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"Built to Last". Defining Identity by the Statues of Chernivtsi

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ABSTRACT

The statues of the city of Czernowitz/Cernăuți/Chernovtsy/Chernivtsi – the capital of the historical province of Bukovina – are a generous subject of study given that the repeated changes of power (Austrian, Romanian, Soviet, and Ukrainian) have brought with them the transformation of the politics of memory and identity. Each of these political regimes that the city went through wanted to prove the legitimacy of owning this territory. Our paper aims to illustrate how the cultural landscape was shaped and remodelled according to the loyalty, creed, sympathies and political or ideological ambitions of successive regimes in the provincial capital of Bukovina. Starting from narrative-historical sources, it examines the sensory commitment of local authorities to the urban environment concerning the changing political realities and how the denial or removal of symbols of the former administrations is equivalent to assuming a new identity. In particular, it presents the intervention of the political factor and its role in shaping the recollection of the city's main squares. Finally, our findings show that the monuments in the urban landscape have the potential of identity markers, which transform memory – despite its ephemeral and fluid character – into a continuous present.

1. INTRODUCTION

The construction of monuments is one of the visualisation activities of characters, personalities, or events, "fixing" the past in the collective consciousness. It is an effort to define public space and generate the memory of places and common or national identities. The inauguration, unveiling, and then appreciation of monuments usually comprise certain public rituals and practices, which involve the participation of as many citizens as possible. In this case, besides their ideological and aesthetic function, the monuments also activated mass political mobilisation. Therefore, the scheme – simple at first glance and logical – of building monuments is, in fact, much more complex and contains many hidden functions. In short, the fever of erecting monuments entails the following scenarios:

a). A specific group of people decides that a person with historical resonance has special merits related to past or city development. An initiative committee is set up to launch an appropriate campaign, and the success of the enterprise depends on the total funds raised for the monument erection. If the amount collected is not enough, the construction can take years. This procedure is an instrument for measuring public sentiment or consensus in the urban community;

b). The state considers that a monument must be erected for ideological, political and propaganda reasons. Consequently, state funds are involved. This practice has gained the most popularity in the last

decades of the 19th and the first years of the 20th centuries, especially in totalitarian societies. During the Soviet regime, for example, there were ideological departments in each district committee of the party that dealt with filling the urban space with communist symbols. For the same reasons, the monument conveys the message of loyalty to the state or a leader.

The phenomenon of public monuments is not only a matter of artistic taste but also a fact of society (Brătescu, 2011). The case of several cities in East-Central Europe – which have experienced repeated political change as well as the experience of belonging to various states – has already been discussed from the perspective of the link between political unrest and urban memory, insisting on their aesthetic experience. (Gerő, 1990; Esbenshade, 1995; Lipták, 2002; Palonen, 2008; Light and Young, 2010; Foxall, 2013). In such towns that display a multicultural history, the statues and their stories are truly fascinating (Forest and Johnson, 2002; Young and Kaczmarek, 2008; Pál, 2017; Eröss, 2018; Horel, 2019). Our paper focuses on a city in Bukovina, known in its history under four names. Some said it was a variation on the same theme.

Others said there were four different versions of a city: Czernowitz of the Habsburg / Austro-Hungarian Empire, Cernăuți in interwar Romania, Chernovtsy in the Soviet Union, and Chernivtsi in post-Soviet Ukraine. Each of these names is related to a historical epoch in which the measures to suppress the old patterns and impose the new models have succeeded one another or combined. The specificity of Cernăuți can be found in other cities in Central Europe because of territorial changes that occurred as a result of wars: Vilna – Wilno – Vilnius; Lwów – Lemberg – Lvov – Lviv; Pressburg – Pozsony – Presporak – Bratislava; Danzig – Gdansk; Kronstadt (Brassó, Brașov) – Stalin – Brașov, etc.

These "successive" names reflect the cultural modelling promoted by various political regimes under which they have been for a shorter or longer time (Simon, 2016). Richard Weiner, for example, illustrates that a reconstructive type of ironic nostalgia can indicate a geographical area laden with the symbols of memory: "When I am asked what country I was born in, I often hesitate before answering: Am I supposed to name the country to which the city in which I was born belonged at the time I was born, or the country it belonged to when I left it? Or, perhaps, the country to which it belongs now? Or rather the country it belonged to just 12 years before I was born, the country where my parents and grandparents were born, the country of my mother tongue?" (Weiner, 2008, p. 5).

In the politics of memory, the change of power in Bukovina has always brought with it a more or less radical substitute. Organised and reorganised, its territory was detached from the principality of Moldavia (in 1774), becoming part of the Austrian Empire (1774/1775–1918) and of the Kingdom of Romania (1918–1940; 1941–1944).

After the Second World War, it came to be divided between the Soviet Union (the Northern part, including Cernăuți) and Romania (the Southern part), and between Ukraine (from 1991) and Romania, respectively. Each new regime not only denied or eliminated the old symbols of power. It was also essential to prove the legitimacy of owning this territory. Thus, all traces of past systems had to be erased, the streets renamed, "their" symbols and monuments, and the urban space re-filled with the emblems and marks of "us". The city had to be populated by "new heroes" and "new altars" or, using modern terminology, a "new marking of the urban space" was required.

