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The Evolutions of Romanian 'Historians' Front' during Stalinism and Late Socialism. RCP's Plans for Establishing a Central Institute for National History

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Abstract: *To examine the evolutions of Romanian 'historians' front' during Stalinism and Late Socialism in a short study might seem presumptuous, but the following pages do not pretend to offer a full-scale exegesis of the practices of doing and using the discours(es) of history in Communist Romania. Rather, I have chosen to discuss here the metamorphoses of this crucial concept between 1948 and 1985, by analyzing its origins, significance and manners into which it has been actively engaged in the Stalinist and Ceaușescuist broader ideological framework by different social agents. The first part of my study focuses upon the ways in which party propagandists and historians have publicly used the 'historians' front' formula during our 'cultural revolution' and the following years. In the second section of my interpretation I present, by exploiting a wealth of previously inaccessible archival sources, the Romanian Communist Party's concrete plans and preparations to materialize this Stalinist concept by creating a single and unique Central Institute for National History. I argue that, under Nicolae Ceaușescu, the party has constantly tried to bring national history-production process under a more and more firmer political control.*

Keywords: *historians' front, Romanian Communist Party, history-production, ideology.*

1. Preliminaries

The present study performs an analysis 'from above' of a central concept for Romanian communist ideology. The 'historians' front', reckoned to be a constitutive part of a much broader 'ideological front' engaged in a decisive struggle against Western 'capitalist ideology' has been a fundamental notion for Leninist ideologues¹ as early as the 1920s. Obviously, under the late Joseph Stalin, through Andrei A. Zhdanov, the idea has taken new forms.

¹ Stuart Finkel, *On the Ideological Front. The Russian Intelligentsia and the Making of the Soviet Public Sphere*, (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2007), p. 2.

In Romanian political culture, this concept has been discursively adopted and employed on a massive scale by Stalinist party propagandists in the postwar era, especially during the 'cultural revolution' (1948-1953). With a considerable lower frequency, the 'historians' front' concept has remained in official use throughout the rest of the 6th decade of the twentieth century.

The sixties have represented a period of unexpected openness for Romanian historical research, at least compared with previous years, albeit this freedom was only a limited, sanctioned and managed one. Although in those times political elites seem to have completely abandoned and forgotten it, the 'historians' front' formula has been suddenly rediscovered by Romanian Communist Party's (RCP) leader Nicolae Ceaușescu somewhere at the beginning of the 1970s. Throughout the 1980s, national history, as well as the 'historians' front', have become two of the most sizable obsessions for an ideological, increasingly radicalized, Ceaușescu. His plan for establishing an unique *Central Institute for National History* can be understood in these terms.

My interpretation is structured into two sections. In the first one, I trace the origins of this concept and I investigate the manners in which it has been engaged in scientific and political discourse especially during the first decade of communist rule. The main sources that I have used, are represented by official materials published in Romania's central historical journal (*Studii. Revistă de istorie*) between 1949 and 1959. I have chosen this academic review, and no other, expressly because of the fundamental purpose *Studii* has had back then: to set up and calibrate the methods and patterns according to which the new Marxist-Leninist discourse about the past should have been produced in Romania². I start from the premises that Romanian Stalinist ideologues and propagandists had taken ideology seriously, because the political regime itself had been an ideological one³: the illustrative statements I reproduce in quotes in my text signify not only the fact that they had learnt, in a very limited time frame, to 'speak bolshevik'⁴ in order to embed themselves within

² „Contribuția revistei «Studii» la dezvoltarea istoriografiei marxist-leniniste în România (cu prilejul împlinirii a 15 ani de apariție)”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, nr. 6, 1962, p. 1779.

³ François Furet, *Le Passé d'une illusion. Essai sur l'idée communiste au XX siècle*, Robert Laffont/Calmann Lévy, Paris, 1995, p. 17.

⁴ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilisation*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997), pp. 198–237.

the “discourse of the state”⁵, but also to act, or ‘behave bolshevik’. I believe one should not regard such problems in a ‘totalitarian’ framework or ‘paradigm’⁶ in order to acknowledge what is now certain fact: these men’s entire course of action has been primarily *ideologically* driven (the statement is valid in equal measure even for the late Nicolae Ceaușescu). Thereby, for instance, the pronouncements they were making on an almost regular basis during the 1950s, concerning the ‘historians’ front’, should not be underestimated and interpreted as just a mandatory duty, an exercise or ‘ritual’ they were obliged to perform only formally. On the contrary, as we now know, these innocuous ‘formalities’ have had devastating and durable consequences for Romanian intellectual field generally. Rather than being only a mobilizing verbiage with transformational valences, thus, such formulae are capable of signifying deeper and more complex “schemes of thought and expression”⁷.

The second section of my study discusses RCP’s tendencies to centralize history-production in Romania on a national scale during the 1970s and the 1980s. Starting with 1974⁸, both RCP’s leader and party structures had begun to pay increasingly more attention not only to general problems of history, beginning to indicate historians how to write about national past, but mainly to bring history-production institutions under a more firmer political control. In mid-’70s, the Stalinist ‘historians’ front’ formula has reentered official vocabulary of party propagandists. As well, a significant number of historians have started to progressively rediscover and reintegrate this early Cold War linguistic vestige into their public discourse.

⁵ Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet. Identity, Rumour and Everyday Life under Stalin 1939-1953*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 2011), p. xxiv; see also Alain Besançon, *Originile intelectuale ale leninismului*, (București, Ed. Humanitas, 2007), p. 351.

⁶ For a concise description of the so-called ‘totalitarian school’ of interpretation, see Vladimir Shlapentokh, Eric Shiraev, Eero Carroll (eds.), *The Soviet Union. Internal and External Perspectives on Soviet Society*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 20-25; for a description of the paradigm shift which occurred in Soviet studies in the 1970s and the challenges posed by ‘revisionists’, see Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Revisionism in Soviet history”, *History and Theory*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 77-91; see also Lynne Viola, “The Cold War in American Soviet Historiography and the End of the Soviet Union”, *Russian Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1, (Jan., 2002), pp. 25-34.

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977), p. 79.

⁸ Cristian Vasile, *Viața intelectuală și artistică în primul deceniu al regimului Ceaușescu, 1965-1974*, (București, Ed. Humanitas, 2014), pp. 157-164.

A decade later, in 1985, RCP's officials from the highest level of power were trying to 'translate' this concept 'into life', by finalizing a large scale project for a radical reorganization of the entire network of history-production centers in Romania. According to their plans, a significant number of these centers were to be shut down completely. The rest of them were going to be reformed and merged together into a new and unique institution – the Central Institute of National History (CINH). Their entire personnel scheme should have been reduced by half. Once inaugurated, the CINH would have gained control over both the whole national history-production, as well as the entire printing-process of all history books, school textbooks and scientific journals written and published in socialist Romania.

A similar neo-Stalinist plan of centralization, mobilization and 'militarization' of a historians' field (or 'front') is not to be found in either Romanian, nor European communist history. I describe these preparations at large in the last section of my study, by interpreting and corroborating a wealth of previously inaccessible data collected from archival sources.

