eISSN 2783-6843 | ISSN 1392-0316 | 10.37522/aaav.117.2025.296

Representations of Africa in Communist Romania. A Case Study of the Books Published in the 1960s

Domnica Gorovei
University of Bucharest
Bulevardul Regina Elisabeta Nr. 4-12, București 030018
domnica.gorovei@unibuc.ro
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0276-6806

The present contribution explores how the African continent was portrayed in books published in communist Romania between 1960 and 1969, aiming to understand the strategies and the rhetoric that the regime employed in the context of the global Cold War. A total of 27 books on Africa have been identified, which can be grouped into three thematic categories: (1) travel diaries, (2) politically engaged writings, and (3) theoretical works spanning history, ethnology, art, and political science. These publications reflect a growing interest in Africa, which was largely perceived as part of a broader, mostly undifferentiated developing world. Representations range from art, history, and political ideas to tales and travel impressions, depicting a continent in need of support from the socialist bloc—particularly Romania—as it fought for independence, resisted stereotypes, and sought to advance towards socialism.

Keywords: Romania, Africa, literature, Global Cold War, Ceaușescu.

Communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965–1989) remains one of the key figures many Africans associate with Romania. Meanwhile, during communism, every Romanian was familiar with political developments on the African continent, as televised news programmes and newspapers dedicated extensive coverage to African affairs. This article examines the public image of Africa during communism, focusing on its representation in published books. The research is structured around the following questions: What did Romanians know about the African continent? How did the regime seek to enhance the knowledge of this distant "otherness"—geographically, historically, and socially—while simultaneously framing it as a "fraternity" from the ideological perspective? How did the regime present its interest in Africa?

The main thesis is that the focus of the regime on the developing world(s)—driven by the need to intensify economic exchanges and consolidate international prestige—was accompanied by efforts to introduce these regions to the Romanian public. In an era when travel was limited, books, articles, and news were the primary means of presenting distant places. This study explores the dialogue between the socialist "Second World" and the "Third World" in the context of the "Global Cold War."[1] As African states became independent, the Marxist-Leninist regime in Bucharest seized the opportunity to forge new partnerships, with Nicolae Ceaușescu continuing the politics of independence from the Soviet Union initiated by Gheorghiu-Dej in 1964.[2] At home, the regime's strategy—nothing being random in a totalitarian system[3]—was to make the world visible to Romanians.

1 We use the terminology as elaborated by Odd Arne Westad: the "Third World" refers to "the former colonial or semicolonial countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that were subject to European (or rather pan-European, including American and Russian) economic or political domination. The term "global" applies to "processes that took place on or toward different continents at roughly the same time." See Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 2–3. See also Bogdan Cristian Iacob, "Babel in Bucharest: 'Third World' Students in Romania, 1960s–1980s," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 63, no. 4 (2022): 669–690; and Part I, "Crossing Borders: The Idea of the Third World and the Global 1960s," in Samantha Christiansen and Zachary A. Scarlett, eds., *The Third World in the Global 1960s* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 23–68.

2 Thomas Kunze, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. O biografie* [Nicolae Ceaușescu. A Biography] (Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 2002), 216–217; Adam Burakowski, *Dictatura lui Nicolae Ceaușescu 1965–1989. Geniul Carpaților* [Nicolae Ceaușescu's Dictatorship 1965–1989. The Carpathian Genius] (Iași: Polirom, 2011), 92–99.

3 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000).

The case study covers the period from 1960 to 1969. Although this timeframe may seem artificially delineated, it is important to study it separately, as it marks the foundation of what would later develop into deeper cooperation between the Romanian regime and its African counterparts in the 1970s, followed by more limited engagement in the 1980s. The 1960s also include the transition from Gheorghiu-Dej to Ceaușescu, and during 1965–1969, as Thomas Kunze summarizes in the title of a chapter of his book, this period was "The Liberalization in the Romanian version, a dictator makes himself loved."[4] For Africa, the 1960s represented a defining decade. At the height of the Cold War, the continent's role became essential—particularly within institutions like the United Nations.[5] In the 1960s, most of the former French and British colonies gained independence, although the Portuguese possessions and racial regimes in the southern part of the continent highlighted the limits of this liberation. For the Romanian regime, where communism was firmly entrenched, the development of diplomatic and economic relations (with the Third World in general) were not the sole priority;[6] its rhetoric also emphasized the denunciation of colonialism, neocolonialism, and segregationist regimes. These themes were recognized as directions of foreign policy at the Ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party in July 1965.[7] By the late 1960s, Africa had been incorporated into Romania's "Plan Cincinal" (Five-Year Plan).[8] This ideological background provides the necessary context for the discussion about the books on Africa, reflecting the logic behind their publication. Moreover, from the perspective of Romanian-African relations, this period laid the groundwork for what would become one of the pillars of the Romanian foreign policy in the 1970s.

This study focuses specifically on books about Africa, although the continent was not the only geographical area of interest to the Romanian

4 Kunze, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. O biografie*, 199–239.

5 One of the aspects underlined by Bogdan-Iulian Ranteș, *Relațiile României cu state din Africa Ecuatorială și de Vest (1960–1974)* [The Relations between Romania and States from Equatorial and Western Africa, 1960–1974], (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2017).

6 Especially after 1965, as the relations were rather formal in the 1960s, as shown by Mioara Anton, "Into Africa: Nicolae Ceaușescu's Tour of March-April 2018," in *Twentieth Century Communism* 15.

7 Anton, "Into Africa," 74.

8 *Lumea*, 1967.

regime in the 1960s. Books on Latin America, Asia, and both Eastern and Western Europe were also published. However, isolating books about Africa allows emphasizing the specific representations of the continent.

This contribution approaches the published books from a political science perspective, briefly outlining the contextual and ideological elements of the publications before focusing on the forewords and prefaces. These sections provided the official interpretations of the regime and offered the explicit ideological framework that justified the publishing strategy.[9] From a methodological standpoint, we have identified 27 works using three sources: (1) books referenced in major newspapers of that time, *România Liberă*, *Scînteia*, *Lumea*, and *Contemporanul*; (2) books with the word "Africa" in the title, catalogued at the Central Universal Library (BCU); and (3) references found in other books or in the series lists of publishing houses, respectively. These books are catalogued at the end of the article (Annex 1) in chronological order, with the original year of publication noted in square brackets. For clarity, references to these works in the text follow the format B (for the book), accompanied by a number from 1 to 27.

This study offers just a glimpse into the otherwise complex and diverse representations of sub-Saharan Africa. Future research should further explore the political conditions surrounding this book series, with a focus on publishing houses and institutional decision-making processes. Taking into consideration the high number of books analyzed (27), we were unable to delve deeply into the political contexts in the author's home country—an essential factor in understanding the ideological rationale behind the regime's selection.[10] Additionally, the two studies by Constantin Ionescu-Gulian warrant a more in-depth analysis. Importantly, this article serves as the first in a series, as it examines only books published during a single decade. This opens the possibility for further research on the 1970s and 1980s, allowing for an overview of evolving trends over time.

9 For example, the first volume (of the two) of African tales, published in 1967, is accompanied by a 45-page preface by the folklorist Corneliu Bărbulescu, opening with general remarks about the regime's strategy to popularize Africa.

10 Francesca Orsini, Neelam Srivastava, and Laetitia Zecchini, "Introduction," in *The Form of Ideology and the Ideology of Form. Cold War, Decolonization and Third World Print Cultures*, edited by Francesca Orsini, Neelam Srivastava, and Laetitia Zecchini (Open Book Publishers, 2022).

The article is structured into three main sections. It begins with general remarks about the published books, followed by a detailed examination of each of the three identified categories: (1) the travelogues, (2) the politically engaged narratives, and (3) the theoretical studies, where the final category explores the ways and forms through which Africa was represented.