2. THEORETICAL PRELIMINARIES

Most of the time, multiculturalism and aesthetic diversity in the urban area fuel the interest in the capital of Bukovina. The revitalisation of the past through the "eternal present of memory" can be found in historical or sociological research, mainly in journalism and literature. It indicates a convergence of tangible and measurable culture (data and facts) with illusions, stereotypes, and clichés. It is well known that Czernowitz was repeatedly considered as nucleus of a "model country of the monarchy" (Zöllner, 1997) or of an almost improbable space of beneficial coexistence. However, the demolition and replacement of the statues demonstrate some debatable aspects of this province's history, highlighting the moments when the old symbols could be equated with injustice or persecution and the new ones with the promise of correct life. Every act of installing a statue gains credibility as long as it provides tools to justify a specific purpose.

From a semiotic perspective, the statues represent a declaration of identity and express certain opinions, beliefs, values that guarantee the community's existence (Bellentani and Panico, 2016). They also indicate a special connection between reality and memory, truth and fiction, responding to the need of bringing to attention the symbols of the historical past. As for the aesthetic peculiarities of statues, they are also determined by history, geography, and ethnicity (Carter, 2010).

The space paradigm allows a comprehensive view of the myth of the "perfect place" or "origin", with its potential of belonging, socialisation, and identification. The place brings, in turn, a symbolism that includes "filling a void", "gratitude", "return to the past", "utopian hope", all concerning the relationship between time and space in the memory reconstructed during this search (Banini and Ilovan, 2021).

A first aspect of understanding the presentation of the main statues in Chernivtsi brings

into question the authors' ability to relate correctly to historical information and individual or collective memory. Some works already emphasised the subjective side of the stories that accompany the statues, involving the imprint on the collective consciousness or the impersonal memory of a specific group (Haberkorn, 2014; Wanner, 2016).

The second defining element in constructing history, narrative and statue is the plasticity of memory or the creative reconstruction of historical Chernivtsi from the present perspective (Mareci-Sabol and Purici, 2020). Most historians, sociologists, geographers, and anthropologists agree that reference to the past can be influenced by the present's commands (Narvselius and Bernsand, 2014; Ilovan, 2021). For example, Koziura believes that focusing on changing manifestations of nostalgia, with a predilection for the Habsburg era, can contribute to a better understanding of the city's symbolic resources, thus mobilising them for various and current purposes. Yet, the constant adjustment of the memory of "what it was once" can negatively affect or even nullify historical reality. Obviously, for tourist guides, for popular literature or articles in magazines and newspapers, the memories transformed into reference information about a monument make the narrative more attractive than the historical fact itself.

The approach to the issue of monuments in Chernivtsi can consider the thematic criterion, presenting the statues as tools for operating the social and political memory through which the identity of the place can be displayed, negotiated, or contested (Koziura, 2020). Another way is provided by the spatial and chronological criteria, indicating the location and time when they were erected, demolished or re-installed. We prefer the second option to see how the urban cultural landscape was remodelled according to the loyalty, creed, sympathies, and ideological ambitions of the political and administrative regimes.

At the same time, using information extracted from the historical narrative sources, memoirs, and newspapers of the time (Austrian, Romanian or Ukrainian), we will focus on the monuments located in the heart of the city, the most suitable places for displaying the message of the regime or the ideal of the community. In fact, these places are squares representing points of convergence of a well-organised street plot and the interference of narratives about the Austrian imperial experience, the Romanianness of Greater Romania, the Soviet transition, and about the contemporary nature of ethnonationalism in post-Soviet Ukraine. Empirically, our research focuses on how the city's population related to some of its statues and the echoes of this reception in various narrative sources and newspapers. The complexity of the problem arises when the same monument is praised by some and contested by others, as an expression of the polarisation produced by ethnic and political principles.

3. DISCUSSION APPROACH

The avatars of Chernivtsi in the history of the province contributed to the change of ethnic and religious balance, fluctuating from a Romanian majority at the end of the 18th century to an ethnic mosaic in the 1910 and 1930 censuses and a Ukrainian majority from the mid-1960s. These successive transformations have also fuelled the problem of recognising the complexity of national, collective, ethnic, and local memory. Analysing the identity of the city with a "multiple past", one can notice that each political regime tried to shape it according to its interests and particular circumstances:

- some symbols were destroyed, being considered hostile to the new state or regime;
- some have been dismantled due to their inadequate nature;
- new traditions and elements of official memory have been brought into this adjusted landscape (Lipták, 2002).

During or immediately after a major conflict, statues became critical points for local authorities who, by exploiting the emotion of locals or the interests or commands of central political leaders, sought to convey a message on the past, future, justice, and honour. Furthermore, the location of the statues in the urban landscape acquired a symbolic connotation, all the more so as they replaced other monuments. Starting from this aspect, we focus on the "series" of erection and demolition of the statues from four squares in Chernivtsi that have acquired this symbolic capital.

