Al-Karameh and its Repercussions, March 21, 1968

By Yousef Omar*

This paper explores the United States' position towards the battle for Al-Karameh and its repercussions on the 21 March 1968. It argues that even though American policy has always been completely biased in favor of Israel since Israel's founding on 15 May 1948, its position on the battle of Al-Karameh was at the time considered supportive of Israel, balanced with Jordan, and hostile to Palestinian organizations. The United States position in the research relies mainly on the documents of the US State Department (Foreign Relations of the United States FRUS) and on some of the minutes of the Israeli parliament (Knesset) sessions (Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings). This research dealt with an introduction to the crystallization of the Palestinian resistance after the defeat of the Arabs in the Six-Day War of 1967 as well as the policy of the United States towards the region after this war, its position on the escalation of Palestinian resistance from inside Jordan, and the dialectic of Jordan's control of its territories and borders. It also dealt with the incident of the bombing of the Israeli bus on 18 March 1968, and the escalation of tension, which eventually led to Israel attacking Jordan in the battle for Al-Karameh on 21 March 1968, the initial American reaction to it, and the subsequent issuance of Security Council Resolution 248 and its implications. It further dealt with the official American position after the battle ended, its support for the efforts of the Jarring Peace Mission in the region, and its policy of balancing its positions between Israel and Jordan. In conclusion, reference was made to the most important results of the research.

Introduction

Israel declared war on Egypt, Jordan, and Syria on 5 June 1967, which Israel called the "Six-Day War" and the Arabs called it Naksa "Setback". It ended with the victory of Israel, the defeat of the Arabs for the third successive time, and Israel's occupation of the Sinai, Gaza Strip, the West Bank (includes East Jerusalem) and the Golan.¹

The defeat of the Arabs in this war and the failure of Gamal Abdel Nasser's national policy led to a major change, as Palestinian refugees no longer waited for the Arab armies to liberate Palestine from Israel as they had before and decided that they would carry out their own armed struggle to achieve it.²

Palestinian organizations initially tried to work among the local population in the occupied territories. Still, they did not achieve much success

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1, Jim Zanotti, "Palestinians: Background and U. S. Relations", *Congressional research service*, 8 January 2010, 45; Rachael Hanel, *Days of Change: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Minnesota: The Creative C. Education, 2007), 26.

2, "1968: Karameh and the Palestinian revolt", *Telegraph*, 1 May 2002. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1400177/1968-Karameh-and-the-Palestinian-revolt.html>

in that. One of the reasons for this was that Israel prevented contact between the leadership of the Palestinian people and the residents of the occupied Palestinian territories and Jerusalem³, so Palestinian organizations, such as Fatah movement, led by Yasser Arafat (1 January 1965 – 11 November 2004), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and other smaller organizations, launched attacks on Israeli targets starting from Jordan due to the presence of a large number of Palestinian refugees there, which provided them with a large popular incubator, in addition to the presence of the longest borders that helped them in carrying out military operations against Israel.⁴

The Al-Karameh⁵ town and the adjacent small Palestinian refugee camp, just a few kilometers away from the new ceasefire lines separating Jordanian and Israeli forces, was a major base for Palestinian organizations and Palestinian fighters locally referred to as "Fedayeen" (Palestinian fighters who are ready to fight Israel and sacrifice themselves for the Palestinian cause).⁶

The fact that Palestinian organizations launched military operations against Israel from Jordan had caused Israel to carry out revenge operations, which had come to be known as "Reprisal operations"⁷. Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1968, these organizations, headed by the largest and most powerful Fatah movement, continued to attack Israel from their bases in Jordan, which resulted in Israeli human and material losses⁸. King Hussein (11 August 1952 – 7 February 1999) did not succeed in neutralizing the Palestinian military presence in the town of Al-Karameh and along the Jordanian border, and by March 1968, there were hundreds of civilians living in the town of Al-Karameh, along with about 900 from Fedayeen - most of them from Fatah movement - who had opened their headquarters in Al-Karameh.⁹

3. Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings, June 1967 – June 1968: the complete transcripts. Part 2, 20 February 1968: Transcript No. 107.

4. James Ciment, *World Terrorism: An Encyclopedia of Political Violence from Ancient Times to the Post-9/11 Era* (London: Routledge, 2011), 295-6.

5. Al-Karameh: A town in central Jordan, near the Allenby Bridge which spans the Jordan River. The river defines the border between Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

6. "Battle of Al-Karama, A Triggering Moment for the Palestinian Resistance", *Palestinian journeys*. <https://www.paljourneys.org/en/timeline/highlight/165/battle-al-karama>

7. Moshe Gat, *Britain and the Conflict in the Middle East, 1964–1967: The Coming of the Six-Day War* (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 124.

8. Spencer C Tucker and Priscilla Roberts, *Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, The: A Political, Social, and Military History*, Vol. I, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 569–570.

9. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist–Arab Conflict, 1881–1999* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 368.