General observations on the published books

Historiography on the Romanian communist regime has shown limited interest in its relations with Africa. However, a recent shift has occurred with the intensification of research on the Global Cold War,[11] leading to collective volumes,[12] studies on African students,[13] Romanian experts,[14] Ceaușescu's tours,[15] and case studies on bilateral relations.[16] Topics such as writers and the Union of Writers, cultural policies, the role of cultural institutions, and literary exchanges between Europe and Romania[17] have also been addressed by several researchers. Nevertheless, there remains a notable scarcity of studies on Romania's interactions with the Global

11 Westad, *The Global Cold War*.

12 Such as James Mark, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung, eds., *Alternative Globalizations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020); James Mark and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialism Goes Global. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); Kristin Roth-Ey, ed., *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular. Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War* (London, New York, Dublin: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023).

13 Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, Simona Corlan-Ioan, Abel Kouvouama, eds, *Intinéraires des élites africaines dans le monde* (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iași, 2021); Iacob, "Babel in Bucharest…".

14 Bogdan Cristian Iacob, "The Hospital: Romania's 'One Nation Hospital' in Gharyan, 1974–1985," in *Socialist Internationalism and the Global 1960s*.

15 Anton, *Into Africa*.

16 Dragoș Sebastian Becheru, "A Perspective on Libyan-Romanian Relations (1969–1989)," *RJHIS* 1, no. 2 (2015): 39–59; Domnica Gorovei, "Regards croisés – les relations bilatérales Roumanie-Sénégal (1965–1980). Les échanges diplomatiques de Nicolae Ceaușescu avec Léopold Sédar Senghor," *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review* XX, no. 4 (2021): 589–614.

17 Lucia Dragomir, "Rencontres littéraires: échanges, incompréhensions et tensions entre les écrivains des 'démocraties populaires' dans les années 1950," *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review* 17, no. 1 (2017): 111–129; Ioana Popa, "Un transfert littéraire politisé. Circuits de traduction des littératures d'Europe de l'Est en France, 1947–1989," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 144, no. 4 (September 2002).

South—especially Africa—through books. Little attention has been given to how the communist regime chose to present these remote parts of the world to Romanians.

Some general observations on books about Africa can be found, for example, in the studies by Bogdan-Iulian Ranteș,[18] who discusses Gulian (B16) and the book about the colonization of Congo (B20). Similarly, Cristina Preutu and Silviu Moldovan[19] examine the political encyclopaedia from 1962 (B7) and various books from the 1950s and 1970s. However, a comprehensive overview is still lacking, which is precisely what this article aims to provide for the 1960s.

Concerning the genealogy of Romanian narratives on Sub-Saharan Africa, some publications already appeared in the 1950s, mostly translations from Russian. These works combined tales from expeditions to Africa with political reflections on the changes that took place on the continent.[20] The memoirs of the founding father of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, were published in 1958,[21] just months after their original release in the wake of Ghana's 1957 independence. Notably, in 1962, the *Editura pentru Literatură* publishing house announced a new focus on progressive literature from Asia, Africa and Latin America.[22]

18 Ranteș, *Relațiile României*, 12–13.

19 Cristina Preutu, Silviu B. Moldovan, "La politique étrangère de la Roumanie envers l'Afrique subsaharienne, des années 1960 aux années 1970," in *Marges impériales en dialogue. Echanges, transferts, interactions et influences croisés entre les espaces postcoloniaux francophone et la périphérie soviétique européenne dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle* [Imperial Margins in Dialogue. Exchanges, Transfers, Interactions and Cross-Influences Between French-Speaking Postcolonial Spaces and the European Soviet Periphery in the Second half of the 20th Century], ed. Matthieu Boisdron and Krisztian Bene (Ploemeur: Editions Codex, 2022), 193–195.

20 I. Valentinov, *Povestiri din Africa* [Tales from Africa] (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1951); Derek Kartun, *Africa, Africa! Un continent care se trezește* [Africa, Africa! An Awakening Continent] (Bucharest: Editura de stat pentru literatură politică, 1956); Marcel Willard, *Marșul african* [The African March] (Bucharest:E ditura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1956), M. C. Kosven, *Introducere în istoria culturii primitive* [Introduction to the History of Primitive Culture] (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, București, 1957); *Date generale: Australia și Oceania, America, Africa* [General Data: Australia and Oceania, America, Africa] (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1958); Pavel Aleksandrovicj, *Prin Africa tropicală: însemnările unui botanist* [Through Tropical Africa: The Notes of a Botanist] (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1959).

21 Kwame Nkrumah, *Autobiografie. Mesaj din Ghana* [Autobiography. Message from Ghana] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1958).

22 *Contemporanul*, no. 50 (December 15, 1961).

From a broader perspective of the communist regime, the publications can be categorized into three main stages, corresponding to the phases of diplomatic and political dialogue. In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the regime published general, introductory studies and novels. The 1970s saw a shift towards more specialized books, covering subjects such as geology, military affairs, and ideology.[23] In the 1980s, there was an increase in the publication of travel guides. Throughout the entire period from the 1950s to 1989, newspapers consistently popularized Africa.

Annex 1 presents a list of 27 books explicitly addressing African issues,[24] although several other publications implicitly referenced the continent, particularly in their condemnation of colonialism or racism. The trend that began in the late 1950s continued into the 1960s, with translated books from Russian, French, and English. "Authentic" Romanian reflections on Africa remained rather marginal—only eight of the 27 identified volumes were written by Romanian authors, while three were translations from Russian, and the remainder from English or French. Only four books were written by Africans: the anthology of poems from Ghana (B10), the now-classic novel by Ousmane Sembène (B5), and works by South-African writers Harry Bloom (B12) and Alfred Hutchinson (B17). This distribution reflects the incipient stage of Romanian scholarship on Africa and a continued reliance on Soviet and Western perspectives on this topic.

In the Romanian communist publishing world, the book market was characterized by a state monopoly. State publishers were organized according to their thematic focus and target audience. As seen in the list in Annex 1, the books on Africa cover a wide range of genres and were published by several publishing houses, including *Editura Științifică* (Scientific Publishing House), *Editura Politică* (Political Publishing House), *Editura Tineretului* (Publishing House of the Youth), and *Editura pentru Literatură* (Publishing House for Literature).

For the 1960s, we propose three categories based on the genres of the books: (1) travel diaries, (2) politically engaged writings, and

23 Elena Voiculescu and Marin Voiculescu, *Renașterea africană* [African Rebirth] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1979).

24 Some books condemning colonialism or racism implicitly refer to this part of the world, e.g., Nicolae Minei, *De la Imperiu la Commonwealth* [From Empire to Commonwealth] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1967).

(3) theoretical volumes on history or political science. The following three sub-sections will provide an overview of each of these categories.

I. The travelogues

Travelogues[25] played an important role in cross-cultural exchange during the Cold War, as they established "routes of exchange."[26] This general observation holds true for Romania, where, in the 1960s, at least seven travel books were published. The travel diaries of two of Africa's greatest explorers, Henry Morton Stanley (B3) and David Livingstone (B6), are presented in reverse chronological order. The books of two 19th-century Romanian travellers to Africa are reedited: Vasile Alecsandri (B1) and the expedition of boyar Dimitrie Ghika-Comăneşti, which is simplified by Aurel Lecca (B4). The impressions of the American naturalist Archie Carr (B25) and two party officials, Dumitru Popescu (B9) and Eugen Pop (B13), complete this category. Thus, we argue that these Romanian volumes serve as a means to recover the limited historical connections Romania had with the African continent.[27]

The title of the French translation of Stanley's 1874 book, used for the Romanian edition, explicitly evokes the sequence: *How I Discovered Livingstone* (B3). Two years later, in 1962, Livingstone's memoirs were also published, this time translated from the 1956 Russian edition (B6). In both cases, the foreword was written by journalist Sergiu Fărcăşan from *Scînteia*,[28] offering the perfect opportunity not only to describe "the rock breaker"—the name given by the natives because he cleared his path through the jungle by breaking rocks—but also to criticize the United States as "a society that relies on exploitation and private property." Fărcăşan includes a citation from Marx about the social revolution that enables human progress without crimes. The realist portrayal of the explorer underlines his dual personality:

25 Eric Burton et al., "The Travelogue. Imagining Spaces of Encounter: Travel Writing Between the Colonial and the Anti-Colonial in Socialist Eastern Europe, 1949–1989," in *Socialist Internationalism*, 237–260.