3.1. The Central Square/The Union Square

Beyond the discourses of the 19th century that focused on the rhythm and the modernising model that Bukovina had to follow, the public monuments that appeared in Czernowitz were clear proof of taking over the Austrian/German model of culture and civilisation. Vienna was throughout the nineteenth century not only the place where a large part of the political class in Bukovina received a cultural and political education, but also the setting in which they discovered the attraction for ideological statues. For example, the cult of the Virgin Mary became visible in Czernowitz Central Square (*Ringplatz*) since 1827, through the *Pieta* (Fig. 1) made by the sculptor Legerlutz at the request and with the money of a wealthy local, Lazar Michalowicz (Czarny et al., 2020). Specific to the Catholic tradition, the monument had an ordinary symbolic meaning for Christians of various denominations who believed in divine protection, especially after the fire that devastated the city in 1816. *Pieta* remained in the city centre "without the citizens' consent", but for "national" reasons was dismantled by order of the former Romanian governor (or the "Romanian aggressor" as he

was called in a local German newspaper) and moved to the Jesuit Church "Heart of Jesus"; later, the Soviet authorities wrecked it, making its full reconstruction impossible (Koziura, 2018).

Fig. 1. Pieta of Czernowitz *(sources: Pieta Monument on the Central Square 1890-1898, Center for Urban History; Fotoistoriya Chernivtsiv, ChernivtsiOnline, 2016)*

The place chosen for *Pieta of Czernowitz* was one of the most desired by the political regime representatives in the history of Bukovina. At the end of the 19th century, the local administration wanted to display there the loyalty symbol to the Austrian monarchy. The Catholic community opposed the decision to move the statue, demanding support from the mayor's office. It was not only a matter of ideological links with the "Christian urban status", but the affirmation of a confessional identity that had been legitimised and imposed itself publicly, through processions and ceremonies. Nevertheless, in 1924, Romanians placed in the same perimeter (renamed *The Union Square*) the *Unirea* (the Union) monument (Fig. 2), a complex composition consisting of many bronze figures, each with a distinct significance: the Moldavian ox who steps on the bi-cephalous eagle, a Romanian infantryman, flag and rifle in his hands, a girl in a folk costume – *The grateful Bukovina* – who bows to him.

Fig. 2. The *Monument of Union*, replacing *Pieta* in the Central (renamed as the Union) Square *(sources: Ursu-Bukowina, 2016; Czarny et al., 2020).*

The symbolism of this scene – "somewhat violent" in the sense of some contemporaries (Maksymiuk, 2015) – was explained in the press of that period, in the following terms: "An altar meant not only to glorify the perpetrators of the Union but to evoke from the glorious times of old, the power and the sacred rights to life of Romanianism. On the white marble, reminiscent of the ancient fortresses built in Dacia by Roman civilisation, a peasant – the incarnation of the ancestral genius, kept sacred by the Romanian woman – kneeling humbly in front of the country's flag – a symbol of great heroic virtues – touches it with her lips. Down below, an ox – the vigour of our nation of Wallachian warriors – guards with its ridge – looking to the East, while the water of a rich spring – the benefits of peace and Romanian civilisation – flows abundantly for the thirsty" (Bucovina, Cultul Eroilor Noştri, 1924, p. 1). Addressing the participants at the inauguration in 1924, the mayor of Cernăuți solemnly promised that "the city hall itself would take under its protection this monument erected by the contribution of all citizens of Bukovina, to preserve and protect it with all patriotic love" (Monitorul Oficial, 1924, p. 12609). But even if the patriotic accents had corresponded in the invoked historical realities and the monument suited the new order of the new state, its establishment in "a nodal point" as the central square of Cernăuți was not fully understood or accepted by all locals: while some regretted the cosmopolitan status of *homo bucovinensis*, others flaunted their identity in the spirit of a frond.

According to the urban legends taken over by novelist Vasyl Kozhelyanko and historian Rudolf Wagner, the iconoclastic attitude of some young Ukrainians materialised in a joke about the monument. Buying hay from a peasant, they asked him to put it in front of the symbolic ox, as "the animal must be fed". Obediently, he added a bucket of water to the hay, but the gendarmes sanctioned his deed. Soon after hearing the peasant's story, they understood the joking spirit of the young Ukrainians (Budna, 2019). What is certain is that throughout the interwar period, the *Union* monument was recognised as a symbol of Romanian identity. Many of the locals or visitors took pictures in front of it to mark their passage through the city or the anniversary of important events in their lives.

In 1940, the demolition of the statuary group by the Soviets began; the process was carried out in three stages: 1940, 1945, 1951 (Zapolowski, Osachuk and Shevchenko, 2007). Even from the first days of the occupation, only the soldier with the flag and the young woman representing Bukovina remained from the monument. Later, a scarlet star made of plywood, draped with fabric, replaced the Union's Monument (Fig. 3).

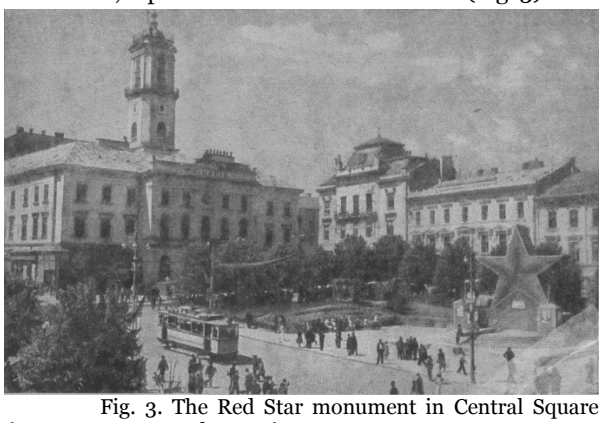

Fig. 3. The Red Star monument in Central Square *(source: Czarny et al., 2020).*

In 1941, with the Romanian administration's return, the star was destroyed, and in its place appeared a neutral object: a ceramic vase brought from the courtyard of the Metropolitan Residence. With the German troops' entry in Cernăuţi, Adolf Hitler's bust was erected in Central Square, but after a short time, several residents stole it. Reports of the war years highlight the lack of reaction from the German occupiers, with no investigations or punishments recorded due to rapid changes of positions on the front. Later, the Soviets would find out that the thieves had thrown Hitler's bust into a courtyard fountain.