United States' Policy towards the Region after the 1967 War

The 1967 war had sparked a lot of speculation about the influence and policy of the United States in the region, so Nicholas Katzenbach, US Undersecretary of State (3 October 1966 – 20 January 1969), summarized the National Security Council meeting on the Near East. On 21 February 1968, the United States' position stated that there was no indication of the fact that the influence of the United States in the region had deteriorated due to the recent war, but that Soviet influence, in turn, was increasing. It added that the United States has lost some influence due to its relationship with Israel and the last Arab–Israeli war under the natural growth of Arab nationalism.¹⁰

Eugene V Rostow, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (14 October 1966 – 20 January 1969), made the matter more specialized when he expressed his concern about the situation in Jordan and considered King Hussein to be in a real dilemma because the Palestinian organizations had resisted Israel while he wanted to move toward a peaceful settlement with Israel but did not dare do so on his own. Rostow stated that the Israeli ambassador to Washington Yitzak Rabin (1968–1973) informed the US State Department that he hoped King Hussein would finally realize that if he wanted to survive he would have to control "terrorism"¹¹. He added that it would increase King Hussein's chances of survival because if the Palestinian organizations had the upper hand, King Hussein would lose control of his country in the end. It was also made clear to the Jordanian people that they were ultimately victims of the Palestinian organizations and that if he used sufficient force against Palestinian organizations he could remain king.¹²

In light of these challenges, King Hussein sent a letter dated 2 March 1968 AD, to American President Lyndon Johnson (22 November 1963 – 20 January 1969), in which he emphasized his "warm close" relationship with the United States, which brings the two countries together for a long period. He added that he was pleased to receive President Johnson's confirmation that he had previously sent stating that the policy and interest of the United States was the continuation of this relationship with Jordan and that all the tensions and problems created by the six-day war did not change the basic US policy toward Jordan. He further stated that the arms deal presented by the chief of

10. Memorandum for the Record, Washington, Subject: National Security Council Meeting on the Near East, 21 February 1968.

All American documents in this study are from: Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1964–1968, Volume XX, Arab-Israeli Dispute, 1967–1968.

11. There is an old debate about defining acts of violence, especially when there are two contradictory points of view. Violence against Israel is considered by the Palestinian people and its supporters to be "resistance", and Israel and its supporters to be "terrorism".

12. Document (Doc). 120292. 1, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, 24 February 1968, 1908Z.

staff of the Jordanian Armed Forces, Major General Amer Khammash (9 October 1967 – 27 October 1968), to the United States was aimed at meeting Jordan's legitimate requirements of acquiring weapons to confront the huge problems facing Jordan. King Hussein declared that he had great hope that the deal would be agreed upon in the end to enable him to overcome the problems facing him.¹³

It is understood from this message that this deal may have been to confront Palestinian organizations that are launching military operations against Israel from Jordan in light of Jordan's permanent declaration of its desire to reach a peace agreement with Israel.

On 12 March 1968, the US Department of State announced that it was pleased with King Hussein's desire to end negotiations to conclude the arms deal between the two countries as soon as possible and requested the American Ambassador to Amman Harrison M. Symmes (18 October 1968 – 7 May 1970) to tell the Jordanian government that the United States would increase the number of M48A1 tanks from 88 to 100 tanks, 40-mm self-propelled anti-aircraft guns from 4 to 24 cannons, and 50-mm anti-aircraft guns from 9 to 100 cannons, in addition to many weapons parts, and that the United States cannot go about supplying weapons to Jordan any longer.¹⁴

It is clear from the quantity and quality of weapons, even with the criterion of armament at the time, that these weapons were primarily defensive rather than offensive weapons, and they were certainly not able to break the strategic balance with Israel but could make a difference in Jordan's ability to deal with Palestinian armed organizations. These organizations had power and influence inside Jordan and could threaten the rule of King Hussein or perhaps change the monarchy later, which is something that King Hussein may have feared personally.

The United States and the Dialectic of Jordan's Control of its Borders

The American ambassador to Amman, Harrison Symmes, stated on 12 March 1968 that, over the years, he was aware that it was impossible for the leader of a small Arab country, such as Lebanon or Jordan, to make separate peace with Israel, and that Jordan was the most moderate and rational, so we must talk to them to hold separate talks with it about peace with Israel as a desperate last resort. Symmes stated that he knew very well that King Hussein

13. Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, 2 March 1968, 1725Z. 3672, Subject: Letter from King Hussein to President Johnson, Ref: State 113645.

14. Doc. 128960, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Jordan, Washington, 12 March 1968, 0007Z.

and many Jordanian leaders wanted a peaceful settlement with Israel but this desire for peace may not come to fruition due to the worsening situation in Jordan, especially as Israel continued to pursue policies that tended to consolidate its occupation of the West Bank. He added that the strategy of manipulation that Israel pursued by launching retaliatory raids against Jordan and the official and semi-official Israeli threats related to revenge against Jordan did not help in this. He further stated that the operations were bound to increase due to the policies pursued by Israel. According to Symmes, developments had shown that it would become more difficult for the Jordanian regime to suppress Palestinian organizations and these posed a major threat to the Jordanian regime itself. He added that if the stalemate in the peace efforts continues in the Gunnar Jarring Peace Mission¹⁵, then failure will occur not only in achieving multiple peaceful settlements but also in the chances of a successful move towards a peaceful settlement between Jordan and Israel, which will become very few, and the outlook for a stable and independent Jordan will become "darker".¹⁶

When Symmes met King Hussein on 14 March 1968, he expressed his concern about the return of hostilities to Palestinian organizations, as had happened in the few days before their meeting. Symmes confirmed that his information indicates that the Palestinian organizations are still working strongly in the Jordan River region against Israel and that, in view of the previous events, it was feared that Israel would retaliate, even though King Hussein has a policy against these organizations. In this meeting, King Hussein told Sims that he wanted the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Jordan, and that, once the American weapons arrived, he would be in a strong position to remove the Iraqis. Symmes expressed his hope that the king would begin his efforts against the Palestine Battalion 421 backed by Iraq and present on Jordanian territory, and King Hussein responded that he was doing everything he could to limit the activity of these organizations. At that time, it seemed from Symmes' point of view that the Israelis were doing some things that did not undermine the operations, the most important of which were unilateral Israeli actions, especially its retaliatory actions against Jordan. These actions severely weakened Jordan's argument that it did not need Iraqi forces on its soil, especially since Iraqi Chief of Staff Ibrahim Faisal Al-Ansari (1967–1968) had announced he wanted to visit Jordan soon and that King Hussein would do everything in his power to get Iraqi forces out of his country. King

15. The Jarring Mission refers to efforts undertaken by Gunnar Jarring to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors following the Six-Day War in 1967. He was appointed on 23 November 1967 by UN Secretary-General, U Thant, as Special Envoy under the terms of UN Security Council Resolution 242 to negotiate the implementation of the resolution.