2. Stalinist Roots of a Romanian 'Historians' Front'

In Romania's post-war history, the year 1948 undoubtedly marks the beginning of a major and radical process of political, economic, social and cultural transformations, capable to cancel, at least temporarily, the major modernizing directions upon which the country has evolved during the previous century. These are the years of the so-called 'Great Break' or, as Kenneth Jowitt has put it, the 'revolutionary breakthrough' of the traditional Romanian society.

The development of the Stalinization process of Romanian culture which was inaugurated that year, the so-called 'cultural revolution'⁹ (1) as it was defined then by leading historian Mihail Roller¹⁰, has chronologically overlapped with the 'Zhdanovshchina'¹¹ (2).

⁹ The concept has been extensively described by Sheila Fitzpatrick, in "Cultural Revolution in Russia 1928-32", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Jan., 1974), pp. 33-52; see also Michael David-Fox, "What Is Cultural Revolution?", *Russian Review*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Apr. 1999), pp. 181-201.

¹⁰ Mihail Roller, „Pe drumul revoluției noastre culturale” în *Lupta de clasă*, seria a V-a, nr. 2, octombrie-decembrie 1948, pp. 97-110.

¹¹ Alexei Kojevnikov, "Games of Stalinist Democracy: Ideological Discussions in

(1) I understand and engage here the concept of 'cultural revolution' as it has been explained and interpreted by American scholar Sheila Fitzpatrick, *id est*, as a moment in time bounded chronologically (1948-1953 in our specific case) rather than a full-fledged *Weltanschauung*. Its basic features nowadays appear to be the following:

- a) the party had assumed total responsibility not only to guide, but also to take full control over the evolution of science, art and culture, altering them in terms dictated essentially by *ideological*, and not *pragmatic* considerations;
- b) the cancellation of opportunities to conduct genuine intellectual debate, non-partisan and non-ideological science, along with the introduction of 'party line' in most areas of culture;
- c) a total rejection of the concept of scientific and/or academic self-sufficiency, doubled by the depriving of "cultural institutions and professional organizations of all powers of initiative and negotiation"¹²;
- d) a temporary success obtained by the ruling party in its effort to establish and propagate its values and discursive patterns among intellectuals.

(2) In the USSR, during the first years following World War II, a massive ideological and nationalistic campaign has been launched in order to help creating a specific socialist science and culture, opposed to its 'bourgeois', Western counterpart. Designated since then as the 'Zhdanovshchina', this phenomenon has been inspired by the name of Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov (1896-1948), a prominent Soviet ideologue, at that time perceived to be a rising star in the new postwar Stalinist leadership or, as a Romanian party leader has labelled him in 1949, "a faithful disciple of Lenin and Stalin"¹³.

If initially this energetic campaign has mainly focused on areas such as literature, philosophy and the arts, starting from August 1948,

Soviet Sciences, 1947-52", *Stalinism. New Directions*, (ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Routledge, London and New York, 2000), pp. 142-177.

¹² Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Culture and Politics under Stalin: A Reappraisal", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Jun., 1976), p. 212.

¹³ Leonte Răutu, „Împotriva cosmopolitismului și obiectivismului burghez în științele sociale”, în Vladimir Tismăneanu, Cristian Vasile, *Perfectul acrobat. Leonte Răutu, măștile răului*, (București, Ed. Humanitas, 2008), p. 227.

once Zhdanov himself had died¹⁴, the 'Zhdanovshchina' has rapidly extended to a number of natural sciences, highly relevant from an ideological point of view in the context of the early Cold War, such as biology, modern genetics¹⁵ and quantum physics¹⁶. In fact, by 1951 the Soviet elites were confident enough to proclaim major ideological achievements in no less than five¹⁷ distinctive scientific branches: philosophy (1947), biology (1948), linguistics (1950), physiology (1950) and political economy (1951). According to one scholar¹⁸, the attacks against modern physics, carried out during the same period, should not be neglected either.

"To the name of A. A. Zhdanov is linked, on one hand, the characterization of the international situation created after the end of World War II and, on the other hand, the ideological formulation of the tasks deriving from it for Soviet fighters on the ideological front"¹⁹ one propagandist of the Romanian Workers' Party was writing in the summer of 1948 in Romania's most prominent review dedicated to sciences, philosophy and arts. For Andrei Zhdanov, after World War II had come to an end, the world had been split into two antagonistic political, military, economical and ideological camps. In this manicheistic view, the Western, capitalist one, being headed by the United States of America, was led by the so-called 'bourgeoise ideology'. The countries composing this camp incarnated an old, obsolete social and political system, which was from the start condemned to extinction by History. According to Zhdanov's thesis, socialist countries should wage a determined fight against these countries, at all costs. The second, socialist camp, was proclaimed to be the most advanced in the world, and to

¹⁴ Chris Ward, "What is History? The Case of Late Stalinism", *Rethinking History*, Vol. 8, No. 3, (Sept. 2004), p. 443.

¹⁵ Peter Kneen, "Physics, Genetics and the Zhdanovshchina", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 50, No. 7 (Nov., 1988), p. 1183.

¹⁶ Joshua Rubenstein, "Introduction: Andrei Sakharov, the KGB and the Legacy of Soviet Dissent", *The KGB File of Andrei Sakharov*, (edited and annotated by Joshua Rubenstein and Alexander Gribanov, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2005), pp. 9-11

¹⁷ Alexei Kojevnikov, "Rituals of Stalinist Culture at Work: Science and the Games of Intraparty Democracy circa 1948", *Russian Review*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Jan., 1998), p. 26.

¹⁸ Ethan Pollock, *Stalin and the Soviet Science Wars*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2006), p. 2.

¹⁹ Ion Banu, „Despre opera științifică a lui Andrei Alexandrovici Zhdanov”, în *Studii. Revistă de știință-filosofie-arte*, nr. 4, 1948, p. 88.

represent the future of mankind. Its most progressive representative was the USSR²⁰, a country who was guiding its policies through a permanent inspiration from the only true scientific worldview – the Marxist-Leninist theory interpreted by Stalin. This one and only ‘scientific philosophy’ “provided the foundation for the ideology that underpinned the state and society”²¹.