In 1945, a 15-meter wooden obelisk was erected on the square's perimeter, lined with the coats of arms of the Soviet republics (Maksymiuk, 2015). As the artistic composition fell into dissonance with the surrounding architecture, it was removed. In 1951, the shifts in the official interpretation of the history of Bukovina became obvious and transparent. On the 7th of November, the statue of Lenin (Fig. 4) was inaugurated in the same Central Square (Zapolowski, Osachuk and Shevchenko, 2007), but on a side and not in the middle of the perimeter.

Fig. 4. *Lenin* statue in Central Square *(source: Czarny et al., 2020).*

The new hierarchy of values and priorities showed itself in the "improved position of the statue", which allowed parades and demonstrations throughout the main square (Wanner, 2016). In other words, the Soviet regime tried to reshape the narratives of the place, according to the new order, transforming it from a space that had expressed the values of the Austrian and Romanian monarchies into a symbolic perimeter for the identity of the socialist state, dominated by "a Lenin" who patronised the memory of the formerly cosmopolitan city and no one could openly dispute.

Four decades later, on the 6th of September 1991, this monument of Lenin was demolished and removed, in its place appearing a wooden cross erected by the Greek Catholic community that wanted to bring the *Pieta* back to its original location. In fact, the practice of replacing the statue of Lenin with a stone or wooden cross is reported in many former Eastern bloc countries, with the adoption of Christian rhetoric being both an expression of the recovery of forbidden identity and the commemoration of the victims of communist repression (Preda, 2016).

On the 28th of April 2014, an article published by "Molodyi Bukovynets" brought back into question the fate of the old monument, stating that the "Caritas Bukovina" Foundation wanted to restore and relocate it in the Central Square in Chernivtsi. However, the historical and religious significance has been multiplied by references to recent political events in Ukraine and, above all, by the democratic movement that brought Ukrainians to the central square of Kyiv (called "Maidan"), to protest against the unpopular regime of Viktor Yanukovych. Given this reality, Valery Syrotiuk, the Greek Catholic vicar of Chernivtsi declared: "The Virgin Mary mourned her crucified Son, just as Ukrainian mothers now mourn their sons who died on the Maidan" (*Hresnu dorohu v Chernivtsjah…* Molodyi bukovynets, 2014). From the perspective of architects,

historians, and artists, the aesthetic significance is more important than the religious one, the recreation of the Pietà monument representing a step towards consolidating the Habsburg identity of the urban landscape in Chernivtsi. Its reconstruction could encourage the associations of the city with the Habsburg past, highlighting its authenticity and, therefore, attracting more tourists (Koziura, 2018).

As for the researchers, they regard the revival of *Pieta* as a "post-Maidan" political vision generated by the local community of Chernivtsi, and which imposed a new type of urban collective affect. It is a reversal of previous trends where the political regime used urban space to establish its symbolism and promote the state policy (Wanner, 2016) or the evidence of the struggle for the nationalisation of the urban landscape (Koziura, 2020). The assertion of national identity is also found in the case of the Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko monument, erected on the 25th of May 1999, in the southern part of the square.

Fig. 5. *Taras Shevchenko* statue in Central Square *(source: Na Tsentral'niy ploshchi Chernivtsiv vshanuvaly Tarasa Shevchenka, 2017)*

Facing the City Hall, the statue indicates, on the one hand, the abandonment, by the Ukrainian authorities, of the past practice (placing symbolic monuments in a specific place) and, on the other hand, their motivation to put the symbol of the new political power in the heart of the city.

3.2. The Criminalplatz/Austriaplatz

Equally important was and is now the square known in the middle of the 19th century as *Criminalplatz,* due to the "gloomy building of criminal justice", meaning the nearby prison. On the 4th of October 1875, in its perimeter was placed the *Austria* monument made by Carl Peckary, a young professor at the Czernowitz School of Commerce (Czarny et al., 2020). Raised with the money collected from the entire province, it marked the centenary of Bukovina's incorporation into the Austrian Empire and the "Franz-Josef" university's opening. The white Carrara marble statue should have replaced *Pieta* in Central Square. Being "the only valuable artistic creation of the young city" and a symbol of devotion to the Austrian state – as the press noted at the time – the monument was to be displayed in the "best place" where anyone could see it (Säcularfeier in Czernowitz, Neue Freie Presse, 1875, p. 15) The protest of the Catholic community of Czernowitz determined the local authorities to decide the location of the *Austria* statue in *Criminalplatz*. The 8.2 m high monument, depicting a 2.5 m "Bukovinian Venus" (Fig. 6), contrasted with the surrounding buildings, especially with the prison.