26 Francesca Orsini, Neelam Srivastava, and Laetitia Zecchini,"Introduction," in *The Form of Ideology and the Ideology of Form. Cold War, Decolonization and Third World Print Cultures*, 11.

27 Mircea Anghelescu's *Călători români în Africa* [Romanian Travelers in Africa] was published much later (Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1983).

28 Stanley, *Călătorie*, 5–14.

a product of a corrupt society (notably through his role in the Berlin Conference) yet also a man of courage. In this, the text subtly contrasts his character with the book by André Gide,[29] which depicts "the hell that the Congo had become after the establishment of colonial law and order."

Two years later, Fărcășan authored the foreword to the translation of Livingstone's travels to South Africa (B6), titled *The African Odyssey*.[30] Following the lead of his Soviet counterpart, A. Barkov, who, in the Russian edition, compared the journey to that of Ulysses, Fărcășan's foreword offers Livingstone's profile, which is much less controversial than Stanley's, although the imperial ambitions of Great Britain are still acknowledged. The foreword noted Livingstone's role in the service of the "main oppressor of African lands, English imperialism, whose chains couldn't be broken until a century later." It also references the English Empire's involvement in the slave trade. Criticism of Livingstone is aimed at his "unawareness of what his home country would later do in Africa," as well as the suggestion that he had not read Marx. Fărcășan argues that Livingstone was "naïve in imagining that civilization […] could be achieved through trade," pointing out that "for him, the ordinary trade and the slave trade were distinct, without realizing the terrible connection between the two—that capitalist trade (…) is laying the groundwork for Africa's cruel fate." The foreword concludes with a reflection on the political evolutions of that time, asserting that "the bloody shackles of the colonialists will fall to the ground." In the end, Fărcășan rehabilitates Livingstone's good intentions, claiming that if the explorer "were alive today, he would vote for the resolution of the Soviet Union at the UN calling for the complete end of colonialism in 1962."

The 1876 travel memoirs of Vasile Alecsandri (B1), one of Romania's greatest classic writers, were re-edited in 1960. However, the book primarily focuses on his trip to the South of France, with only half of the volume covering Africa, specifically the North of the continent (from Biarritz to Gibraltar). Despite this, the book retains the title *Voyage to Africa*. The foreword to this edition emphasizes the narrative qualities of the writer, highlighting his oral style and his talent for describing the places he visited, rather than focusing on Africa or ideological aspects.

29 André Gide, *Călătorie în Congo. Note de drum* [A Trip to Congo. Trip Notes] (Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1971).

30 Livingstone, *Călătorii*, 5–17.

A second book published the same year is a condensed version of Dimitrie Ghika-Comănești's memoirs from his 1895–1896 hunting and exploring expedition to the Horn of Africa (B4). In 1960, Aurel Lecca popularised this work in an abridged version, narrated in the third person. The book, titled *A Romanian in Africa*,[31] recounts the journey in an illustrated format—though it is important to note that Dimitrie Ghika was accompanied by his son, Nicolae. While it may seem unusual for the communist regime to highlight the travels of an aristocrat from Moldova as part of Romania's continued interest in Africa, the first chapter of the book clarifies this aspect: the expedition had a popular scientific objective, as the hunted animals were donated to the Grigore Antipa Museum of Natural History. This edition seems to be loosely based on the original text, presenting a more general overview of Africa's diverse wildlife and exotism. Aimed at young readers, it features large-format illustrations and chapter titles that reference the animals encountered or hunted, such as ants, rhinoceroses, elephants, leopards, lions, crocodiles, giraffes, and buffalos. These animal depictions are interspersed with nationalist episodes, including recurrent references to the "Romanian pavilion" and a ditch through the Uebi Shebeli river in the Ogaden Region, which is named after the "man of culture and memorialist" Ion Ghika. In contrast to the original work,[32] which includes much more violent hunting scenes and detailed descriptions of Somali communities, the 1960 edition simplifies the language and omits the sociological observations.

A travel volume that adopts an ecologist perspective is *Ulendo* (B25),[33] authored by the American naturalist Archie Carr. The title means "voyage" or "trip" in *Chinyianja*, the language spoken in present-day Malawi (formerly Nyasaland), where the author spent three months. Carr's aim is to argue that Africa's wild areas should be preserved and human expansion should be limited. Focusing on the environmental changes brought about

31 With Val Tebeică *Un român în Congo* [A Romanian in Congo] (Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1970), describing the journey of Sever Pleniceanu, 1898–1901, in the Congo River Basin.

32 The first edition published by Editura Socec will be reprinted under the original name and title: Dimitrie Ghika-Comănești, *O expediție română în Africa* [A Romanian Expedition in Africa] (Iași: Polirom, 2016).

33 His previous book *Aventurile unui naturialist in Marea Caraibilor* [The Adventures of a Naturalist in the Caribbean Sea] (București, Editura Științifică, 1964).

by human activity, the book contains few political and human elements, although the efforts of some African leaders in this regard, notably presidents Julius Nyerere of Tanzania or Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, are acknowledged.

Two volumes—both travel reports[34]—are written by communist officials (B9, B13) after their political trips to Egypt (1960) and Mali (1962). These books confirm the growing trend of "unveiling" Africa, starting with the Maghreb in the early stages and gradually expanding to Sub-Saharan regions. Both authors praise the socialist regimes they visited, namely those of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt and Modibo Keita in Mali, as well as trade unionism, state-led construction projects, the beginning of industrialization (and nationalization in the Egyptian case), agricultural cooperatives, and efforts to reduce the inequalities left by colonialism.

The first of these books (B9) is written by "the chief ideologue during the 1970s" for the cult of Ceaușescu, Dumitru Popescu.[35] At that time, Popescu was a journalist and General Director of the Romanian Press Agency (Agerpres). His trip to Egypt, Iraq, and Cuba[36] served as an ideal opportunity to introduce these distant locations to the Romanian public through a socialist lens. The book denounces neocolonialism and Western logic, presenting the Soviet Union as the only source of vital investment. Popescu describes situations that seem almost too ideologically perfect to be believable. For example, he meets a poor, illiterate local who explains to him that there are two kinds of people in the world: on one side are the Americans, who wish to re-colonize the Arabs, and on the other are the Russians, who seek to liberate them. Modern Alexandria, likened to Babylon, becomes another platform for criticizing the exploitative world of casino owners and large landowners. His visit to the Suez Canal allows him to recount the bombing by the French and British and the subsequent control over commerce, while his stop in Port Said offers an occasion to remember the British attack of 1956 and the Soviet assistance in driving out the "imperialists".

34 In the collection *"În jurul lumii"* [Around the World] of Editura Tineretului.

35 Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2003).

36 In 1965, he published a second travel journal, *Drumuri europene* [European Roads] (Bucharest: Editura Tineretului), 1965.