16. Doc. 3770. 1, Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, 12 March 1968, 1615Z.

Hussein expressed his hope that Israel would not make this matter impossible. King Hussein also agreed that the operations harmed the Arab cause more than it assisted them.¹⁷

In a telegram from the American embassy in Jordan to the US State Department on 19 March 1968, King Hussein revealed the decision taken by Iraqi Chief of Staff Ibrahim Al-Ansari to gradually withdraw Palestinian battalion 421 from Jordan to Iraq within just a week.¹⁸

It is possible to analyze King Hussein's position that he did feel that there was a real danger to him and his throne, as the presence of Palestinian armed organizations, some Iraqi forces, and many external circumstances imposed many challenges on him, so requesting weapons from the United States was part of his defense in case this evolved into an existential threat to him.

The Bombing of the Israeli Bus and the Escalation of Tension

During this American diplomatic move to at least reduce tension and achieve peace between Jordan and Israel, Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan (5 June 1967 – 3 June 1974) on 17 March 1968, warned that Palestinian guerrillas were preparing for a new wave of resistance, which Israel would take as an excuse to do what King Hussein was unable to do, that is, eliminating the Palestinian organizations. Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol (26 June 1963 – 26 February 1969) also warned of this issue in the Knesset. On the same day, Yosef Tekoah (1968–1975), the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, filed a complaint with the United Nations against what he called "the Arabs repeated acts of aggression".¹⁹

The next day, 18 March 1968, an Israeli school bus was detonated by a landmine 13 miles north of Eilat, killing two people (a doctor and trainer) and wounding ten children²⁰. This operation was the thirty-eighth of the Fatah movement within three months. That night, the Israeli cabinet approved the attack on the Al-Karameh, and Israel assumed that Jordanians would stand neutral and ignore the Israeli attack.²¹

17. Doc. 3793, Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, 14 March 1968, 0820Z, Subject: Terrorism.

18. Doc. 3887, Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, 19 March 1968, 1915Z, Subject: Terrorism.

19. "Foray into Jordan", *Time*, Friday, 29 March 1968. <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/0,9263,7601680329,00.html>

20. Doc. 3887, Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, 19 March 1968, 1915Z. Subject: Terrorism; Amir Oren, "Debate in the Desert", *Haaretz*, 13 May 2011; <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5011697>; Morris. Righteous Victims, 368.

21. "1968: Karameh and the Palestinian revolt", *Telegraph*, 1 May 2002.

Symmes mentioned that King Hussein decided to send Colonel Muhammed Daoud (Jordanian liaison with Israel) to meet his Israeli counterpart under the auspices of the United Nations in the next few days to contain the tension. The Israeli government made intensive efforts to arrest those responsible for the bus bombing and requested any information that might help her in the investigation. This request made King Hussein to speculate in some detail about Israeli intentions towards Jordan while he was reviewing Arab military capabilities with his advisers. He expressed his conviction of the complete inability of the Arabs to win a military solution in any military confrontation with Israel. Iraqi Chief of Staff Ibrahim Al-Ansari informed King Hussein that Iraq could no longer help Jordan militarily against Israel. In return, King Hussein expressed his doubts about the Israelis and their desire for peace. It was concluded that Israel wanted to retain the Arab land it occupied for religious and cultural reasons, that it needed to occupy certain additional areas to reinforce its position, and that Jordan was the target of Israeli occupation.²²

As for the Israeli bus bombing, King Hussein reminded Symmes that he had been "put into hell" and affirmed that if the perpetrators were arrested in Jordan, they would receive the same punishment as if they had caused this accident to the Jordanians. He added that he had sent senior investigators, including trackers, to the area of the accident near Aqaba and yet they did not discover any evidence that any person from Jordan's territory in that area had crossed into the border. King Hussein also mentioned that the Jordanian intelligence service, through breaches and investigations, was unable to discover any known Palestinian organization's involvement in this incident and that investigations were still ongoing under his personal supervision. The king indicated the possibility that there would be Egyptian foreign involvement in that incident²³ and he said it would be desirable to inform the Israelis Update on the Israeli bus accident, the Palestinian battalion 241, and the dispatch of Colonel Muhammad Dawud. King Hussein warned that if the Israelis announced that the exit of the Palestinian battalion from Jordan resulted from Israeli pressure, he would not be able to allow her to leave later, and his efforts in this regard would be seriously compromised.²⁴

The US State Department sent a telegram to the American Embassy in Israel on 20 March 1968, in which it stated that the Israeli ambassador to Washington, Yitzhak Rabin, had been called at 15:00 Washington time to clarify the following points.