Fig. 6. *Austria* statue in Austriaplatz of Czernowitz *(source: Czarny et al., 2020).*

Later, *Criminalplatz* was renamed *Austriaplatz*. The journalists of Czernowitz expressed hope that city officials – those who had refused to place the monument of Bukovina's loyalty in the city centre – would encourage the construction of "European houses" in *Austriaplatz* (Säcularfeier in Czernowitz, Neue Freie Presse, 1875, p. 15). According to eyewitnesses, the

Romanian authorities removed the statue after 1918, throwing it from the pedestal and dragging it in an unknown direction. Then it would have lost its head, arms, and the Austrian coat of arms.

A few mentions about the attitude towards the monument could be read in the memoirs of Josef von Ezdorf, the last leader of the Austrian regional administration, who remained in Czernowitz another three weeks after the entry of the Romanian troops in the town. Before leaving Bukovina for Vienna, he noticed a group of people dressed as peasants kneeling in front of *Austria*'s majestic pedestal. Asked by the governor what they were doing, they replied: "We pray to Mother Austria" (Chornei, 2017).

The new installed Romanian regime considered the statue "obsolete", translating the imperial message of unity as an expression of "hypocrisy". In the opinion of a contemporary of the event, the *Austria* monument "had hurt, by its simple presence, the national feeling, for 46 years" (Monitorul Oficial, 1924, p. 12609). Even the inscriptions in German, Ruthenian, and Romanian – referring to the Union of Bukovina with Austria – were the proof of "a defiant hypocrisy". False would have also been the illustration of Bukovina's fidelity to the Vienna Court, illustrated as the enthroned empress. As for its aesthetic value, the conclusion was: "How much art, so much untruth" (Monitorul Oficial, 1924, p. 12609).

In 2003, more than 80 years after these statements, the sculpture was discovered during the sewerage below ground level at the Ukrsotsbank branch in Chernivtsi. Although decapitated, with a few cracks, traces of arson and metal salts due to contact with the ground (Fig. 6), *Austria* proved to be – according to the historian Oleksandr Masan – "almost the only monument in the Austrian era, so well preserved to date" (Chornei, 2017). The discovery was hailed by the region's intellectual and political circles, becoming a symbol of friendship between Ukraine, Austria, and Western Europe. In 2006, ten copies of the statue were entrusted to European artists for the "creative restoration" being toured on the continent to return to the Yuriy Fedkovych National University in Chernivtsi finally. Despite urban legends, according to which the decapitated head of the statue could be found in a private collection, the restorers claimed that, even in its absence, they would be able to restore the figure entirely. The community and authorities will decide its fate: to return to the former location or reach the Art Museum in Chernivtsi.

3.3. The Arboroasa Square/Ghica Vodă Square/Soviet Square/Soborna Square

In the third decade of the last century, the busts of the poet Mihai Eminescu (on the 7th of December 1930) and of the Romanian Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu (on the 28th of November 1936) were installed in Arboroasa Square (Fig. 7), nearby the former Austriaplatz, which has been renamed after 1918 as Ghica Vodă Square (in honour of the Moldavian Prince Grigore III Ghica, who opposed the annexation of Bukovina to Austria).

Fig. 7. The bronze busts of Mihai Eminescu and I. I. C. Brătianu in *Arboroasa* Square *(sources: Realitatea Ilustrată, 1930, p. 15; Realitatea Ilustrată 1936, p. 2).*

The press in Bucharest, taking over the speeches held on the inauguration of the statue of Eminescu, notes: "The monument was erected in this place to be seen from all sides, to be a continuous stimulus to more idealism, more disinterest, to more

sincerity" (Inaugurarea bustului lui Eminescu la Cernăuți, Adevărul, 1930, p. 3). Six years later, informing about the "great festivities" on the 18th anniversary of the Union of Bukovina with Romania, the same newspaper specified in connection with the bust of the Romanian Prime Minister Brătianu: "Let's return, with our minds, to Mihail Eminescu, who mourned the fate of Bukovina, and whose bronze rests in this park where I. C. Brătianu's face is revealed today. It symbolises the forging of the deep connections of ancient Romanianism with our brothers from all over the world, as well as the restoration of the continuity of the Romanian unitary life" (Marile festivități de la Cernăuți, Adevărul, 1936, p. 5). The iconic images of the two personalities (one illustrating the cultural dimension and the other the political significance) were to bring a symbolic capital to the square by representing political and national ideals, while stimulating the feeling of belonging to the Romanian nation and loyalty to the Romanian state.