In this new postwar political and ideological framework, the functions of Soviet writers, artists, philosophers, scientists, historians and economists have undertaken a radical change²², able to transform the basic essence of these various professions: in Zhdanov’s view, their mission was to produce a new and distinctive type of Soviet science, culture and philosophy, not only non-Western in its basic features, but even superior and opposed to the Western traditional system of values. Thus, in order to accomplish this groundbreaking task, artists, scientists, philosophers and historians, organized into a highly disciplined ‘ideological front’, were to engage themselves into a war-like ‘ideological battle’ against all Western non-communist ideas, values, philosophical ideas, sciences and arts. Although the origins of this phenomenon can be traced back to the 1920s and 1930s, when it started to take shape, in the postwar it has reached its climax. In that period, “philosophy was not an intellectual process but a means of inculcating the state ideology in whatever form it might assume. This indeed was true of all the humane sciences.”²³ In Zhdanov’s own words, an efficient ‘philosophical front’, for instance, should be designed to function in these terms:

“When one talks about the philosophical front, in our minds immediately appears the image of an organized detachment of militant philosophers, armed to the perfection with the Marxist theory, who are conducting a general offensive against the inimical ideology from abroad, against the remnants of bourgeoisie ideology from the consciousness of Soviet people in our country; we have the image of philosophers who contribute to the incessantly progress of our science and who are arming the working people of the socialist society with the consciousness

²⁰ Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution. A History of International Communism 1917-1991*, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014), p. 43.

²¹ Ethan Pollock, *op. cit.*, p. 3

²² J. Miller and M. Miller, “Andrei Zhdanov’s Speech to the Philosophers: An Essay in Interpretation”, *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Jun., 1949), p. 41.

²³ Leszek Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism. Its Origin, Growth and Dissolution. Volume III, The Breakdown*, (Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 76.

of the necessity of the road we are engaged onto, and with firm trust, founded upon science, in the final victory of our cause."²⁴

Drawing his ideas from his Soviet colleagues, Romanian historian and ideologue Mihail Roller²⁵ has argued as early as 1948 that history-writing was not just a simple discipline like any other, but pure ideological activity. For him, not taking full control over national history-production from the very beginning of the new Romanian popular democratic regime, would have permitted the "class enemy" to master a very dangerous "weapon against the working-class."²⁶ For Romanian historian-activists of those days, "scientific, objective truth can be respected and presented only from the basis of the working class' worldview [...] only by regarding history as a weapon in the service of the fight of the the working class."²⁷ These anti-Western, anti-'cosmopolitan', anti-'objectivist' and anti-'bourgeoise' ideas, inspired by Andrei Zhdanov, had been most clearly exposed and systematized during Romanian High Stalinism in 1949, in a text authored by Leonte Răutu, chief of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the RWP, bearing the title *Against the bourgeoisie cosmopolitanism and objectivism in social sciences*²⁸. For Răutu²⁹, too, just as for Zhdanov and Stalin³⁰, a truly objective scientific knowledge of the social world could only be reached by appropriating the perspective of the working class. In this pure, primary Leninist view³¹, one cannot understand *reality-as-it-is* if one is not animated by a strong party-spirit. The party-spirit or party-mindedness manifested in sciences (especially in social sciences), conducive to the imposition of ideological uniformity, is the essence of Lenin's influential 'партийность' principle.

²⁴ A. A. Zhdanov, *Cuvântare la discuțiile în jurul lucrării lui G. F. Alexandrov: "Istoria filosofiei occidentale"*, București, Ed. P.C.R., 1947, p. 42.

²⁵For a comprehensive study regarding Roller's life and activity, see Ștefan Bosomitu and Mihai Burcea „Mihail Roller (1908-1958). O scurtă biografie”, in *Identitate, social și cotidian în România comunistă*, (Iași, Ed. Polirom, 2012), pp. 19-65.

²⁶ Mihail Roller, *Probleme de istorie. Contribuții la lupta pentru o istorie științifică în R.P.R.*, (3rd edition, București, Ed. P.M.R., 1951), p. 66.

²⁷ „Despre activitatea Institutului de Istorie din Cluj al Academiei R.P.R.”, in *Studii. Revistă de istorie și filosofie*, nr. 2, 1953, p. 32.

²⁸ Leonte Răutu, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-257.

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 216-218.

³⁰ I. V. Stalin, *Problemele leninismului*, (București, Ed. pentru literatură politică, 1952), p. 612.

³¹ V. I. Lenin, *Opere complete*, vol. 1, (București, Ed. PMR, 1950), pp. 402-403.

In order to organize a disciplined 'historians' front', capable of waging a war with both foreign and domestic enemies, Romanian communist political elites needed to carry on a radical process of structural change, a process which, during 1948-1949, has been doubled by massive purges of the Romanian field of historians. Chronologically, the universities and their academic staff were the first to witness the attack, as early as 1947, when a series of laws and decrees both organized their new structures, and established their personnel lists³². To illustrate the dimension of this phenomenon, it is sufficient to mention that from the total number of academics hired at the Bucharest University in 1945, only about 10% were still professionally active³³ in 1948-1949.

In addition, in the summer of 1948, another set of decrees have dismantled not only the Romanian Academy, but also the entire network of history-production institutions and their scientific journals. From that moment onwards, the whole national historical research started to be planned, coordinated and strictly supervised by this institution which, according to the law, had become a 'state institution' subordinated directly to the Council of Ministers³⁴. The system of planned science has replaced traditional free research, rejected as an "anarchy which permitted initiatives and personal fantasy to choose the problem[s], making impossible the solving of fundamental problems"³⁵.

Because this phenomenon of 'breaking through' Romanian historical discipline after 1948 has been discussed in depth after 1989, and a consistent body of scholarly literature related to this topic has been produced since then³⁶, I will limit myself here only to highlight what I

³² Maria Someșan, Mircea Iosifescu, „Modificarea structurii Universității în anii consolidării regimului comunist”, în *Analele Sighet*, vol. 6, (București, Ed. Fundația Academia Civică, 1998), p. 447.

³³ Adina Berciu-Drăghicescu, Ovidiu Bozgan, *O istorie a Universității din București (1864-2004)*, (București, 2004, Ed. Universității București), p. 228.

³⁴ Arhivele Naționale ale României (National Archives of Romania, ANR) - Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorice Centrale (Service of the Central Historical National Archives - SANIC), Fund Central Committee of the RCP, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, File no. 86/1950, f. 1, („Statutul de organizarea și funcționare al Academiei Republicii Populare Române”).

³⁵ Andrei Oțetea, „Dezvoltarea științei istorice românești după 23 August 1944”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, nr. 4, 1959, p. 36.

³⁶ Florin Constantiniu, *De la Răutu și Roller la Mușat și Ardeleanu*, (București, Ed. Enciclopedică, 2007), pp. 23-70; Apostol Stan, *Istorie și politică în România comunistă*, (București, Ed. Curtea Veche, 2010), pp. 87-96; Șerban Papacostea, “Captive Clio: Romanian Historiography under Communist Rule”, *European History Quarterly*, Vol.

believe to be the most significant feature of the newly established 'historians' front': all the members composing it have suddenly converted themselves into both state employees *and* political activists. Thus, during this period, historians – and generally intellectuals – have become more dependant on the (socialist) state than ever before in modern history, just like their Soviet fellows³⁷.

To sum things up, the idea of a 'historians' front' as a distinctive sub-system of a larger 'ideological front' engaged into a life and death battle against both the capitalist West and the domestic 'old', an idea patented after World War II by Soviet ideologue Andrei Zhdanov, has been immediately appropriated by Romanian Stalinist political elites and party-minded historians. Discursively employed on a massive scale during Romanian 'cultural revolution' between 1948 and 1953 – in party documents, speeches, scientific journals and reviews – the frequency of using the 'historians' front' concept has not diminished even after the death of Joseph Stalin in March 1953.