The book written by journalist Eugen Pop (B13) opens with an exotic perspective, describing "tam-tam"[37] as "a strange wireless telegraph with a mysterious code full of enigmas for us (visitors)," highlighting the remoteness of Niger and Mali for the Romanian reader. The author describes various aspects, such as places like Bamako, the Niger Valley, the drought-stricken savanna, and the flora, particularly the baobab tree. He also explores historical elements like the French invasion and the Scottish explorer Mungo Park, traditions, from small villages and fishing to marabous and mystic rituals, as well as cooking in nature and hand-made products. He shares local stories and mythological legends, and describes folkloric dances and performances. In comparing the region with Europe, Pop notes "the heat, the slow motion of people […] houses built of clay," contrasting these elements with "the wildness of the exotic nature." Much like Dumitru Popescu, he is impressed by the bargaining at the market. The political context is also present, as he visits Mali in April 1961, "at the invitation of the Malian trade unions – The Workers' Union of Mali," only a few months after the country's proclamation of independence on June 20, 1960. "Even our friendly visit to Mali is a manifestation of the feelings that socialist countries have towards African peoples. We talk about these feelings, about the rightness of the verdict that history has pronounced against colonialism."

II. Politically engaged writings

The second category of books encompasses politically engaged novels and reports that primarily focus on condemning apartheid, racial discrimination, and colonialism. These are translated works from the Soviet Union, France, or South Africa, and include authors such as Jean Villain (B18), Alfred Hutchinson (B17), the Senegalese writer Sembène Ousman (B5), and an anthology of Ghanaian writers (B10). Additionally, it is worth noting the 1967 translation of the classic anti-slavery novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe.[38]

37 The tom-tom instrument is, in fact, a recurrent reference in Romanian vocabulary when discussing Africa.

38 Harriet Beecher-Stowe, *Coliba unchiului Tom* [Uncle Tom's Cabin], Biblioteca pentru toți, 1967.

"One of the world's most passionate filmmakers and the novelist who perhaps best captured the turmoil of modern West Africa,"[39] Ousmane Sembène's name is "Romanized" in the Romanian edition as Semben Usman. With deep ties to the communist world—he studied filmmaking in Moscow at the Gorky Studio and completed a brief internship in Prague in October 1958—he "was to gain a new knowledge and embrace a humanism steeped in Marxist ideology, which would eventually structure his thinking and orientate his action."[40] His second novel, originally titled *O Pays, mon beau peuple!* (Oh Country, My Beautiful People!), is renamed in Romanian *Umar și Isabelle* (Umar and Isabelle) (B5). Set in the Southern Senegalese region of Casamance where the author was born, the novel follows the life of the young Oumar Faye, who, like Sembène himself, returns from France after fighting in the Second World War, accompanied by his white wife, Isabelle. In the foreword, Mircea Postelnicu[41] condemns colonialism for perpetuating a false image of Africa, which is absent in countries without colonial histories: "black Africans presented as primitive, dangerous, and often cannibalistic, incapable of governing themselves." The awakening of African peoples is framed as a consequence of the great socialist October Revolution. References to poet Heinrich Heine, the African Peoples' Conference of January 1960 in Tunis, and a detailed account of the Mali Federation serve to evoke the political and historical context of the story. The collapse of the Federation between Senegal and Sudan (now Mali) is interpreted as the failure of the French-African community project. The biographical details about the author highlight not only his humble origins—"a man of the people who were on the right side of the barricade"—but also his experience as a soldier in the French army, where he fought in the "anti-Hitlerist war," followed by his work as a docker in Marseille. Sembène is praised for his "progressive" and "reactionary" character and his connections with the East—he was a delegate from Senegal to the 6th World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow in 1957 and, a year later, attended the conference of Asian and African writers in Tashkent. However, Postelnicu is more reserved regarding the character Oumar Faye, stating that "the means he

39 Samba Gadjigo, *Ousmane Sembene. The Making of a Militant Artist* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), xi-xii.

40 Gadjigo, *Ousmane*, 98.

41 Semben, *Usman*, 5–10.

uses are not always the fairest nor the most effective; he is often too unruly and lacks the calmness required of a fighter and especially of a leader." It is equally acknowledged that Faye "has to face not only the enmity of the exploiters but also a retrograde mentality."

The novel *Episode* (B12), which addresses apartheid, is written by the South African writer, attorney, and human rights campaigner Harry Bloom.[42] Set in the fictional medium-sized-town of Nelstroom in the Transvaal in 1953, the novel depicts segregation and discrimination. Like Ousmane Sembène, Bloom had previous connections with the Eastern block; he lived in Czechoslovakia with his wife[43] and published a book under the pseudonym Walter and Beryl Storm, titled *We Meet the Czechoslovaks*. The foreword, written by Nicolae Oltin Popescu,[44] provides general information about apartheid, including its etymology, statistics, a reference to Nobel Peace Laureate Albert Luthuli, its important mining and industrial potential, the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, the international sanctions imposed on the country, and the destructive consequences of the apartheid.

Another book about apartheid is Alfred Hutchinson's autobiography (B17), published four years after its original release and international success. Dedicated "to the fighters for liberty in South Africa," the book recounts Hutchinson's experiences, including his escape from Johannesburg after being imprisoned in 1952 and charged with treason in 1956 for opposing apartheid.[45] As the title suggests, the book chronicles his journey through Rhodesia, Nyasaland, Mozambique, Tanganyika, Congo, and East Africa, finally reaching Ghana. The afterword, written by Nicolae Minei,[46] offers various data on apartheid, such as the ratio of the white population to the African population, the disparity in property ownership or labour force participation, and discriminatory practices like the prohibition against doctors treating black patients. In a more political and ideological approach, Minei discusses not only the African National Congress but also the Communist Party of the South African Republic, "which operates in

42 https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/specialcollections/tag/harry-bloom/, accessed March 14, 2023.

43 Tom Lodge and Milan Oralek, "Fraternal Friends: South African Communists and Czechoslovakia, 1945–89," *Journal of African History* 61, no. 2 (2020): 221.

44 Bloom, *Transvaal*, 5–14.

45 https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alfred-Hutchinson, accessed March 14, 2023.

46 Hutchinson, *Drumul*, 5–10.

deep illegality and is the oldest Marxist-Leninist party on the entire African continent." The continental changes that occurred after the book was written are noted, with the number of independent states rising from eight to 35. The connections with Romania are also mentioned:

> Among these sincere (…) friends is the Romanian People's Republic. For the citizens of our country, Africa has ceased to be **a distant, foreign and mysterious continent** [our emphasis]. The voice of the government of the Romanian People's Republic, enjoying the unanimous approval of public opinion in our country, has sounded resolutely in all circumstances in which the question of defending the rights and legitimate claims of Africans has been raised in various international assemblies (…) Together with the other socialist countries, the Romanian state grants aid in various fields to the peoples who have conquered their independence. Students from Africa, Asia and Latin America are studying in our institutes and universities, and with the knowledge they have acquired here, they will bring back to their native lands the memory of a free and happy people who have extended to them a friendly hand.[47]

The book by the German author Jean Villain (B18) compiles the journalistic reports he wrote during his visit to South Africa in the second half of 1960. The presentation alternates between testimonies and short articles detailing the discrimination and abuses he observed, approached from a historical perspective. The preface by historian Cristian Popișteanu[48] revisits the abuses of the regime dominated by "the hegemony of the white man," and provides information about the political landscape of South Africa, including domestic politics, parties, and politicians. The challenges faced by communists in a random decision-making system are also noted: "In southern Africa, no one is allowed to be a communist; but who is a communist and who is not, that is for the Minister of Justice to decide, following the 1950 Act for the Suppression of Communists."