After the occupation of northern Bukovina by the Soviets, the *Liberator's* monument was erected in the former *Arboroasa* Square, renamed *The Soviet Square*, honouring the first anniversary of the victory in the "Great Patriotic War" (1946). The new authorities used the place where the Romanian administration started to erect an Unknown Hero monument (Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. The Liberator's Monument *(source: Petiție… Libertatea cuvântului, 2018)*

Considered by many as the most tragic and glorious moment of the Soviet era, the Great Patriotic War and its associated memorial sites remain among the most complex symbolic representations. Although the "cult of World War II" plummeted in the Gorbachev years, due to the glasnost policy that undermined many Soviet war myths, local politicians have preserved this type of monument to reinterpret or continue the history of the place in a more positive light (Forest and Johnson, 2002). The monument depicting the Soviet soldier still stands today in the *Soborna* Square (this is the most recent name of the place), although the law of de-Sovietization is in force in Ukraine. If until the "Maidan", all the Ukrainian and Russian community gatherings in Chernivtsi took place here, with the events in Kyiv and the transformation in the country's foreign policy, the area of the meetings became the Taras Shevchenko statue, in the Central Square. Nevertheless, the *Liberator's* Monument is spectacular, like the Soviet tank T-34/76 (located on the street that provides access to the city centre) preserved in memory of the liberation of Chernivtsi on the 25th of March 1944 (Zapolowski, Osachuk and Shevchenko, 2007) (Fig. 9).

Fig. 9. Soviet tank T-34/76 *(source: Petiție… Libertatea cuvântului, 2018).*

Even so, in 2018, the inhabitants of Chernivtsi initiated an online petition asking the local authorities to demolish the two Soviet monuments, as they symbolise the domination of the communist system over Bukovina. The petitioners state that in their place must be erected a monument in memory of the victims of the Nazi and Soviet occupation (Petiție… Libertatea Cuvântului, 2018).

3.4. The Elisabetaplatz/Vasile Alecsandri Square /Theatre Square

The fourth square in Chernivtsi where statues were installed, then dismantled, was successively named *Elisabetaplatz*, *Vasile Alecsandri Square* and,

finally, the *Theatre Square*. The figure of Empress Elizabeth should have been installed in the eponymous location, doubling in this respect the proof of patriotism and loyalty that the city had declared to the House of Habsburg (Fig. 10).

Fig. 10. *Elisabeth* statue in Public Garden of Czernowitz *(source: Österreichische Illustrierte Zeitung, 1911, p. 9).*

The local newspapers stated the monument was constructed by the locals' voluntary contribution (Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung, 1905, p. 3), although the collection lasted several years. The intention to dedicate a memorial to Elisabeth has been recorded in the press since 1901, along with discussions about its future positioning. As the presence of two statues in *Austriaplatz* might have seemed "'too much' to the viewer" (Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung, 1908, p. 1), the ideal place would have been in front of the Theatre, but the square was neither asphalted nor arranged. Besides, since the German local councillors had planned to pay homage to Schiller as a patron of this cultural institution, the two monuments would have generated some rivalry. In fact, Schiller illustrated German culture, while Elizabeth was the symbol of the ideology of the Habsburg dynasty. Despite the opinion of the architect of the city, Friedrich Haberlandt, who considered the theatre square "the most beautiful" in Chernivtsi, the statue was placed in the *Volksgarten* (Public Garden), a place that "suited more to the personality of the deceased empress" (Czernowitzer Allgemeine Zeitung, 1908, p. 2).

Along with the regional and local officials, a Romanian delegation sent by King Carol I participated in the inauguration festivities, on the 15th of October 1911. According to the local newspapers, the ceremony was an occasion to manifest the inhabitants' patriotism, each ethnic group in Bukovina expressing their gratitude and loyalty to the Austrian dynasty (Czernowitzer Tagblatt, 1911). This element of transnational identification would disappear in the years of the First World War, the monument of Elizabeth being dismantled by the Romanian authorities who, in February 1925, handed it over with a report in the custody of the Museum of Bukovina in Cernăuţi.

As for Friedrich Schiller's statue, it was unveiled on the 10th of November 1907 (Fig. 11).

Fig. 11. Friedrich Schiller statue in front of the theatre *(source: Czarny et al., 2020).*

The German-language press wrote about the event as one of "epochal importance in the annals of the history of the city's cultural development" (Czernowitzer Tagblatt, 1907, p. 1) and this because, although placed on the border of the "backward East" with the "selfish West", Bukovina fulfilled its cultural mission by erecting the first monument dedicated to a poet. It was not a tribute to a "national hero" or a "glorious warrior," but to a "great hero of the spirit, whose rich fruits were spread evenly over all nations". Besides, the monument in Czernowitz of a German poet indicated "the German imprint and character of the city", which could be enjoyed by "all nationalities fighting for culture and education, beauty and truth" (Czernowitzer Tagblatt, 1907, p. 1).

In fact, the preference for Schiller's artistic creation was repeatedly manifested among Bukovinian elites, some of the Romanians translating his works "without remarkable effect", but as proof of the "constant interest for the great poet" (Bogdan-Duică, 1905, p. 193). As for the "joy", which all nationalities should have shared, it remains questionable since Sternberg stated that "the Jews as a people had no reason to celebrate Schiller" (Sternberg, 1962, p. 46);

even so, "the Jewish City Council members went along with placing a statue of the poet in front of the theatre. How different the Jewish attitude towards the 'Singer of Freedom' was from that of the Romanian authorities, who immediately after the occupation of the city in 1918, removed the Schiller statue from the court of the German House" (Sternberg, 1962, p. 47). According to the documents, in 1922, Schiller's statue was demolished for "nationalist" reasons and moved in a funeral procession organised by the German community in the German House's courtyard (Drozdowski, 1961). After the first Soviet invasion, on the unoccupied place in front of the theatre, a statue of Lenin was unveiled, in order to "patronise" the first celebration of the October Revolution; in later images, (from the 24th of July 1941, made by Willy Pragher (Orașul Cernăuți și Marele Război. Libertatea Cuvântului, 2017), it appeared beheaded, in the background outlining the building on which the Nazi flags had been hoisted (Fig. 12).