In January 1953 for instance, Ladislau Bányai had summarized the main accomplishments and shortcomings of the History Institute from Cluj in a meeting with the most prominent historians of the day. In his speech, he used the same radical Stalinist tone, emphasizing the need of "a whole army of historians, an army which should receive precise guidance"³⁸ from party forums. Sure enough, that day a vast majority of participants have integrated themselves into approximately identical discursive patterns. In Stephen Kotkin's words, they were 'speaking bolshevik'.

26 (1996), pp. 181-193; Vlad Georgescu, *Politică și istorie. Cazul comuniștilor români 1944-1977*, (București, Ed. Humanitas, 2008), pp. 9-17; Andi Mihalache, *Istorie și practici discursive în România „democrat-populară”*, (București, Ed. Albatros, 2003), pp. 24-47, pp. 63-75; Alexandru Zub, *Orizont închis. Istoriografia română sub dictatură*, (Iași, Institutul European, 2000), pp. 61-71; Dinu C. Giurescu, *De la Sovromconstrucții nr. 6 la Academia Română. Amintiri, mărturii*, (București, Ed. Meronia, 2008), pp. 119-152; Felician Velimirovici, *Istorie și istorici în România comunistă (1948-1989)*, (Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Mega, 2015), pp. 30-86.

³⁷ Benjamin Tromly, *Making the Soviet Intelligentsia. Universities and Intellectual Life under Stalin and Khrushchev*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, 2014), p. 5.

³⁸ „Consfătuirea istoricilor din R.P.R. (16-17 ianuarie 1953)”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie și filosofie*, nr. 1, 1953, p. 37.

On November 17, 1954, the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the CC of the RWP was organizing another meeting³⁹ with a significant number of representatives from the 'historians' front'. As anyone can easily observe by just reading the transcript of the discussions which had taken place then, the very phrase 'historians' front' occurs no less than seven times in the text. This time again, most of the Romanian historians were speaking bolshevik.

In the spring of 1955, Traian Udrea, a well-positioned young historian, representative of the new generation, has had made the first postwar general evaluation of the evolutions recorded by Romanian historical sciences during the first seven years of popular democracy. In his opinion, the fact that most of the professionally active historians of that moment have integrated themselves into the party's ideological front, "...has contributed to the binding of the science of history with the people's struggle for the construction of socialism and for accomplishing the cultural revolution in our country"⁴⁰.

Approximately a year later, the 'historians' front' seems to have temporarily disappeared from official political vocabulary. In December 1955, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, when addressing the 2nd congress of the RWP, had explicitly set a new major task for historians - namely, to produce another marxist-leninist synthesis of national history⁴¹. In referring to them, Dej talked about 'our historians' and our 'historical science', not mentioning even once the Zhdanov-inspired formulae of 'ideological front' or 'historians' front'. No doubt, as it is now evident, by 1955 the Romanian 'historians' front' itself had started to undertake a slow but significant process of internal change. Because this phenomenon has already been thoroughly analyzed by now⁴², I am not going to discuss its implications here. I am only emphasizing the fact alone.

³⁹ Felician Velimirovici, "«Nu am spus niciodată că Roller nu este Roller.» Ședința istoricilor români din 17 noiembrie 1954", în *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie "A. D. Xenopol"*, tom LI, 2014.

⁴⁰ Traian Udrea, „Despre unele probleme privind știința istorică în R.P.R.”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, nr. 1, 1955, p. 110.

⁴¹ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, „Raportul de activitate al Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român”, în *Congresul al II-lea al Partidului Muncitoresc Român*, București, Ed. de stat pentru literatură politică, 1956, p. 156.

⁴² Andi Mihalache, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-129; Bogdan Iacob, “Co-option and Control: The Changing Profile of the Historical Front in Communist Romania at the End of the Fifties”, *History of Communism in Europe*, Vol. 2, 2011, pp. 197-227.

However, in the spring of 1956, Stalinist rhetoric was being publicly reaffirmed once again, with a thrust reminiscent of the one which has characterized the 'cultural revolution' years. When 'translating' the lessons of the party's congress for historians' use, the anonymous author of an editorial text disseminated through the central journal of Romanian history was reiterating from the very beginning the idea that "the science of history is a constitutive element of the party's ideological front of fight"⁴³. Moreover, in his view history should "contribute to the development of trust in the rightness and all-conquering power of our cause". For him, just as it did for the propagandists who activated on the ideological front during High Stalinism, historiography should represent "a telling and profound exposure of mystifications [and] calumnies which imperialistic circles are trying to propagate against our popular republic."⁴⁴ Going only through the successive twelve issues of *Studii. Revistă de istorie* published in 1955 and 1956, one cannot notice too many expressions of the so-called 'spirit of Geneva' which has presumably manifested in historiography back then.

At the end of following year, Romanian political and intellectual elites were celebrating the anniversary of the first ten years since monarchy has been abolished and a Romanian People's Republic has been established in its place. As the custom demanded, this celebration occasioned an appraisal of the development of the new, 'scientific' historical science, during the first decade of 'people's power'. The unsigned editorial article published in the first pages of the last issue of *Studii* in 1957, designed to realize this assessment, was referring to our 'marxist historians' while analyzing their accomplishments. Although the 'historians' front' expression was missing from his text, the author still felt it necessary to remind the reader in a Stalinist manner that "a marxist historian has the duty to provide precise and clear answers to a series of problems raised by the cultural revolution."⁴⁵

After the death of Mihail Roller, in December 1958 another leading article full of recommendations and endorsements for historians' use has been published in the last issue of *Studii*. Bearing the

⁴³ „Sarcinile de mare răspundere puse de Congresul al II-lea al P.M.R. în fața istoricilor”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, nr. 1, 1956, p. 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁵ „Educația patriotică și sarcinile științei istoriei”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, nr. 6, 1957, p. 11.

symptomatic title *For a Consistent Application of Marxist-Leninist Theory in Historical Research*, the material represented a direct reaction⁴⁶ developed by a number of Stalinist historians against the recently appointed director of the Academy's Institute of History in Bucharest, Academician Andrei Oțetea, and his critique of Solomon Știrbu's latest book⁴⁷ (a young dogmatic hardliner raised by Roller in the first half of the fifties). In a radical parlance, the unnamed authors of the editorial were rejecting once again not only the "rotteness of the bourgeoisie regime"⁴⁸ but also, just like Răutu in 1949, the "bourgeois objectivism, which was manifested recently in different works of our historians"⁴⁹. While enumerating the unprecedented achievements of Romanian marxist-leninist science of history together with historians' personal shortcomings, the authors have avoided to use the 'historians' front' phrase, at the same time limiting themselves only to reassert the all-conquering power of the marxist-leninist theory in historical research and the righteousness of the 'cultural revolution' conducted by the party⁵⁰. This particular editorial has been considered (*id est*, proclaimed), during the following years, a very "precious guideline" for Romanian historians⁵¹.