A novel by the Russian author Ivanov-Leonov, published in 1962 (B8), is set in Kenya during the 1952–1956 independence movements against English colonialism, focusing on the Mau Mau rebellion. "The result

47 Idem.

48 Villain, *Și astfel*, 5–12.

of the author's strong impressions from his visit to Africa, it is the first novel in a larger cycle of stories about Africa published in the Soviet Union," states the collective afterword from the publishing house.[49]

Two translations from Russian complete this category: an anthology of 18 Ghanaian writers (B10)[50] that celebrates the country's 1957 independence and addresses the social problems facing the newly formed state, and the book by Aleksandr Liubosh (B11), aimed at a young audience, describing a voyage to Africa by a French expedition, with references to the English explorer Samuel Baker.

III. Theoretical studies about Africa

The third category includes theoretical and scholarly studies about Africa, with most notable examples being the two Romanian translations of the well-known British historian Basil Davidson's books (published in 1964 and 1967) and the two works by the communist ideologue Ionescu Gulian, released in the same years as Davidson's translations. Alongside these, the category also includes general works by journalists, historians, art specialists, and folklorists, covering a wide range of African topics for the Romanian public.

One of the most effective tools for disseminating political information about Africa was *Africa Today. A Short Political and Economic Guide*, an encyclopaedia published in the Soviet Union in 1962 and soon after translated into Romanian (B7). It provided general information about the continent, short country profiles of newly independent states, as well as political and physical maps of Africa, several illustrative photos, such as images of Patrice Lumumba, the first African Peoples' Conference in Accra in 1958, and an English-language poster announcing the sale of slaves. On this last topic, it is also worth noting the 1966 monograph on the colonization of Congo by journalist Nestor Rateș and historian Nae Popescu (B20).

The liberation of the African continent and the critique of imperialism are the central themes of the book by William Alpheus Hunton (B2),

49 Ivanov-Leonov, *Generalul*, 262–264.

50 Poetry and short novels by Joyce Addo, Efua Theodora Sutherland, Liebreht Hess, Richard Bentil, Frank Kofi Niaku, I. Kafu Hoh, Andrew Amankwa Opotu, Josef Garti, Bosman Laryea, Cameron Duodu, R. G. Haggin, G. M. K. Mensah, Peter Krame Buahin, Kvesi Brew, J. H. Sakei, J. K. O. Lindsay, J. M. Mensaj, and T. K. Aninfen.

an activist and progressive African American writer. Described in an official journal as "a brief history of the conquest of Africa and an analysis of the methods of colonialist plunder, while also depicting the ongoing struggle and development prospects of the peoples of the vast African territory,"[51] the book includes a collective preface by the publishing house,[52] which delivers one of the most vehement denunciations of Europe and the United States, portraying them as viewing Africa merely as "a vast land of wealth to be pumped into industrially developed countries [...] with no regard for the true masters of the continent—the African peoples."

The Marxist critique of colonialism is also present in *The Lion Awakes* by Jack Woddis, three of whose books were translated into Romanian (B14, B19).[53] The first volume includes two of his English-language books, *Africa—The Roots of Revolt* and *The Lion Awakes*, though the Romanian version curiously omits the reference to Africa from the title, publishing both books under the second title. Woddis was one of the most influential writers of his time, receiving positive reviews in major journals such as *Presence Africaine*, *African Affairs* and *Tiers Monde*, all of which stressed the book's significance for understanding the continent. His analysis explores the economic and social causes of colonialism and independence, with a special focus on trade unions. As a British author and a member of the Communist Party, Woddis aligned well with the ideological narrative of the Romanian communist regime.

The Atlantic slave trade is examined in a book co-authored by American historians Daniel P. Mannix and Malcolm Cowley (B26), a widely recognized volume that garnered global attention. However, several reviews noted its limitations, particularly in the authors' attempt to present the tragic chapter of human history in a readable format, offering a synthesis and simplification of existing studies while updating statistical data.[54] Drawing from a collection of narratives taken from the memoirs of slave ship captains and crews, the book serves a dual purpose: popularising history through

51 Destinele Africei" [Africa's Destiny], *Contemporanul* 30, vol. 71930 (July 22, 1960).

52 Hunton, *Destinele*, 3–5.

53 In 1975, a third volume is published: *E timpul să schimbăm cursul. Cum văd socialismul comuniștii din Marea Britanie* [It's Time for a Change. How Communists from Great Britain See Socialism] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975).

54 Edward F. Sweat, *The Journal of Negro History* 48, no. 3 (July 1963): 223–224.

an ideological lens and critiquing the West. In the preface, historian Camil Mureșan[55] links Africa's underdevelopment to the economic benefits that slavery brought for America and Europe, and its lingering effects in parts of the southern United States.

Short articles on pre-colonial Africa and the disastrous consequences of colonization—such as genocide, the destruction of social and economic order, and the slave trade—are compiled in a book by journalists Gunter Linde and Edmund Brettschneider (B22). The introductory study, written by Nicolae Minei,[56] is one of the few to caution against generalizing about Westerners, noting that not all Europeans supported colonial rule. He highlights the example of Albert Schweizer, the founder and head of a leprosy hospital in what is now Gabon, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1952. For Minei, the book aligns with the trend to rediscover Africa's ancient past as a counterbalance to the losses inflicted by colonialism and to dismantle the two myths of colonialism: European superiority and the supposed inferiority of Africans. Minei adds an ideological perspective, emphasizing the role of the socialist bloc in supporting African development, with a clear mention of Romania's engagement.

The Romanian scholarly perspectives on Africa are best understood when analyzing the original works by Ionescu Gulian (B16, B23) and the introductory study by Emil Condurachi to the 1964 translation of Davidson (B23). Less ideologically influenced analysis can be found in the prefaces by Eugen Schiller (B27) and Corneliu Bărbulescu (B24). We will briefly discuss each of these four perspectives.

Basil Davidson was a recurrent reference in the Romanian public sphere in the 1960s,[57] and remains one of the best-known historians due to his efforts to popularize and raise awareness about Africa's millennia-long history. The preface to the 1964 translation of his work is written by Emil

55 Author of several books on Romanian and universal history, such as *Revoluția burgheză din Anglia* [The Bourgeois Revolution in England] (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1964), among others. Mannix and Cowley, *Corăbiile*, 5–10.

56 Linde and Edmund Brettschneider, *Înainte de*, 5–12.

57 The second volume by Basil Davidson, like Woddis' work, was published without any introductory or final study.

Condurachi, a member of the Romanian Academy (B15).[58] Condurachi strongly criticizes imperialism's "despoiling" of Africa and points out the "valuable contribution to dispelling the mystifications spread by apologists of neo-colonialism by introducing the uninformed reader to the cultural-political history of African peoples." In 1961, Condurachi published an article discussing the end of the slave order until the end of the Roman Empire, advocating for Marxist historiography and criticizing the "reactionary" analysis and "bourgeois historiography," which downplayed the importance of social unrest as "forms of class struggle."[59] When reviewing Davidson's book, he uses the same approach, applying Marx and Engels' theory. However, from this point, some reservations arise, as Condurachi expresses doubts about "some of the author's explanations and personal interpretations," pointing out that they are not fully supported by scientific research based on the concept of historical materialism." He critiques Davidson for "dwelling excessively on the role played by sailors and caravans in spreading forms of material culture," arguing that such spread "could only take root as far as the local development of the forces of production would allow." Condurachi also draws comparisons between archaeological findings in Africa and those in Romania, revealing an emerging nationalist tone in Romania in the 1960s. On several occasions, he finds Davidson "inconsistent" as he overemphasizes the geographic factors or the external influences, or "simplistic" when he argues that art, religion, and tradition "are not and cannot be considered scientifically primitive, but are the expression of a world with its own characteristics." Despite these critiques, Condurachi acknowledges Davidson's virtue as a "progressist author" for his humanitarian perspective and his critique of past European archaeological conclusions. Nevertheless, he maintains that the book is still worth reading, as it shows the potential "for social progress in Africa."