22. Doc. 3887, Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, 19 March 1968, 1915Z, Subject: Terrorism.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

- a. The United States government is deeply concerned about reports from its embassy in Jordan and other indications that Israel is calling in reserve soldiers and taking measures that indicate its desire to carry out imminent military retaliation against Jordan.
- b. The United States of America understands the feeling of anger in Israel after the attack on the Israeli school bus; however, the United States considers that the Israeli military reprisals are self-defeating and would seriously harm the hopes of a peaceful solution to the problems of the region.
- c. More Israeli retaliatory actions against Jordan would be a major and perhaps fatal blow to the Jarring Peace Mission and to American interests in Jordan and would seriously undermine the ability of the United States to influence the Arab position to achieve constructive directions that are in Israel's best interest as much as it is in the interests of the United States.
- d. Any Israeli military retaliation will be a regrettable measure at a time when it appears that Jordan will take steps to fight the resistance, which is what Israel has been seeking for a while.²⁵

In a memorandum from Rostow, the Assistant to US President Johnson on 20 March 1968, Rostow confirmed that the Israelis were massing their forces on the border with Jordan, even though the American ambassador to Israel Walworth Barbour (11 May 1961 – 19 January 1973) confirmed that the Israeli decision of the final attack on Jordan had not yet been taken and that the rapid Israeli military move stemmed from the growing concern about the continuation of the Palestinian resistance. Barbour added that the Israelis did not believe that King Hussein made a real and sufficient effort to suppress Palestinian organizations and that after the bombing of the Israeli bus and similar incidents of sabotage, the pressure for revenge in Israel had become irresistible. So King Hussein asked the United States to help repel the Israelis because he feared that a major Israeli attack on his country would be the end, leading to the elimination of the Jarring Peace Mission. Rostow stressed that this would make the US position unhappy, especially if Israel decided to occupy additional lands of Jordan.²⁶

Because of the escalating tension in the Middle East, and because of the Israeli build-up on the Jordan border, the US State Department sent a telegram from US President Johnson to the American embassy in Israel on 21 March 1968, and they were asked to deliver it urgently to Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol as follows. Johnson Deplores what he called recent operations against

25. Doc. 133284. 1, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, 20 March 1968, 1943Z.

26. Action Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, 20 March 1968, 7:25 p.m. Subject: Urgent Message to Eshkol.

Israeli lives and property. Nevertheless, he fully expressed his conviction that any military retaliation against Jordan would be a major error in appreciation and would have devastating consequences for hopes of peacemaking and the future of the region. He added that it was in the interest of the United States and Israel that no such action should be taken and he was making his effort for King Hussein to in return make every effort to stop the resistance.²⁷

In a similar step, Johnson sent a telegram on the same day to teleport it quickly to King Hussein, expressing his appreciation for King Hussein's efforts to control Palestinian organizations and prevent incidents like the bus bombing on March 18, 1968, that could destroy hopes for peace in the Middle East. Johnson appealed to King Hussein to make every effort to put such incidents under strict control and that King Hussein must resolve to maintain an environment free from this kind of violence. He added that he appealed to Israeli Prime Minister Levy Eshkol in return for the exercise of restraint.²⁸

Menachem Begin, the Israeli minister (without portfolio), stated that during the day before the Battle of Al-Karameh, Israel received five different messages from the United States of America, including one from President Johnson himself, asking her to refrain from a military operation.²⁹

It was clear that the United States wanted to maintain stability in the constantly tense Middle East and did not want a new war by Israel against the Arabs, especially since Israel had just emerged victorious over them in the Six-Day War. At the same time, the States have never wanted to lose its ally Jordan in a region teeming with countries hostile to it and its policy in the region.

The Beginning of the Battle of Al-Karameh

After Israel's shocking victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) expected that any operation in the Jordanian town of Al-Karameh would be "a picnic"³⁰. Since by 20 March 1968, Jordan was fully aware of the various Israeli military build-ups, the Jordanian army had taken positions near the bridges separating the two countries, and the artillery had been

27. Doc. 133886, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, 21 March 1968, 0511Z.

28. Doc. 133887, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Jordan, Washington, 21 March 1968, 0540Z.

29. Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings, June 1967 – June 1968: the complete transcripts. Part 2, 22 March 1968: Transcript No. 111.

30. Michel Warschawski, "Karameh: The Palestinian Resistance's 1968 Baptism of Fire", *Verso*, 13 May 2018. <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3800-karameh-the-palestinian-resistance-s-1968-baptism-of-fire>.

deployed to the upper Jordan Valley highlands overlooking the town of Al-Karameh to obtain a strategic advantage.³¹

Prior to the Israeli attack on Al-Karameh, the IDF Chief of Staff, Haim Bar-Lev (1968–1971), stated that the Israeli Air Force (IAF) threw leaflets informing the Jordanian army that Israel had no intention of harming them and that they should not interfere in any upcoming battle. The leaflets did not receive any attention but rather led to Palestinian fighters heading in large numbers to confront Israeli forces in the town of Al-Karameh.³²

At 5:30 am on 21 March 1968, the Israeli forces attacked at the same time the Jordan River through the bridges that separated them from Jordan³³, where soldiers and paratroopers crossed, alongside tanks, armored vehicles and other vehicles, Allenby Bridge south of Al-Karameh and Damiya Bridge north of it in a movement of pincers to attack Palestinian militants in two directions. Israeli forces also moved south of the Dead Sea near the town of Ghor Al-Safi, and paratroopers were dispatched east of Al-Karameh to cut off the road to any withdrawal of Palestinian fighters³⁴. When the Israeli forces began their incursion into Al-Karameh, they met stiff resistance by Fatah movement fighters and other Palestinian organizations backed by artillery and Jordanian forces.³⁵

The Israeli forces in charge of the attack penetrated the town of Al-Karameh at 7:00 am³⁶, and by 8:00 am, they took control of the town. These forces discovered that Al-Karameh was the largest base of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) previously perceived.³⁷

Despite the partial success achieved by the Israeli forces in Al-Karameh, these forces were frustrated by their inability to surround the entire forces of the PLO factions, especially Fatah movement, and were surprised by the violent resistance of these factions and the standing of the Jordanian army on their side. Their frustration was further aggravated by their inability to achieve rapid victory as they had hoped and as was the case in all their

31. Kenneth M Pollack, *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948–1991* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 331–332.

32. Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings, June 1967 – June 1968: the complete transcripts. Part 2, 26 March 1968: Transcripts Nos. 113–114.

33. Doc. 133886, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, 21 March 1968, 0511Z (Note: 3); Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 332–333.

34. "Battle of Al-Karama, A Triggering Moment for the Palestinian Resistance", *Palestinian journeys*.

35. Pollack, *Arabs at War*, 332–333.

36. Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 369.

37. Chaim Herzog and Shlomo Gazit, *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East from the War of Independence through Lebanon* (New York: Vintage Books, 1982), 205.

previous wars. So the IDF leadership decided to withdraw but later had to fight again to withdraw from Jordan.³⁸

The End of the Battle of Al-Karameh

The IDF began withdrawing on the same evening, during which 156 fighters of the PLO factions were killed, about 100 others were wounded, and 141 others were captured³⁹. The Jordanian forces lost between 40-86 soldiers, with 108-250 soldiers were wounded⁴⁰. As for Israel, it lost 28-33 soldiers, with 69-161 were wounded; 27 tanks were destroyed, and 4 other tanks were left behind.⁴¹

The relatively high Israeli losses were big and surprising for the Israelis⁴², and this was why the battle of Al-Karameh provided a huge boost and a great propaganda service for the PLO and Fatah factions⁴³. This battle immediately became a synonym for Palestinian courage and valor, less than one year before Israel defeated the Arab armies in the Six-Day War. The battle of Al-Karameh was not merely a victory in a battle but a history that brought the Palestinian issue and the Palestinians back to the political map.⁴⁴

The chief of bureau of the then Israeli Foreign Ministry, Gideon Rafael (1968–1972), admitted when he said: "The operation gave an enormous lift to Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement and irrevocably implanted the Palestinian problem onto the international agenda, no longer as a humanitarian issue of homeless refugees but as a claim to Palestinian Statehood."⁴⁵

The battle of Al-Karameh also made Arabs and Palestinians realize that Israel could be defeated and forced to recalculate its potential⁴⁶, and they

38. "Foray into Jordan", *Time*, 29 March 1968.

39. Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 369.

40. Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land, A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2009), 244–246; Steve Posner, *Israel Undercover Secret: Warfare and Hidden Diplomacy in the Middle East* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1984), 181; Suzanna Goussous, "UJ celebrates 47th anniversary of Karameh Battle", *The Jordan Times*, 26 March 2015. <http://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/uj-celebrates-47th-anniversary-karameh-battle>.

41. Herzog and Gazit, *The Arab-Israeli*, 205; Morris, *Righteous Victims*, 369.

42. Tucker and Roberts. *Encyclopedia of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, I, 569–573.

43. Jewdayo Grid, "March 21: Battle of Karameh", *Jewish Current*, 20 March 2011. <https://jewishcurrents.org/march-21-battle-of-karameh/>.

44. "1968: Karameh and the Palestinian revolt", *Telegraph*, 1 May 2002.

45. Grid, "March 21: Battle of Karameh"; Warschawski, "Karameh: The Palestinian Resistance's 1968 Baptism of Fire".

46. Jawad Anani, "The Karameh Battle", *The Jordan Times*, 19 March 2018. <https://www.jordantimes.com/opinion/jawad-anani/karameh-battle>

considered it a psychological victory over the IDF, which was seen as invincible after its victory in three battles against Arabs.⁴⁷

The American Reaction to the Battle

Harold H. Saunders of the National Security Council sent a memo to President Johnson on 21 March 1968, informing him that Israel had begun a major attack on the bases of Palestinian organizations on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. Saunders confirmed that Johnson's message to Eshkol arrived after the attack (8:45 pm EST), that Eshkol told him that this raid would be "limited", and that the Israeli forces would withdraw as soon as they finished their mission to prevent and disarm the activities of Palestinian organizations.⁴⁸

Saunders emphasized in this memo that the United States faced three issues.

1. The United States would likely delay the signing of the US Aid Agreement to Israel, known as PL480, which was to be signed at 10:30 am on 21 March 1968 US time, and Saunders confirmed that he did not see an opportunity to sign this new agreement on the same day and that it was necessary for the United States to say that everyone would be "very busy" that day, avoiding any indication that this delay was punishment for anyone.
2. The United States was considering issuing an early statement based on the idea that more violence cannot bring peace to the Middle East and that "our concern and dismay" be expressed about Israeli military action against Jordan, and that it could hardly be silent about that, with the need to be as cautious as possible towards local Jewish opinion in the United States.
3. Saunders confirmed that he had no indication until that time that there would be a meeting of the United Nations Security Council, but the possibility of this happening was clear.⁴⁹

After the battle for Al-Karamah began, King Hussein sent President Johnson on 21 March 1968, a message saying: "We are now fighting once again, defending ourselves in the face of blatant and deliberate Israeli aggression". King

47. A.I. Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 258.

48. Information Memorandum From Harold H. Saunders of the National Security Council Staff to President Johnson, Washington, 21 March 1968, 7:45 a.m.