The final years of the 6th decade have witnessed the last grand mobilization of forces in the historians' field during Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's lifetime. The sustained work in order to accomplish the task set by the party back in 1955 – the completion of the *Istoria României* treatise – has given historians the opportunity to conduct general evaluations of the national marxist-leninist historiography. In the summer of 1959 for instance, the celebration of the first 15 years since Romania's 'liberation from the fascist yoke' occasioned such an account. Although he presented a progressive, always ascending development of the evolution which Romanian historical science has had since 1948, an evolution characterized by significant 'qualitative accumulations', Andrei Oțetea's appraisal marks a clear departure from the Stalin-style

⁴⁶ Florin Constantiniu, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-158; Felician Velimirovici, *Istorie și istorici în România...*, chapter 2.

⁴⁷ Solomon Știrbu, *Răscoala din 1821 și legăturile ei cu evenimentele internaționale*, (București, Ed. de stat pentru literatură politică, 1956).

⁴⁸ „Pentru aplicarea consecventă a teoriei marxist-leniniste în cercetările istorice”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, nr. 6, 1958, p. 5.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵¹ Vasile Maciu, „Cercetarea istoriei moderne a României în anii puterii populare”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, nr. 6, 1962, pp. 1574-1575.

patterns of interpretation and language employed during and after the 'cultural revolution'. For the first time after 1948, an official historian was publicly advancing the necessity for a "critical reconsideration of the cultural heritage of the past"⁵². Not mentioning concepts such as 'historians' front' or 'cultural revolution' in his text, Oțetea still recommended his colleagues "not to capitulate in front of the class enemy"⁵³ which, in his view, was being still ideologically active among them.

3. Ceaușescuist Plans for Establishing the Ultimate 'Historians' Front'

'Historians' front', 'cultural revolution', 'bourgeois objectivism', 'cosmopolitanism', 'rotten imperialistic culture' and many other similar expressions originated in the early Cold War Zhdanovite terminology have had the role to suggest historians' total break with the past along with their full commitment and adherence to the party's ever-changing ideological program. Despite the fact that such phraseology has been overused especially during the first half of the fifties, the 'historians' front' has still remained – as one scholar concluded after conducting a comprehensive analysis of the matter – only a "figure of speech"⁵⁴ unmatched by reality. In any case, by 1962 the expression itself seem to have been completely abandoned: while undertaking a thorough evaluation of the achievements of Romanian marxist historiography in the postwar era, the most prominent historians of the day have opted to use phrases like 'our historians', 'marxist historians' or 'Romanian historians' instead of 'historians' front', and 'new historiography' or 'new conditions' rather than 'cultural revolution'. The shift in style was evident. Throughout the 1960s, the 'historians' front' has virtually disappeared from official discourse.

The idea and the necessity for establishing a strong 'ideological front' has been 'rediscovered' and publicly postulated by Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1971. Despite the fact he never used this particular formula until then, it is worth mentioning that even in his most 'liberal' phase Ceaușescu has never abandoned the fundamental Leninist principles which were underpinning his political thought. Maybe the most

⁵² Andrei Oțetea, „Dezvoltarea științei istorice românești după 23 august 1944”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, nr. 4, 1959, p. 42.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵⁴ Andi Mihalache, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

important one, the so-called 'leading role of the party' in all spheres of life, has been repeatedly enunciated: for instance, in May 1967, writing about the most important tasks facing the RCP at that moment, the Romanian dictator has clearly stated that "there must not exist even a single field of theoretical thinking and activity of spreading ideas where the party spirit does not make its strong presence felt"⁵⁵. In fact, by just studying his 'theoretical' contributions published during the first years of his rule, one might rightly conclude that Nicolae Ceaușescu *has never given up the basic premises of marxist-leninist ideology*. In fact, he has always viewed ideological problems in Leninist patterns of understanding⁵⁶. Taken together, Ceaușescu's speeches from July and November 1971 clearly mark a shift of priorities and an increased preoccupation towards issues related to culture, education and ideology although, as Kenneth Jowitt has noted, they never become truly "equal in status with industrialization and social change, but [they have been] become increasingly significant at this point in time since it affects the regime's ability to enhance its capacity to direct the continued development of Romanian society."⁵⁷

In July 1971, while highlighting once again the necessity to strengthen the 'communist consciousness' of the working people in order to successfully build the multilaterally developed socialist society, Nicolae Ceaușescu's tone has significantly radicalized. Using a classic Stalinist rhetoric, reminding of the one which dominated public space 20 years earlier, Ceaușescu has made a series of ideological 'recommendations' while harshly criticizing "the obsequiousness [*ploconirea*] towards what is produced in the West"⁵⁸ (in 1949 Leonte Răutu was firmly rejecting

⁵⁵ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul desăvârșirii construcției socialiste*, vol. 2, (București, Ed. Politică, 1968), p. 274.

⁵⁶For instance, in February 1971, while discussing with a number of artists and intellectuals, Ceaușescu has given them the task to actively contribute to the "creation of the new man"; see Nicolae Ceaușescu, „Cuvântare la întâlnirea cu oamenii de artă și cultură”, în *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate*, vol. 5, (București, Ed. Politică, 1971), p. 459.

⁵⁷ Kenneth Jowitt, "An Organizational Approach to the Study of Political Culture in Marxist-Leninist Systems", *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Sep., 1974), p. 1187.

⁵⁸ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Expunere la consfătuirea de lucru a activului de partid din domeniul ideologiei și al activității politice și cultural-educative*, 9 iulie 1971, (București, Ed. Politică, 1971), pp. 48-49.

'cosmopolitanism' and the West as well). Just like Răutu and Zhdanov⁵⁹ in their times, Ceaușescu too has emphasized in the same speech the fact that Romanian society recognizes only a *single* true philosophy⁶⁰ – the marxist-leninist one, arguing that:

[philosophy] this is not a specialized profession, but an ideological activity by excellence, and there must go only people who will become party activists. In any field will they work as philosophers, they must be marxist-leninist philosophers. We cannot allow any other kind of philosophy in Romania. This is true for other humanities faculties of Romania [...] and history. We can have only one history, one conception of history, the dialectical and historical materialism, no other conception can exist in history teaching.”⁶¹

On the same occasion, borrowing phrases from the Stalinist vocabulary, RCP's leader has also condemned the 'bourgeois mentality'⁶² which, in his opinion, has started to manifest in cultural life, at the same time affirming the right of the party to intervene in *every* field of human activity, even in theater and music⁶³. His intention was evident: a more rigid ideological control exercised by the party apparatus over all national cultural matters.

In November 1971 Ceaușescu has explicitly enunciated the 'cultural revolution'⁶⁴ formula in order to describe the great accomplishments which had occurred in Romanian culture, not at the beginning of the fifties as one may expect, but only during the first five years of his 'term'. From that moment forward, phrases like 'ideological front', 'cultural revolution' or 'historians' front' have started to gradually flood public discourse.