58 Davidson, *Redescoperirea*: 5–18. The preface includes the institutional affiliation of the author, which signals the importance the regime placed on the volume. Seen as the perfect "opportunist," he served as Dean of the Faculty of History-Geography of Bucharest (1948–1950), Director of the Institute of Archaeology of Bucharest (1956—1970), and President of the Romanian Numismatic Society (1958–1983). Gabriel Catalan, "Istoriografia română sub impactul modelului sovietic (1947–1955)" [Romanian Historiography under the Impact of the Soviet Model, 1947–1955], in *Anuarul Institutului De Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România* IV (2009): 23.

59 Emil Condurachi, "Unele probleme ale sfârşitului orânduirii sclavagiste în istoriografia contemporană" [Some Problems of the End of Slavery in Contemporary Historiography], in *Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche* (SCIV) 12, vol. 1 (1961): 35–53.

The Russian expert on Africa, M. O. Kosven, dedicated a chapter of his book on primitive culture[60] to spiritual culture, interpreted through the Marxist-Leninist lens of history as a period of societal development preceding the emergence of classes—one of the five historical stages of humanity: "the primitive commune, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism." The dichotomy between the bourgeois theory and the Soviet theory constitutes the main foundation of two theoretical studies by the Academy member Constantin Ionescu Gulian (B16, B23).[61] Gulian argues that there is "a gap between the spirit of most studies in the Western bibliography (bourgeois progressive authors, reactionary bourgeois dogma, and bourgeois ideologues) and the need for their scientific Marxist interpretation [...] regarding the theory of culture." However, it is worth noting that his references are mainly drawn from French studies.

His first published book (B16) is structured around four general themes: (1) religious representations, (2) morals, (3) the fine arts, and (4) reasoning. Perceiving Africa as a continent in social and political turmoil, a vast territory of interest for the "science of culture," Gulian presents his work as "an initiation into the spiritual culture of Black Africans." Closely following Davidson's perspective, the book serves as a plea for the recognition of Africa's history, adding an ideological critique of capitalist authors who, for a long time, promoted the idea of African inferiority and the "gross forgery" of their flourishing civilizations. He acknowledges not only the "originality and continuity of the culture of African peoples" but also the political role of the continent in its developmental stage and the increasing role of "progressive African politicians, writers, artists, and other representatives of contemporary African intelligentsia."

Gulian's second book about Africa, published three years later, is a study on African humanism and folklore (B23). The publication adds elements of Africa's cultural history to the existing historical, geographical, ethnographical, and political knowledge about the continent. The author rejects the perspective that overlooks popular cultures, presenting folklore as "the living encyclopaedia of all peoples, the power of the people,"[62] and the source of humanity and spiritual creation. Gulian directly links his presentation of "myths,

60 Kosven, *Introducere în istoria culturii primitive*, 7.

61 Gulian would later publish several books on humanism and culture.

62 He uses the term "gintă," which is difficult to translate into English. The definition is: "A group of people with a common ancestry, forming the basic productive unit of the primitive commune; a form of social organization specific to such a group of people." See https://dexonline.ro/definitie/gintă, accessed February 14, 2023.

stories, fables, proverbs, riddles, and nicknames" to Marxist theory on spiritual values. His conclusion remains ideologically framed, as he argues that the history of humanism, which had been individualistic until that point, would take on new meaning once the masses assume a more important role. Influenced by the Negritude concept, Gulian views African folklore not only as part of popular humanism but also as a "black humanism which professes solidarity and fellowship within the broader scope of universal humanism [...] thus nourishing the rights of African peoples to national freedom."

To this ideologized reflection on folklore, we add the much more reserved perspective in the introductory study to the collection of African tales, which includes translations from French volumes published in 1893, 1903, 1926, 1937, and 1947 (B24). For Corneliu Bărbulescu, from the Constantin Brăiloiu Romanian Institute for Ethnography and Folklore,[63] the book in two volumes aims "to sketch some human features of the everyday life of black people, similar in its major coordinates to the life of other people, differentiated only by specific details of behaviour relationships of adaptation to the environment and the exteriorization of emotion," as seen in the ethnic and linguistic diversity of the continent, in the oral tradition and griots, and generally in the stereotypes that are being shattered. "Mankind is beginning to understand that where many 19th-century scholars were still writing on the map of Africa *hic sunt leones*, there were, in fact, peoples with a rich and troubled history, with deep roots in the distant past."

Last but not least, African art was presented to the Romanian public at the end of the decade through a small art book signed by Plutarh-Antoniu Mihăilescu (B27), which includes general observations about the populations and tribes of Sub-Saharan Africa, a selection of ancient artistic cultures (Nok, Ife, Benin, Zimbabwe), and presentations of tribal art and decorative motifs. The photographs in the book were sourced from various museum managers and art collectors from Europe, Africa, and Asia. In the introductory study,[64] Eugen Schileru, professor of art history at the Nicolae Grigorescu Institute of Fine Arts, points out that the volume continues the Romanian studies "on the art of black ethnic groups" initiated by Ionescu

63 *Basme*, v-xliv.

64 *Întâlnire cu arta africană*, 5–30.

Gulian. Black art is presented after exploring the early influences of primitive elements on European art (Delacroix, Gauguin, Picasso). A series of observations, as relevant today (2024) as they were when first made, include: masks and their limited spiritual value when removed from their original context, the growing recognition of the aesthetic value of black art after a period when it was overlooked, the diversity of African societies, and the need to address "the arts of the black ethnic groups of Africa," challenging the idea of immobility or the absence of historical elements in black art.

Ways and forms of representation

Upon studying these books, it becomes obvious that the space of Sub-Saharan Africa is integral to the discourse on decolonization, a movement that was constantly evoked in the early 1960s as part of the critique of imperialism and capitalism. For the Ceaușescu regime, from 1965 onwards, the discourse on decolonization would be aligned with the economic strategy and become part of the struggle for supremacy, even within socialist countries. The phrase "Africa, Asia, and Latin America" is a constant reference in the prefaces analyzed, serving as a constant argument for grouping these regions under the umbrella of the Global South. This is precisely where we sought to isolate the publications about Africa, in order to understand the prevailing images of this continent.

Placed under the banner of socialist realism, these writings are all political, militant literature depicting the ideological clash between the Marxist, progressist interpretation of history and the colonial, reactionary one.[65] All these books target the general public, with the overall aim to educate. A good summary of these representations that the Romanian communist regime aimed to popularize in the 1960s can be found in the photos hereafter. The covers of most of the published books are suggestive, featuring images of animals from wild Africa, slaves in chains, statues, masks, or ethnic elements of African culture. The exoticism of the continent and its struggles are consistently depicted, fuelling the reader's imagination. Powerful representations of men convey the intensity of the anti-colonial fight.

65 Reynald Lahanque, "Les romans du réalisme socialiste francais," *Sociétés & Représentations*, Editions de la Sorbonne 15, vol. 1 (2003): 179.



1, 2. Covers of some books published in the 1960s

Kai kurių XX a. 7 deš. išleistų knygų viršelių nuotraukos



3. Covers of some books published in the 1960s

Kai kurių XX a. 7 deš. išleistų knygų viršelių nuotraukos

All the introductory studies to these books serve as an apology for (Romanian) socialism and express support for the African cause and the development of the continent. The significant number of articles and books about Africa serves as an indicator of the regime's effort to stimulate the interest of the Romanian public in the African continent. The selected works validate the ideological stance, with their obvious critique of colonialism and/or racism, which extends not only to the former European colonial empires but also to the United States.