49. Ibid.

Hussein affirmed that he was defending his country in this war with the remaining weapons in their hands since the June 1967 war in light of the lack of a final agreement with the "friendly" United States to re-supply Jordan with defense equipment. He added that it was because of Israeli aggression that Jordan, its Head of State, leaders, armed forces, and people have all become "victims" of American weapons, and that his faith and belief in the friendship between Jordan and the United States and its president made Jordan to reject any other choice from any country to strengthen his defensive weapons in the face of the history of the continuing aggression of Israel. King Hussein affirmed that neither he, his government, nor his armed forces would bear and would not be responsible for the safety and security of the Israeli occupation forces in the West Bank and the rest of the occupied Arab territories and that he was not expected to be responsible for this matter.⁵⁰

King Hussein also affirmed once again that after a thorough investigation into the incident of the Israeli bus bombing, no conclusion had been reached regarding the perpetrators in Jordan. He added that he was doing his best honestly and sincerely to lay the foundation for a just and lasting peace in the region, and that if there was blame because of the failure, it must fall directly on the Israeli side and on those who encouraged Israel knowingly or unknowingly in its plan to destroy the first and last opportunity to achieve peace.⁵¹

The US Ambassador in Amman Symmes mentioned that the message of the American President to King Hussein on 21 March 1968, had reached him three hours after the Israeli attack on the town of Al-Karameh began within the Jordanian border, and that this message had sparked a very negative reaction from King Hussein. He added that it appeared that the king was particularly upset by what he considered a hint that the United States of America held Jordan responsible for the Israeli bus bombing and that he was not sincere in efforts to control Palestinian organizations.⁵²

King Hussein's position was apparently sincere if we knew that after decades, no one could prove that the Palestinian organizations were the ones that blew up the Israeli bus and none of them had claimed responsibility for this incident, which really raises many questions about who carried it out.

50. Doc. 3928, Telegram From the Embassy in Jordan to the Department of State, Amman, 21 March 1968, 1030Z.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid.

Security Council Resolution 248 and its implications

After the battle of Al-Karameh ended, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 248 on 24 March 1968, unanimously (15 countries, including the United States of America), and the resolution states as follows.

1. Regret over the loss of life and serious damage to property.
2. Condemn the military action launched by Israel in flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and ceasefire resolutions.
3. Denounce all violent incidents that violate the ceasefire, and declare that military reprisals and other grave ceasefire violations cannot be tolerated.
4. Call on Israel to desist from actions or activities contrary to Resolution 237 (of 1967).⁵³

The American Position after the Battle Was over

The American ambassador to the United Nations Arthur Goldberg (28 July 1965 – 24 June 1968) said: "We believe that the military counteractions, such as those that have just taken place, on a scale out of proportion to the acts of violence that preceded it, are greatly to be deplored."⁵⁴

Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban (13 January 1966 – 2 June 1974) also spoke about the harsh reactions to the Al-Karameh battle around the world, stressing that the American position was particularly troublesome, given that the United States considered the operation a disproportionate and unnecessary attack. The matter ultimately led to an increase in Fatah movement's power.⁵⁵

In a media note from Rostow to President Johnson on 22 March 1968, Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, who mentioned the Israeli justifications for their recent attack on Jordan, replied that the Israelis had gathered much evidence that Palestinian organizations were planning a coordinated attack in the spring and summer of 1968 within Israeli territories. Eshkol claimed that the Israelis seized Soviet documents and weapons to prove this. While Eshkol was working to achieve better control of the borders with Jordan, Symmes was assuring him of the United States' determination to return attention and focus to the Jarring Peace Mission. He added that the debate on this mission and the possibility of its success was still continuing and that a future mission

53. United Nation, Security Council, S/RES/248 (1968, Resolution 248, 24 March 1968.

54. Grid, "March 21: Battle of Karameh".

55. Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings, June 1967 – June 1968: the complete transcripts, Part 2, 9 April 1968: Transcript No. 115.

would also depend on the results of the Arab Summit that King Hussein requested to convene after the Israeli attack on the town of Al-Karameh.⁵⁶

As for the Israeli Prime Minister, he said on 22 March 1968, that Israel received a clear message from the American administration that the large-scale military operation contradicts American interests in the region. Eshkol explained to the American administration that Israel would proceed in diplomatic talks with Jarring as scheduled⁵⁷. On the day, the US State Department sent a telegram to the American Embassy in Israel on 23 March 1968, reporting that Eshkol reviewed the Palestinian military operations, the most recent of which was the "Gruesome attack" on the Israeli bus carrying Israeli children on 18 March 1968, confirming that Fatah movement had decided to develop its operations against Israel by undertaking open, frank, organized, and legitimate operations in the eyes of King Hussein, instead of carrying out secret operations only. This would be done during the spring and summer of 1968. The Jordanian leaders tolerated and sometimes encouraged violations against the security of the State of Israel and did not contribute to a ceasefire or the implementation of international obligations, which threatened Jordan's independence and pushed Jordan and Israel towards conflict again. The telegram added that the attack by Israel on the town of Al-Karameh against Fatah movement should not cause any remorse for Israel, the Israeli government, or the United States, that it would be "destructive" for the United Nations to avoid its duty by harshly criticizing Fatah operations from Jordan against Israel. It further stated that orders had been issued to the IDF not to harm civilians in the battle of Al-Karameh, that this cost Israel a heavy price, and that King Hussein must understand that the Jordanian army was not a target of the Israel Defense Forces, although the Jordanian army sometimes succumbed to pressure from Fatah movement.⁵⁸

The US State Department also stated that King Hussein was then better able to promote a ceasefire and move toward peace through negotiations and that Israeli Foreign Minister Aba Eban told Jarring that the Israeli government was still accepting his proposal to hold a peace conference with Arab countries in Nicosia. He added that it would work with him patiently despite Jamal Abdel Nasser's irresponsible rejection of this proposal⁵⁹. Aba Eban once again considered that the Jordanians were still showing their readiness for peace with Israel. He spoke with the American administration, which asked

56. Information Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, 22 March 1968, 7:35 p.m. Subject: Reply from Eshkol.

57. Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings, June 1967 – June 1968: the complete transcripts. Part 2, 22 March 1968: Transcript No. 112.

58. Doc. 135561. 1, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, 23 March 1968, 2001Z.

59. Ibid.

Israel to reduce its actions in East Jerusalem and make some gestures towards Palestinian refugees to persuade Jordan to move towards peace.⁶⁰

In a memo to President Johnson on 26 March 1968, Rostow said that after weeks of negotiation, the arms deal for Jordan was ready to be signed and that the plan was to sign the deal without announcing it after negotiations that lasted a few weeks. That time may not have been the best time to announce the deal in light of the ongoing Palestinian attacks against Israel and the Israeli attack on Al-Karamah within the Jordanian borders. However, there may not be any good time to announce the deal, and the main purpose of this matter was to strengthen the authority of King Hussein, although the weapons in this deal would not reach Jordan at the same time.⁶¹

It seems that the United States wanted this deal to balance its relationship with Jordan on the one hand and with Israel on the other, and that the approval of this deal was a kind of compensation for the Israeli attack on Jordan. It may also have been an attempt to encourage Jordan to continue peace efforts and to fight the operations carried out by Palestinian organizations against Israel.

Therefore, Rusk gave a fresh indication that the United States would make efforts again to prevent further Israeli attacks on Jordan, that the United States' opposition to Israel's retaliatory raids on Jordan came as it does towards opposing operations against Israel. He added that the United States appreciated that the problem of King Hussein lay in controlling Palestinian operations in light of the lack of progress towards a peaceful settlement. He further stated that no Israeli government could resist the pressure of the internal policy that drove them to take another military action if operations continued in Israeli territory, and as regards the increasing intensity of these operations, security considerations had always prevailed over the Israeli government.⁶²

Rusk stressed that it was clear that achieving a just and acceptable peace on both sides was the only true solution to the problem of Palestinian operations and that the ways in which the United States can assist Jarring's efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement should be actively examined. However, if the cycle of Palestinian operations and Israeli reprisal raids continues, the situation will rapidly deteriorate to the point of no return. Rusk stated that work should continue for more flexibility in the Israeli position, but at the same time, it was necessary for Jordanians to show a great deal of control over

60. Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meetings, June 1967 – June 1968: the complete transcripts. Part 2, 19 March 1968: Transcript No. 110.

61. Action Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, 26 March 1968, 8:10 p.m. Subject: Signing Jordan Arms Package.

62. Doc. 137662, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Jordan, Washington, 28 March 1968, 0138Z.

the activities of Palestinian organizations. Unfortunately, the United States had no plan to present to the Jordanians to control the organizations. Rusk stressed that the US government was not absent from the Jordanian government's efforts or the moderate and constructive course that it followed and that they were concerned about the situation that appeared to be going in dangerous directions away from peace.⁶³

The US administration emphasized once again that the operations carried out by Palestinian organizations pose a threat, and Israel must do what is necessary towards it, and that Israel's efforts to end these operations through military counterattacks will not succeed. It added that if they continued on that path, everyone would see an endless spiral of attacks and counterattacks and all the Arabs at the Arab Summit would continue to reject a political solution and declare their commitment to the guerrilla war carried out by the Palestinian organizations against Israel and that the Israelis are beginning to understand this thing, even though they feel that they had to respond to these operations in one way or another.⁶⁴

The US administration also confirmed that the only party that could stop operations from Jordanian territory was the Jordanian government. Consequently, the problem was to persuade King Hussein to stop these actions or work to create conditions that would enhance his standing enough to suppress them, with an agreement that Israeli military attacks do not enhance his standing. It added that it may not be too late for King Hussein to neutralize Palestinian organizations or stop them by force, and that the alternative to violence lay from the point of view of the US government in putting the Jarring peace talks on the road, and that the alternative to peace was to allow the force to play its role.⁶⁵

The administration also stressed that the problem was that only the Israelis decide to shoot when the pressure of Palestinian operations against them escalates, leaving the United States in a worse position every time Israel responds, in light of the real risk that the Security Council will vote the United Nations to impose sanctions against Israel, and most importantly, that Israel was also in a worse situation if it does not stop the spiral of guerrilla war.⁶⁶

In a conversation, Harold Sand Rice and Ephraim Evron, the Israeli Minister at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, spoke basically about the Israeli attack on Al-Karamah town and what the Israelis see at the end of their course of escalating operations and counter-retaliatory attacks, although the results of the military review of the attack on the town of Al-Karamah were

63. Ibid.

64. Memorandum From Harold H. Saunders of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Washington, 29 March 1968, Subject: Next Step with Israel-Jordan.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

not yet over. Evron noted in this meeting that the Israelis were not necessarily satisfied with this type of attack as the best way to combat organizations and that they would test other methods like building a fence extending from the Dead Sea to the Sea of Galilee (Tiberias). He added that this was why Israel ordered so many anti-personnel mines as quickly as possible from the United States. Evron also stressed that he was fully prepared to recognize that Israeli counterattacks would not stop operations.⁶⁷

When Sanders asked about his opinion of how the Israelis could expect to stop activities on grounds that Israelis did not control, Evron responded that the main problem was convincing King Hussein of the need to carry out the task of controlling his lands and preventing operations. Then Sanders told him that he did not believe that the Israeli counterattacks would do that either. Evron did not agree with him, but he did not argue with the same strength that he did before. Evron emphasized in this meeting that King "Hussein is so weak that perhaps only the Palestinians can take the lead"⁶⁸. However, the facts of the matters proved that Evron's words were false, as King Hussein was able, within only two years, to impose his authority and sovereignty on the ground and to permanently liquidate the Palestinian resistance and remove it from Jordan.