⁵⁹ Leszek Kołakowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-105.

⁶⁰ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Expunere la consfătuirea de lucru a activului de partid din domeniul ideologiei...*, p. 60.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁶⁴ Nicolae Ceaușescu, „Expunere cu privire la Programul P.C.R. pentru îmbunătățirea activității ideologice, ridicarea nivelului general al cunoașterii și educația socialistă a maselor, pentru așezarea relațiilor din societatea noastră pe baza principiilor eticii și echității socialiste și comuniste”, în *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate*, vol. 6, (București, Ed. Politică, 1972), p. 628.

The last issue of *Studii. Revistă de istorie* edited in 1971 was opening with an unsigned editorial article⁶⁵ full of recommendations and instructions for historians, grounded upon the speeches and proposals which Nicolae Ceaușescu has made during the summer and autumn of the same year. This editorial was the first one to be published since Ceaușescu has acceded power, and it inaugurated a series of authoritative articles which will ritualistically demand the fulfillment of potentiality through a thorough application of the 'marxist-leninist' theory in history-production. Such articles will appear increasingly more often, especially after 1975.

Between 1971 and 1975 the RCP's central structures have made considerable efforts in order not only to 'creatively develop' problems of theory and ideology, but also to redefine the legislative framework into which cultural institutions were functioning⁶⁶. Both processes were clearly intended to bring the field of cultural production under a more rigid political control. The Ceaușescu version of marxist-leninist philosophy has been codified in the pages of the first Constitution of the party adopted in December 1974 - a document which has started to be elaborated by an ideological commission as early as July 1972 under Ceaușescu's direct supervision⁶⁷. Judging by the reactions generated by its adoption, the party's program has become, soon after, an ideological landmark⁶⁸ in cultural matters and especially in those intellectual fields ideologically most sensitive - philosophy, political economy and history.

In concrete terms, the set of the ideologically-shaped laws and decrees promulgated during the same time frame have had the same purpose, namely, to impose a firmer control over national cultural production in order to reestablish a highly disciplined 'ideological front'. RCP's efforts were intended to give effect to Stalinist metaphors and figures of speech such as 'ideological front' or 'historians' front' by operating a thorough centralization of national history-production⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ „Pentru dezvoltarea spiritului militant al științei istorice”, în *Studii. Revistă de istorie*, tom 24, nr. 6, 1971, pp. I-VI.

⁶⁶ Cristian Vasile, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-163.

⁶⁷ *Programul Partidului Comunist Român de făurire a societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate și înaintare a României spre comunism*, (București, Ed. Politică, 1975), p. 7.

⁶⁸ „Respectarea adevărului - îndatorire primordială a științei istorice”, *Revista de istorie*, tom 28, no. 6, 1975, p. 801; see also „Partinitatea - obiectivul central al activității noastre de cercetare, scriere și difuzare a cunoștințelor de istorie”, *Revista de istorie*, tom 28, no. 12, 1975, p. 1798.

⁶⁹ Gabriel Moisa, *Direcții și tendințe în istoriografia românească, 1989-2006*, (Oradea, Ed. Universității din Oradea, 2006), p. 20.

One of the most significant legal change has been introduced by the State Council's Decree no. 121 from March 18th, 1970⁷⁰. This act has established and regulated the functioning of a new major institution – the Academy of Social and Political Sciences (ASPS) which, according to the law, was being directly subordinated to the Central Committee of the RCP. Its basic features were similar to those held by the old Romanian Academy up to that moment – in the first place, the planning and coordination of scientific research in humanities and social sciences⁷¹ on a national scale. Starting with the same date, 17 of the Academy's research institutes were subordinated to the ASPS (*id est*, to the Romanian Communist Party⁷²). According to the *Encyclopedia of Romanian Historiography* published in 1978, at that time the ASPS was coordinating the main research institutes, centers and laboratories from Bucharest and also those from the most developed cities of the country (Bacău, Braşov, Cluj-Napoca, Constanţa, Craiova, Iaşi, Oradea, Sibiu, Târgu-Mureş and Timişoara).

After the ASPS has been established, in 1974 historical research institutes have reintroduced collective work plans validated through research contracts concluded between the research institutes and the ASPS with the aim to capitalize history-production⁷³. As well, the Stalinist principle of “collective responsibility”, a medieval one in fact⁷⁴, has also been introduced at the same time. In order to fulfill their individual work plan, historians had to produce works circumscribed to documents prepared in advance. The emphasis was thus put primarily on the amount of work carried out by historians, and not on their scientific relevance, impact or intrinsic quality. As a consequence, a relatively large share of articles, studies and even books written by them

⁷⁰ „Decret nr. 121/18 martie 1970 pentru înfiinţarea Academiei de Ştiinţe Sociale şi Politice a Republicii Socialiste România”, *Buletinul Oficial*, VI, 22, I, 18 martie 1970.

⁷¹ Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, *Intelectualii în câmpul puterii. Morfologii şi traiectorii sociale*, (Iaşi, Ed. Polirom, 2007), pp. 95-96.

⁷² „Academia de Ştiinţe Sociale şi Politice a Republicii Socialiste România”, Dan Cătănuş (ed.), *România 1945-1989. Enciclopedia regimului comunist. Instituţii de partid, de stat, obşteşti şi cooperatiste*, (Bucureşti, Institutul Naţional pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, 2012), p. 17.

⁷³ Gabriel Moisa, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁷⁴ J. Arch Getty, *Practicing Stalinism. Bolsheviks, Boyars and the Persistence of Tradition*, (Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2013), pp. 38-44; Radu Popa, „Postfaţă”, Vlad Georgescu, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

remained unpublished⁷⁵ once the plan has been fulfilled. Basically, following the establishment of the new political 'academy' in 1970, scientific research in humanities, social and political sciences has been taken away from the Romanian Academy and entered directly under the control of the superior party institutions.

After scientific institutes have been subordinated to the ASPs, the role and prestige of the 'old' Academy has begun to gradually decrease, even if, on July 10, 1985, Ceaușescu was elected its full member, and simultaneously its honorary president⁷⁶. In fact, after 1970 the Romanian Academy has entered into a progressive decline, visible from multiple angles. For instance, this phenomenon can be exemplified statistically only by analyzing the evolution of the number of its members between March 1974 (when the last elections of new members has taken place) and 1989 (the year of the collapse of the communist regime). During this period of 15 years, there has not been chosen even a single new member (except for Nicolae Ceaușescu), although 129 academicians have died in the meantime: from a total number of 228 full and correspondant members the Academy has had back in 1974, in May 31, 1989 it was left with only 99⁷⁷.