The subjects of the books are chosen to address the political urgency of the moment and to ensure that the message is received accordingly. Prefaces written by intellectuals loyal to the regime explicitly offer a communist interpretation of the events.[66] Humanism, progressivism, and a focus on contemporary issues are common elements used to condemn

66 Lahanque, "Les romans," 181.

"bourgeois science," to fight against late colonialism (Portuguese Africa), or to denounce the racist governments of South Rhodesia and South Africa.[67] The social character of the great majority of these works is also obvious, stemming from the Marxist belief that class and social conflict are central to history.

Before concluding, we will briefly address the three questions posed at the beginning of this article. Considering what Romanians knew about the African continent in the 1960s, the books cover a wide range of topics, and when analyzed together, they present a quite complex and wide area of interest. Politics, economics, history, art, folklore, ethnology, and travel impressions (including Romanian perspectives) are all interwoven within an ideological understanding of the continent, firmly rooted in the historical context of the time. The regime enhances knowledge of this distant "otherness" from geographical, historical, and societal perspectives, while also fostering a sense of "fraternity" through its Marxist interpretation of history. This interpretation enables criticism of how the Europeans colonized and enslaved Africa, while emphasizing the need for a better understanding of the continent and denouncing the stereotypes that promoted representations of Black inferiority. The interest in Africa reflects Romania's focus on relations with the Global South, a privileged partner in the UN and in the fight against oppression. Romania and Africa are united through the socialist model and the shared struggle for the liberation of all countries. In this context, the popularization of apartheid becomes a pressing issue, as does the potential of the continent, which is evoked much more subtly.

One final aspect worth noting is the print run of these books, as indicated at the end of most of the publications from that time.[68] The highest circulation was seen in the collections of tales, with over 40,160 copies for each of the two volumes. The books on travel followed closely, with print runs between 40,000 and 20,000 copies, while novels ranged from 20,000 to 6,150 copies (Sembène Ousmane). The more specialised books, such as the publication on African art (3,840 copies) and the anthology of Ghanaian literature (3,170 copies), had the lowest circulation. Basil Davidson's popularity is reflected in his print run, which stands as the highest among

67 Gary Baines and Peter Vale, eds., *Beyond the Border War. New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts* (University of South Africa: Unisa Press, 2008).

68 Only for five of the 27 books were these data not indicated.

the theoretical volumes, at just over 25,000 copies. This category also had the lowest print runs, with examples like Gulian's 1964 volume published in 6,125 copies and his 1967 volume in 8,125 copies. These figures are unsurprising, as the classification of volumes into the established three-fold categories aligns with the regime's expectations regarding public reception.

Final remarks

This contribution explores how the Romanian communist regime presented the African continent through the books published during the 1960–1969 decade, aiming to understand the strategies and rhetoric developed by the regime following African independences in the context of the global Cold War. The increased interest in the continent is obvious, with the types of publications ranging from art, history, and political ideas to tales and travel impressions.

When studying the 27 books about the African continent, we propose a three-fold categorization based on the type of writing: (1) travel diaries, (2) politically engaged writings, and (3) scholarly works focused on the history and political evolutions in Africa. Progressive and engaged authors are published as part of the regime's effort to align with the Global South. Africa is consistently depicted as an exotic continent, but from an ideological perspective, it also serves as a platform to critique the West's approach to this continent in the Cold War era.

Received —— 2025 04 08

Annex 1. List of the main books about Africa published in the 1960s (in chronological order, with the original year of publication in square brackets)

B1 Alecsandri, Vasile. *Călătorie în Africa* [A Trip to Africa]. Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă. Biblioteca pentru toți, 1960.

B2 Hunton, W. Alphaeus. *Destinele Africii* [Africa's Destiny]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1960.

B3 Stanley, Henry Morton. *Călătorie prin Africa 1871* [Voyage to Africa 1871]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1960. [1874]

B4 Lecca, Aurel. *Un român în Africa* [A Romanian in Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Tineterului, 1960. Series "Mari descoperitori, mari călători."

B5 Usman, Semben. *Umar și Isabelle* [Usman and Isabelle]. Bucharest: Editura De stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1960. [1957]

B6 Livingstone, David. *Călătorii și cercetări în Africa de Sud* [Voyages and Researches in South Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1962.

B7 *Africa azi: scurt îndreptar politic-economic* [Africa Today: A Short Political and Economic Guide]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1962. [1962]

B8 Ivanov-Leonov, V. *Generalul "Africa"* [General Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1962.

B9 Popescu, Dumitru. *Impresii de călător prin Egipt, Irak, Cuba* [Impressions of a Traveller through Egypt, Iraq, Cuba]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1962.

B10 *Glasuri din Ghana* [Voices from Ghana]. Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1962. [1960]

B11 Liubosh, Aleksandr. *Pe jos prin Africa* [On Foot through Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1963 [1960].

B12 Bloom, Harry. *Revoltă în Transvaal* [Uprising in the Transvaal; original title: Transvaal Episode]. Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1963. [1956]

B13 Pop, Eugen. *Bate tam-tam-ul pe Niger* [The Tam-Tam Rings along the Niger]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1963.

B14 Woddis, Jack. *Leul se trezește* [The Lion Awakes. Bucharest:

Editura Politică, 1963. [1960, 1961]

B15 Davidson, Basil. *Redescoperirea Africii vechi* [The Rediscovery of Old Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului Editura Ştiinţifică, 1964. [1961]

B16 Gulian, C.I. *Despre cultura spirituală a popoarelor africane* [On the Spiritual Culture of the African People]. Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1964.

B17 Hutchinson, Alfred, *Drumul spre Ghana* [The Road to Ghana]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1964.

B18 Villain, Jean. *Şi astfel zămisli Dumnezeu apartheidul: şase mii de kilometri prin Africa de Sud* [Thus God Made Apartheid: Six Thousand Kilometres through South Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1964. Series "În jurul lumii." [1961]

B19 Woddis, Jack. *Calea Africii* [Africa's Way]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1965. [1962]

B20 Rateş, Nestor, and Nae Popescu. *Realităţi congoleze* [Congolese Realities]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1966.

B21 Davidson, Basil. *Mama neagră: Africa: anii încercărilor* [Black Mother: Africa: The Hard Years]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1967. [1961]

B22 Linde, Gunter, and Edmund Brettschneider. *Înainte de venirea omului alb: Africa îşi descoperă trecutul* [Before the Arrival of the White Man: Africa Discovers Its Past]. Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1967. [1962]

B23 Gulian, C.I. *Omul în folclorul african* [Humanity in African Folklore]. Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1967.

B24 *Basme africane* [African Tales], vol. I & II. Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1967.

B25 Carr, Archie. *Ulendo: călătoriile unui naturalist prin Africa şi în afara ei* [Ulendo: The Trips of a Naturalist In and Out of Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1968.

B26 Mannix, Daniel P., and Malcolm Cowley. *Corăbiile negre. O istorie a negoţului cu sclavi din Atlantin 1518–1865* [Black Cargoes. A History of the Atlantic Slave Trade]. Bucharest: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1968. [1962]

B27 Mihăilescu, Plutarh-Antoniu. *Întâlnire cu arta africană* [Encounter with African Art]. Bucharest: Editura Meridiane, 1968.

Bibliography

Aleksandrovicj, Pavel. *Prin Africa tropicală: însemnările unui botanist* [Through Tropical Africa: The Notes of a Botanist]. Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1959.

Anghelescu, Mircea. *Călători români în Africa* [Romanian Travellers in Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Sport-Turism, 1983.

Anton, Mioara, "Into Africa: Nicolae Ceaușescu's tour of March-April 1972," *Twentieth Century Communism* 15, 2018: 73-91.

Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Penguin Books, 2000.

Baines, Gary, and Peter Vale, eds. *Beyond the Border War. New Perspectives on Southern Africa's Late-Cold War Conflicts*. Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2008.