The Balance Policy after the Battle of Al-Karameh

American diplomacy did not stop after the battle of Al-Karameh, so Harold Sanders sent to Rostow on 1 April 1968, another memorandum stressing the need for US President Johnson to put pressure on Israel and begin to rebalance the position of the United States of America toward the Arabs. Sanders added that the best bet for the United States was to focus on changing Israel's position by persuasion - rather than pressure - to give the Jarring Pease Mission a real opportunity to achieve peace. He further stated that it must be ensured that doing something close to this was better than letting the forces in the Middle East play their role, given the possibility that the next Arab summit would commit to guerrilla war against Israel instead of a political solution. He added that called upon Israel to clearly signal that she did not want to put obstacles in the way of the Jarring Pease Mission, which was difficult in light of the

67. Memorandum for the Record, Washington, 29 March 1968, Subject: Conversation with Israeli Minister Evron.

68. Ibid.

crisis of the Israeli cabinet and Eshkol's desire to preserve the coalition that made up his government.⁶⁹

On 4 April 1968, US Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach sent a note to President Johnson expressing deep concern about the recent developments in the Middle East, which gave the Soviet Union the opportunity to exploit provocative operations and Israeli military retaliation against them. He added that it was clear that Palestinian guerrillas had strengthened their gains due to King Hussein's inability to deal with the matter due to his regime's apparent weakness, along with reduced sympathy for Israel and increased doubts about its peaceful intentions. Therefore, Jarring must try to secure some gestures on the part of the Israelis, and the Arabs should obtain some conviction regarding continued Israeli interest in reaching a political settlement, which would strengthen King Hussein's position.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, on 5 April 1968, Rostow affirmed that Eshkol's approach to Jarring's Pease Mission was very general, while King Hussein expressed his willingness to accept this plan. Rostow added that there was an express judgment that if the United States failed on this tour, they would face a very grim possibility⁷¹, and this track confirmed Israel's demand for large quantities of anti-personnel mines (400,000) from the United States. Evron said that the urgently needed mines coincided with the creation of a security belt to prevent the infiltration of Palestinian fighters along sensitive areas of the ceasefire line. The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian Affairs, Rodger P. Davies (1965–1970), gave a personal response to Evron's request that since the United States government took a strong public stance criticizing Israeli's policy of military retaliation, it was preferable to cooperate in taking measures to provide alternatives to that policy. Rodger added that it would be embarrassing to use US-manufactured mines in military countermeasures to Jordan, so Evron quickly replied that he was authorized to announce to him that the mines would only be used in a project to close and guarantee the Israeli border at night only.⁷²

Whatever the case, President Johnson expressed to Levi Eshkol his deep sympathy for the serious problems posed by the ongoing operations against Israel, as well as his deep concern about the prospects of not achieving peace in the Middle East. Yet Johnson expressed his belief that military action that crossed the ceasefire did not deter the kind of operations that Israel was facing but led to

69. Memorandum From Harold H. Saunders of the National Security Council Staff to the President's Special Assistant (Rostow), Washington, 1 April 1968, Subject: The President's Decision and the Near East.

70. Memorandum From Acting Secretary of State Katzenbach to President Johnson, Washington, 4 April 1968, Subject: Middle East Problem.

71. Action Memorandum From the President's Special Assistant (Rostow) to President Johnson, Washington, 5 April 1968, 9:20 p.m.

72. Doc. 142978. 1, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, 6 April 1968, 0229Z.

more insecurity. The president added that Israel's true security lay only in achieving peace, that everyone was at a crossroads in this regard in the Near East, and that the only peacemaking process available at that time was the Jarring Peace Mission. Johnson expressed his deep concern regarding the lack of tangible results for this mission and the accumulated deterioration of the situation resulting from the increase in military operations and countermeasures carried out by Israel, which seriously affected life in Jordan. He confirmed that there was very little time. However, there was still an opportunity for an active peace strategy, and this may be the last chance for the success of the Jarring Peace Mission.⁷³

The Battle of Al-Karamah ended, but the Jarring Peace Mission continued afterward. It could not achieve peace between Israel and the Arabs, nor bilaterally, between Israel and Jordan. As for the Palestinian organizations in Jordan, they were on a date with clashes between them and the Jordanian army, in what was known as the "Black September" events, which began in September 1970 and ended in July 1971 with the elimination of the presence of these organizations on Jordanian lands and their transfer to Lebanon, which became a starting point for Palestinian military action again against Israel.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the position of the United States of America was supportive of the right of Israel to defend itself against Palestinian military actions launched from Jordan. At the same time, the United States affirmed its position in favor of the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Jordan as its ally state. Therefore, it rejected the Israeli military countermeasures against Jordan before and during the Battle of Al-Karamah, considering that these measures were inconsistent with American interests in the region and would not stop these operations against Israel or give it the security it sought. The United States maintained that security could only be guaranteed by achieving peace. It also put pressure on the Jordanian King Hussein, incited him to act against the armed Palestinian organizations, and repeatedly demanded that he does his duty to stop Palestinian hostilities against Israel. Therefore, the United States' agreement to supply Jordan with defensive weapons -which did not disrupt the military balance with Israel - may have come within the framework of that order, and this was confirmed in the next few years when Jordan, through the use of military force, permanently liquidated the presence of Palestinian organizations on its territory in 1970–1971.

73. Doc. 142988. 1, Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Israel, Washington, 6 April 1968, 0516Z.

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