The year 1975 is also highly relevant from yet another point of view. Soon after the closing of RCP's 11th Congress, the Political Executive Committee of its CC has issued a decision to form a party and state commission charged with the editing of a new national history treatise⁷⁸. In fact, the real stake behind this decision to produce another massive academic work was the reaffirmation of the principle of collective work and of the system of planned science, two fundamental ideas clearly expressed in 1976 during the first congress of political education and socialist culture⁷⁹.

⁷⁵ Apostol Stan, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-320.

⁷⁶ ANR - SANIC, Fund Central Committee of the RCP, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, File no. 29/ 1989, f. 2 („Stenograma primirii de către tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu, secretar general al Partidului Comunist Român, președintele Republicii Socialiste România, a delegației Academiei Republicii Socialiste România”).

⁷⁷ ANR - SANIC, Fund Central Committee of the RCP, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, File no. 30/ 1989, f. 18 („Situatie statistică referitoare la membrii Academiei R.S. România”).

⁷⁸ „Respectarea adevărului - îndatorire primordială a științei istorice”, *Revista de istorie*, tom 28, no. 6, 1975, p. 799.

⁷⁹ *Congresul educației politice și al culturii socialiste*, București, Ed. Politică, 1976.

RCP's leadership tendencies to extend and accentuate its control over the entire field of historians have also manifested through its efforts to concentrate historians' work in order to produce a number of four massive synthesis capable of reflecting the new historiographic canons pushed forward by political power: a treatise of military history of the Romanian people, a general history of Romanians in ten volumes, a treatise of universal history in six volumes and a treatise for the history of the RCP in five volumes. A document kept in the archives of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the CC of the RCP, dating from May 21, 1980, details the stage of each project⁸⁰, and it also enumerates another set of eight great projects which should have been completed as soon as possible – a history of the Romanian language (six volumes), a history of Romanian literature (six volumes), a history of the international communist movement, a history of the international antiimperialistic movements, a history of education in Romania (four volumes), a history of Romanian scientific and technical thought (four volumes), a history of Romanian law and a history of Romanian philosophy (each of them in two volumes).

Of all these projects meant to reflect the place occupied by historical research in Romania only a few have materialized, most of them recording major failures⁸¹ even though, for example, the manuscript of the first volume of *History of Romanians* has been completed⁸² at the end of 1978. The official history of the party, on the other hand, although it was completed in the winter of 1980 (in a single volume consisting of more than 700 pages), obviously, based upon the recommendations⁸³ made by the RCP program in 1974, has not been published ever, since Nicolae Ceausescu considered, without any further explanation, that its publication "is not possible"⁸⁴.

⁸⁰ ANR – SANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Fund Central Committee of the RCP, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, File no. 11/1980, ff. 27-28, („Informare privind stadiul de realizare a Tratatelor de istorie și a altor lucrări fundamentale nominalizate în documentele Congresului educației politice și al culturii socialiste”).

⁸¹ Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, (ed. a III-a), București, Ed. Humanitas, 2005, p. 140.

⁸² ANR – SANIC, Fund Central Committee of the RCP, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, File no. 23/1980, f. 20.

⁸³ ANR – SANIC, Fund Central Committee of the RCP, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, File no.7/1980, f. 41.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 40.

The 'centralization' and 'militarization' of Romanian historical field in late 1970s and early 1980s can also be traced by just analyzing the discursive practices adopted in the public space by both party officials and social agents (historians). In May 1980 for example, Nicolae Ceaușescu has organized a meeting with the most prominent historians of the day⁸⁵. Most of them, while talking about themselves and their work, were referring to the 'historians' front', not forgetting that their profession was representing an important element on the 'ideological front'. Academician Ștefan Ștefănescu for instance, director of "Nicolae Iorga" Institute in Bucharest, has even highlighted the idea that "this double hypostasis of political activists and scientists blends perfectly into the investigative work of the Romanian people's past. Romanian historiography has a strong tradition of political activism."⁸⁶

The idea of concentrating the forces and efforts of most historians around the completion of the above mentioned grand enterprises pushed forward by the higher-level RCP institutions, has also had the role to minimize even further the relative autonomy of the Romanian field of history production. By early 1980s, the 'historians' front' has completely lost its "power to define its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products"⁸⁷ in the absence of external (political) factors. Additionally, by that time Nicolae Ceaușescu has 'theorized' the concept of the so-called 'unitary history', according to which there "should not be two histories, a history of the people and a history of the party [because] our people has a single history."⁸⁸ In fact, Ceaușescu has expressed similar ideas in his speech which he held during the enlarged plenary session of the CC of the RCP from 1-2 June, 1982, even though, while stating them, he was using his nowadays well-known *langue du bois*. Of the 34 pages that make up Ceaușescu's speech, more than a quarter are dedicated to synthesize a version of the glorious history of the Romanian people, inaugurated by the Dacian king Burebista and which has culminated with the socialist era. But what RCP's general secretary has repeatedly stressed on that occasion,

⁸⁵ ANR - SANIC, Fund Central Committee of the RCP, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, File no. 23/1980, („Stenograma întâlnirii de lucru cu istoricii, de la CC al PCR - 27 mai 1980”).

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, ff. 12-13.

⁸⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production. Essays on Art and Literature*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p. 115.

⁸⁸ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate*, vol. 24, București, Ed. Politică, 1983, p. 67.

however, was the “lagging behind” of the “theoretical activity, ideological, political and educational as against the productive forces”⁸⁹, just as he did in 1971 (when he formulated the “July Theses”) or in 1976 (when he opened the first Congress of Socialist Culture and Education) or, more recently, in 1979, when he presented the CC report to the 12th congress of the party⁹⁰. But this time, additionally, he set out a series of concrete proposals regarding the development of the political and ideological consciousness of the “masses”. One of them has explicitly highlighted the need to intensify the work in order to complete a new “history of the Romanian people in the spirit of dialectical and historical materialist world view”.

Following this purpose, the production of a new history treatise of the Romanian people, there was needed a new and unique Central Institute of National History, capable to gather together all historians professionally active in socialist Romania, and to unify their “forces”: “We have to unify forces in history in one institute of national history, which will encompass as well the society of historical sciences”⁹¹ emphasized Ceaușescu in 1982. Three years later, on 30 May 1985, the Central Institute of National History (CINH) was being organized, lacking only the approval of the State Council. From obscure reasons, the CINH has never received it.

A report presented to the ideological commission of the CC of the RCP on 29 May 1985, regarding “the establishment, organization and functioning” of the institute, was arguing the need of such an institution in terms inspired by Ceaușescu’s statements which he made during the above-cited plenary session in 1982. Taking into consideration, “based upon consultations with a large group of specialists in research and teaching of history”⁹², the “dispersal of forces and insufficient

⁸⁹ Nicolae Ceaușescu, „Expunere cu privire la stadiul actual al edificării socialismului în țara noastră, la problemele teoretice, ideologice și activitatea politică, educativă a partidului prezentată la plenara largită a Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român. 1-2 iunie 1982”, în *Anale de istorie*, anul XXVIII, nr. 4, 1982, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Raport la cel de-al XII-lea Congres al Partidului Comunist Român*, București, Ed. Politică, 1979, p. 82.