Fig. 12. The Lenin statue in front of the theatre *(source: Orașul Cernăuți și Marele Război. Libertatea Cuvântului, 2017).*

Later, after the installation of the Soviet regime, the Chernovtsy theatre received the name of Olga Kobyleanska, and in front of was placed, on the 29th of November 1963, a bust of the Ukrainian writer (Fig. 13).

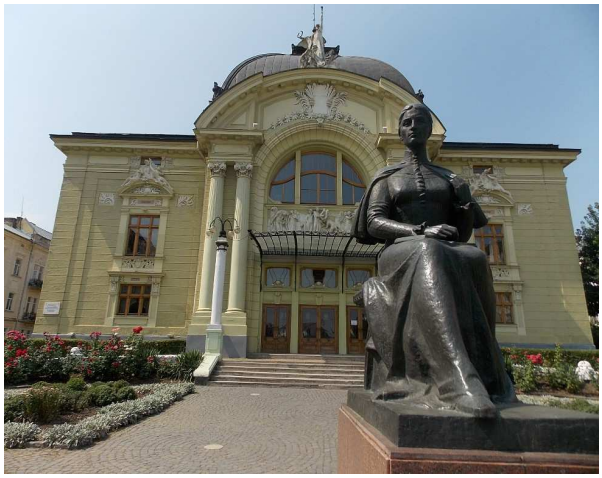

Fig. 13. Kobyleanska statue in front of the theatre *(source: Sabău, 2015).*

The monument, considered "modest" from an artistic perspective, was replaced by another on the 2nd of August 1980, which can still be seen today, also in tourist promotion materials, thus becoming an iconic image of this city. The choice of the Ukrainian writer was not only a matter of an artistic nature, but also a manifestation of local emancipation reaffirmed as a form of Ukrainian identity.

3.5. A "special place" for another type of symbolic monuments

There are other monuments in Chernivtsi with symbolic and evocative value, and which were not or are not located in the key points of the city: statues from the Austrian, Romanian, Soviet and Ukrainian periods representing political figures (Joseph II, Franz Josef, Marx, Engels, Stalin, Kalinin), people of culture (Josef Hlavka, Gorky, Pushkin, Shevtschenko, Worobkevicz, Makowej), allegories of peace and war (Regiment 41, Heroes fell for the Fatherland), care for others and solidarity (Caritas, The Cradle of Friendship). Most have particular semiotics and a "national-educational" and cultural value.

From the category of political leaders who played a significant role for Bukovina, reflecting the Austrian Empire in the province capital, *Franz Josef* monument is one of the most representative. It was unveiled on the 29th of September 1899, as a sign of "patriotism" and "loyalty" to "the noblest emperor and lord" who had celebrated 50 years since his accession to the throne (*Ein patriotische Feier*. Bukowinaer Post, 1899, p. 4) (Fig. 14).

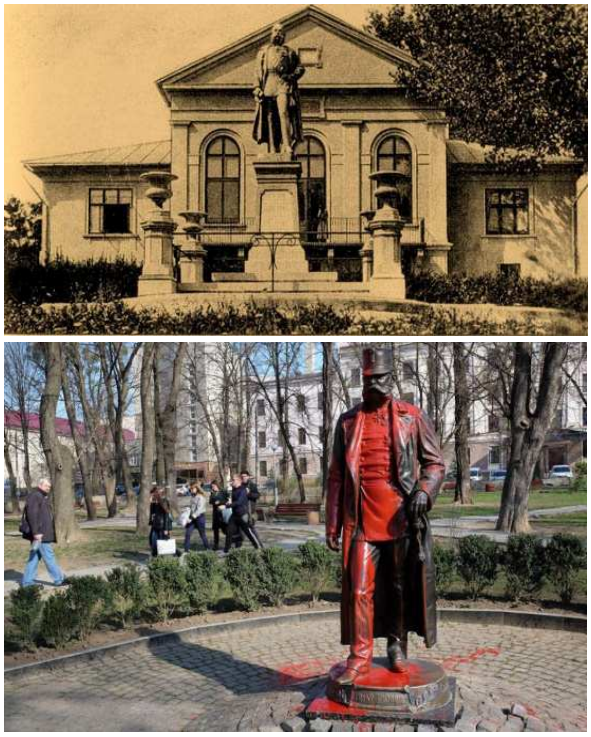

Fig. 14. Franz Josef statue in Chernivtsi *(sources: Czarny et al., 2020; Chornei, 2014).*

Surprisingly, the monarch did not have a solemn, classical position but appeared on the go, as the inhabitants of Czernowitz had seen him on his third and last visit to the city in September 1880 (Mährisches Tagblatt, 1880). After attending the Yom Kippur ceremony in the Great Synagogue, Franz Josef walked the streets of "Little Vienna", talking to passers-by, which increased his popularity and established him in the urban memory. The location of the statue in front of the Hunting House in the Public Garden was due to the same feeling of the monarch's closeness to the citizens of his empire, of sharing the values and ideals of the "Austrian Crown".