Becheru, Dragoș Sebastian. "A Perspective on Libyan-Romanian Relations (1969–1989)." *Romanian Journal of History and International Studies* 1, no. 2 (2015): 39–59.

Beecher-Stowe, Harriet. *Coliba unchiului Tom* [Uncle Tom's Cabin]. Bucharest: Biblioteca pentru toți, 1967.

Burakowski, Adam. *Dictatura lui Nicolae Ceaușescu 1965–1989. Geniul Carpaților* [Nicolae Ceaușescu's Dictatorship 1965–1989. The Carpathian Genius]. Iași: Polirom, 2011.

Burton, Eric, Zoltán Ginelli, James Mark, and Nemanja Radonjic, "The Travelogue: Imagining Spaces of Encounter—Travel Writing Between the Colonial and the Anti-Colonial in Socialist Eastern Europe, 1949–1989", in Kristin Roth-Ey, ed., *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular: Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023: 237–259.

Carr, Archie. *Aventurile unui naturialist in Marea Caraibilor* [The Adventures of a Naturalist in the Caribbean Sea]. Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1964.

Condurachi, Emil. "Unele probleme ale sfârșitului orânduirii sclavagiste în istoriografia contemporană" [Some Problems of the End of Slavery in Contemporary Historiography]. *Studii şi cercetări de istorie veche* (SCIV) 12, no. 1 (1961): 35–53.

Date generale: *Australia și Oceania, America, Africa* [General Data: Australia and Oceania, America, Africa]. Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1958.

Dragomir, Lucia. "Rencontres littéraires: échanges, incompréhensions et tensions entre les écrivains des 'démocraties populaires' dans les années 1950. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review* 17, no. 1 (2017): 111–129.

Gadjigo, Samba. *Ousmane Sembene. The Making of a Militant Artist*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Gheorghiu, Mihai Dinu, Simona Corlan-Ioan, and Abel Kouvouama, eds. *Intinéraires des élites africaines danes le monde*. Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iaşi, 2021.

Ghika-Comănești, Dimitrie. *O espediție română în Africa* [A Romanian Expedition in Africa]. Iași: Polirom, 2016.

Gide, André. *Călătorie în Congo. Note de drum* [A Trip to Congo. Trip Notes]. Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1971.

Gorovei, Domnica. "Regards croisés – les relations bilatérales Roumanie-Sénégal (1965–1980). Les échanges diplomatiques de Nicolae Ceaușescu avec Léopold Sédar Senghor." *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review* XX, no. 4 (2021): 589–614.

Iacob, Bogdan Cristian. "Babel in Bucharest: 'Third World' Students in Romania, 1960s–1980s." *Cahiers du monde russe* 63, vol. 4 (2022): 669–690.

Iacob, Bogdan Cristian. "The Hospital: Romania's 'One Nation Hospital' in Gharyan, 1974–1985." In *Socialist Internationalism*.

Kartun, Derek. *Africa, Africa! Un continent care se trezește* [Africa, Africa! An Awakening Continent]. Bucharest: Editura de stat pentru literatură politică, 1956.

Kosven, M. C. *Introducere în istoria culturii primitive* [Introduction to the History of Primitive Culture]. Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1957.

Kunze, Thomas. *Nicolae Ceaușescu. O biografie* [Nicolae Ceaușescu. A Biography]. Bucharest: Editura Vremea, 2002.

Lahanque, Reynald. "Les romans du réalisme socialiste francais." *Sociétés & Représentations*, Editions de la Sorbonne 15, no. 1 (2003): 179.

Lecca, Aurel and Val Tebeică. *Un român în Congo* [A Romanian in Congo]. Bucharest: Editura Ion Creangă, 1970.

Lodge, Tom, and Milan Oralek. "Fraternal Friends: South African Communists and Czechoslovakia, 1945–89." *Journal of African History* 61, no. 2 (2020): 221.

Mark, James and Paul Betts, eds. *Socialism Goes Global. The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the Age of Decolonization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Mark, James, Artemy M. Kalinovsky, and Steffi Marung, eds. *Alternative Globalizations*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020.

Minei, Nicolae. *De la Imperiu la Commonwealth* [From Empire to Commonwealth]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1967.

Mureșan, Camil. *Revoluția burgheză din Anglia* [The Bourgeois Revolution in England]. Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1964.

Nkrumah, Kwame. *Autobiografie. Mesaj din Ghana* [Autobiography. Message from Ghana]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1958.

Orsini, Francesca, Neelam Srivastava, and Laetitia Zecchini, eds. *The Form of Ideology and the Ideology of Form. Cold War, Decolonization and Third World Print Cultures*. Open Book Publishers, 2022.

Popa, Ioana. "Un transfert littéraire politisé Circuits de traduction des littératures d'Europe de l'Est en France, 1947–1989." *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 144, no. 4 (September 2002).

Popescu, Dumitru. *Drumuri europene* [European Roads]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1965.

Preutu, Cristina, and Silviu B. Moldovan. "La politique étrangère de la Roumanie envers l'Afrique subsaharienne, des années 1960 aux années 1970." In *Marges impériales en dialogue. Echanges, transferts, interactions et influences croisés entre les espaces postcoloniaux francophone et la périphérie soviétique européenne dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle*, edited by Matthieu Boisdron and Krisztian Bene. Ploemeur: Editions Codex, 2002.

Ranteș Bogdan-Iulian. *Relațiile României cu state din Africa Ecuatorială și de Vest (1960–1974)* [The Relations Between Romania and States from Equatorial and Western Africa, 1960–1974]. Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2017.

Roth-Ey, Kristin, ed. *Socialist Internationalism and the Gritty Politics of the Particular. Second-Third World Spaces in the Cold War*. London, New York, Dublin: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023.

Sweat, Edward F. *The Journal of Negro History* 48, no. 3 (July 1963): 223–224.

Tismăneanu, Vladimir. *Stalinism for All Seasons. A Political History of Romanian Communism*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2003.

Valentinov I. *Povestiri din Africa* [Tales from Africa]. Bucharest: Editura Tineretului, 1951.

Voiculescu, Elena, and Marin Voiculescu. *Renașterea africană* [African Rebirth]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1979.

Westad, Odd Arne. *The Global Cold War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Willard, Marcel. *Marșul african* [The African

March]. Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură și Artă, 1956.
Woddis, Jack. *E timpul să schimbăm cursul. Cum văd socialismul comuniștii din Marea Britanie* [It's Time for a Change. How Communists from Great Britain See Socialism]. Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975.

Online sources

https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/specialcollections/tag/harry-bloom/. Last accessed March 14, 2023.
https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alfred-Hutchinson. Last accessed March 14, 2023.

Santrauka

Afrikos vaizdavimas komunistinėje Rumunijoje. XX a. 7 deš. išleistų knygų atvejo studija

Domnica Gorovei

Reikšminiai žodžiai: Rumunija, Afrika, literatūra, Pasaulinis šaltasis karas, Ceaușescu.

Šiame straipsnyje nagrinėjama, kaip Afrikos žemynas buvo vaizduojamas 1960–1969 m. Rumunijoje išleistose knygose, siekiant suprasti šalies komunistinio režimo strategijas ir retoriką, Afrikos šalims pasiekus nepriklausomybę Pasaulinio Šaltojo karo kontekste. Per šį laikotarpį išleistos 27 knygos apie Afriką yra suskirstytos į tris kategorijas pagal žanrą: 1) kelionių dienoraščiai, 2) politiškai angažuoti pasakojimai ir 3) teoriniai istorijos ir politikos mokslų darbai. Didėjantis susidomėjimas žemynu yra akivaizdus – publikacijos apima tokias temas kaip menas, istorija, politinės ideologijos, kelionių pasakojimai ir asmeniniai įspūdžiai.