In the years of the First World War, during the occupation by Russian troops, the emperor's statue was removed, and information about its fate is missing or overlooked. What is certain is that less than 100 years later, in 2009 (after celebrating 600 years since the documentary attestation of the city in 2008), a statue depicting Franz Josef was unveiled near the Catholic Church in Chernivtsi.

The monument, imagined without a pedestal, depicts an emperor walking the city's streets, mingling with passers-by, as he had done in the late nineteenth century. Another peculiarity of the 2009 statue reminiscent of Austrian Bukovina relates to the motivation for its erection: the initiative did not belong to local authorities, governments, or cultural associations, such as the *Verein zur Verschönerung der Stadt Czernowitz* which, in 1998, restored the memorial plaque from 1908 on the "Habsburghöhe" behind the university, dedicated to the 60th anniversary of Franz Josef's reign. It was the idea of private individuals, on the one hand, the sponsor Yan Tabachnyk, a well-known accordionist, and representative of the Party of Regions, and on the other hand, of the former Prime Minister of Ukraine, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, born in Chernivtsi, and whose father taught at the university once called "Francisco Josephine".

Thus, *Franz Josef* monument could be considered a "gesture of local patriots to their hometown" (Bernsand, 2016, pp. 120-130). On the 3rd of October 2009, the inauguration of the statue was attended by local and regional officials, the Austrian Ambassador to Ukraine and the grandson of the last Austro-Hungarian emperor (Narvselius and Bernsand, 2014). Karl von Habsburg stressed the importance of the monument's inscription about the "roses with which the city was once swept" (referring to the quote from the work of contemporary German writer Georg Heinzen about the old Czernowitz, where there were more bookstores than bakeries and where the streets were swept with bouquets of dried roses). Although Yatsenyuk said that not "the nostalgia for the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy" motivated him to take such action, but "recognition of the achievements of the Empire", the unveiling of the statue of Franz Josef was an example of how the memory of Austrian Bukovina shaped the urban mythology of Post-Soviet Chernivtsi (Bernsand, 2016, p. 120). In 2014, during the pro-European protests in Ukraine, the statue was vandalised with red paint thrown over it. The supporters of democratic changes (so-called "Euromaidan" activists) in Chernivtsi condemned the incident, generating new discussions on historical memory, "regional eccentricities", and the need to respect the justice of history (Chornei, 2014).

For specific groups and even communities, the destruction of statues is not a reparative act but a curative one, with relative consequences, sometimes on short term. Viewed from such a perspective, the action of repositioning the community and the authorities towards the statues (including the symbolic statements that appeared in the press in Chernivtsi, after the 2014 incident with the paint poured on the statue) refers to the cosmopolitanism of the city. This feature can encourage, in the emotional register, attitudes such as solidarity, tolerance, optimism.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In more than two hundred years, the city of Chernivtsi faced a consistent territorial and administrative transformation. Not only its perimeter has been expanded, but the names of the streets had changed, as having the political regimes and the ideal they preached.

The place of so-called *homo bucovinensis* acquired a symbolical significance for its inhabitants, even if, many times, the discourse of ethnic and national identity has doubled its multicultural peculiarity. The subsequent reinterpretation of the past in a selective key has changed the vision of a common, local feature. The inauguration of a statue or of an important monument has become a form of displaying a new identity. At the same time, its dismantling was seen as evidence of the denial of the previous feature.

This article presented how the political demands and public participation can shape the image of the past, using statues of Chernivtsi as a symbol of "loyalty" (in the nineteenth century), "national consciousness" (in the interwar period), "revolutionary effort" (Soviet era) and "freedom of nowadays". Based on information extracted from older or newer historical sources, it was underlined the context of installation and demolition of some monuments, with a symbolic and identity load, shared by some inhabitants of the city, but contested by others.

The dismemberment of Austria-Hungary and the union of Bukovina with Romania provoked the multi-ethnic population of the city since the imperial symbolism in the main squares – referring to the Austrian identity – had to be replaced by representations reminiscent of both the province's

mediaeval past and Romanian unity. Faced with the new rulers' discourses, some residents felt excluded, choosing either to be nostalgic for dynastic patriotism or to manifest their identity difference in terms of ethnic assertion.

The Soviet occupation of northern Bukovina, the discrediting of previous regimes, the repudiation of former local administrations and the reinterpretation of history by manipulating memory and historical artefacts led not only to the redevelopment of squares and the installation of new symbols but also the reconceptualization of the former cosmopolitan city. As for the local, national, and ethnic identity in post-Soviet Chernivtsi, it generates discussions when the statues become symbols of anti-communist, religious and patriotic sentiments.

Regardless of the political regime, each newly installed authority tried to induce the idea that the old loyalties had been removed forever, and the new administration would be a lasting and eternal one. Transmitting a political message, they demonstrate that neither the brush nor the marble is strong enough in the face of obsolete or radical ideas and decisions to materialise them. Preservation, vandalism, or demolition of statues belongs to the victors' history. It is a widespread phenomenon (although not a novelty).

In the contemporary paradigm, it reveals that the community, more than the state, seeks to reconstruct its place identity by displaying symbols that define it. Historical detachment is the only way that allows memory to settle naturally; it is also a guarantee that the change of perspective and political passion will not destroy the identity of a city where statues have been "raised to last".

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