⁹¹ Nicolae Ceaușescu, „Expunere cu privire la stadiul actual al edificării socialismului în țara noastră...”, p. 28.

⁹² ANR – SANIC, Fund Central Committee of the RCP, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, File no.8/ 1985, f. 23, („Raport privind înființarea, organizarea și funcționarea Institutului Central de Istorie Națională”).

coordination of research activities"⁹³ in history, and – as a direct consequence of this dispersal –the editing of “works and studies disrespectful towards the historical truth”⁹⁴, or even of “historical works that, in parallel, are treating the same or similar issues”, the report was advocating the need “to integrate all Romanian historians in a single institution”, which will operate and produce scientific works “based upon a unique national research program”. The fundamental objective of the institute’s existence would have been, thus, the realization of a large and older historiographical project, never fulfilled throughout the communist regime in Romania: the “development of historical research for the elaboration of Romania’s History Treatise”⁹⁵.

The CINH was to report the fulfilment of its unique research plan not to the RSR Academy, nor the Academy of Political and Social Sciences, but directly to the National Committee for Science and Technology presided by Elena Ceaușescu, an organism under which the CINH would have been placed legally. The CINH would have hired all historians from all research institutions in the country (at that time there were, totally, a number of 445 historians professionally active). But not all of them would have been transferred to the CINH: a number of 207 posts were to be completely abolished, so their holders until then would have remained, therefore, unemployed.

On 30 May 1985, a draft decree of the State Council was regulating the organization and functioning of the CINH, retaining the basic ideas formulated in the report written the day before – the need to fulfil a fundamental objective of socialist historical sciences, namely the production of studies and books capable of reflecting the development of “the unitary history of Romanian people, its heroic struggle for freedom, independence, national and unity of state, the building of socialism and communism in Romania, our people's contribution to the development of universal civilization and the progress of mankind”⁹⁶. The provisions contained in the 2nd and 3rd articles of this decree represent a premiere in Romania’s history, empowering a state institution to oversee not only the full national history-production of

⁹³ *Ibid.*, f. 18.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, f. 19.

⁹⁶ ANR – SANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția de Propagandă și Agitație, Dosar nr. 8/1985, f. 24 („Decret privind înființarea, organizarea și funcționarea Institutului Central de Istorie Națională”).

books, but also to strictly control this process. According to the first article, "achieving the goals of fundamental scientific research in the field of history is based upon a unique national research program"⁹⁷. Article 4 (which lists the powers of the institution), had decrees that the same institute was to develop the "unique plan for scientific research in the field of homeland history and world history, according to current and future requirements of historical science's development"⁹⁸. The 2nd article of the decree constitutes yet another premiere, by equating party activists with historians, activists who were to be employed as scientific researchers:

"The activity of staff from historical scientific research units, as well as that of professors in higher education, including the ones from the «Ștefan Gheorghiu» Academy, who are teaching history, is organized and conducted under the coordination of the Central Institute of National History. The activity of scientific research carried by teachers, established through working norms, is encompassed by the research plans of the Institute.

To the [process of] scientific research are also participating secondary school teachers, members of the Society of Historical Sciences, party and state activists with valuable contributions in the field of history, which are included into the teams of researchers of the institutes."⁹⁹

Without further detailing the 16 tasks laid down in the 4th article, I only emphasize the idea that they, through their content and taken into consideration as a whole, were empowering this mammoth institution to manage and control not only the whole national history-production and research but, eventually, everything concerning Romanian historical sciences, from archaeological sites of the country to the recent history of RCP, from textbooks or popular magazines that could not be published without its permission, to the production of historical movies. According to all data and evidence available at the present moment, such an attempt to "discipline" and "militarize" the field of historians is unique in the history of European communist regimes, having no basis of comparison elsewhere.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 25.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 26.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 25.

In accordance with the project of the decree that established its functioning, the CINH would have been managed by a Scientific Council consisting of 25 members (which, in turn, should have appointed an executive bureau, composed of 7 members, in order to coordinate the activities of the institution on a daily basis). The chairman of the Scientific Council would have acted as a director general. He was to be assisted by two Vice-Chairs of the Scientific Council (one of whom was secretary of Party organization and institution), a deputy director general and a scientific secretary. Both the two directors and scientific secretary were to be appointed by the National Committee for Science and Technology¹⁰⁰.

The Institute would have had a single legal personality, while the six major specialized institutions composing it would have simply had the status of research units. These were to be the following:

- Institute of Historical and Social-Political Studies (Bucharest)
- Institute of History "Nicolae Iorga" (Bucharest)
- Institute of South-East European Studies (Bucharest)
- Institute of Archaeology (Bucharest)
- Institute of History and Archaeology (Cluj-Napoca)
- Institute of History and Archaeology "A.D. Xenopol" (Iasi)

On 29 May 1985, the situation of researchers engaged in historical research institutions of socialist Romania, which were to be merged into the CINH, was detailed in a documentary kept in the central archive of the CC of the RCP. Being one of the few official statistics concerning the situation of the Romanian historians' front in the 1980s, I synthesize its data in Table 1, below.

The organizational scheme of the CINH's was to represent, as I have already said, more than a simple "federalization" of pre-existing history institutes, since new component units were to be deprived by law of any internal autonomy (starting with the establishment of the organization chart and staff, the development of work plans, and ending with the remuneration of researchers or the dissemination of the results of their work). On the other hand, the entry into force of the decree establishing the CINH would have partially repeal previous legislation under which a number of institutions in operation - for example, the Institute for Thracology, established in 1979, or the Centre of History and Military Theory - would, apparently, completely disappear. In fact,

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 29.

these historians, along with some of the people working for the Institute of Historical and Political Studies, were to become the nucleus or the pillars upon which the CINH was to be established. In this regard, it is symptomatic the fact that in the future CINH, only the Institute of Historical and Political Studies has to benefit the status of a sector, while other units would have only become sections, or even research teams. The organization and functioning of the CINH is detailed in Figure 1, while the reducing of the total number of posts proposed for it, broken down by component units, including administrative and ancillary staff, are summarized in Table 1. The most significant change worthy of mentioning here is that the total number of research posts was to fall down from 445 to 238: about 53% of Romanian historians would have remained unemployed.

The new and only historical research institute of socialist Romania would be, therefore, not only an institution placed under the strictest political control in the history of the Ceaușescu era, but also a significantly leaner, more flexible and therefore more easy to be "coordinated" from above. Having a pyramid-type organization scheme and engaging into its structure the entire number of country's historians, the purpose of the CINH was to centralize, in fact, the whole national history-production. Such a centralization of the field of historians has never existed in the history of post-war Romania except the period of the Stalinist cultural revolution, conventionally comprised between 1948 and 1954/1955.

The reasons why the State Council has not promulgated the decree in the end remain unknown. If it would have done this last step, the CINH would have become a reality that would have sent Romanian historical research back to the "era" of Mihail Roller.

Figure 1

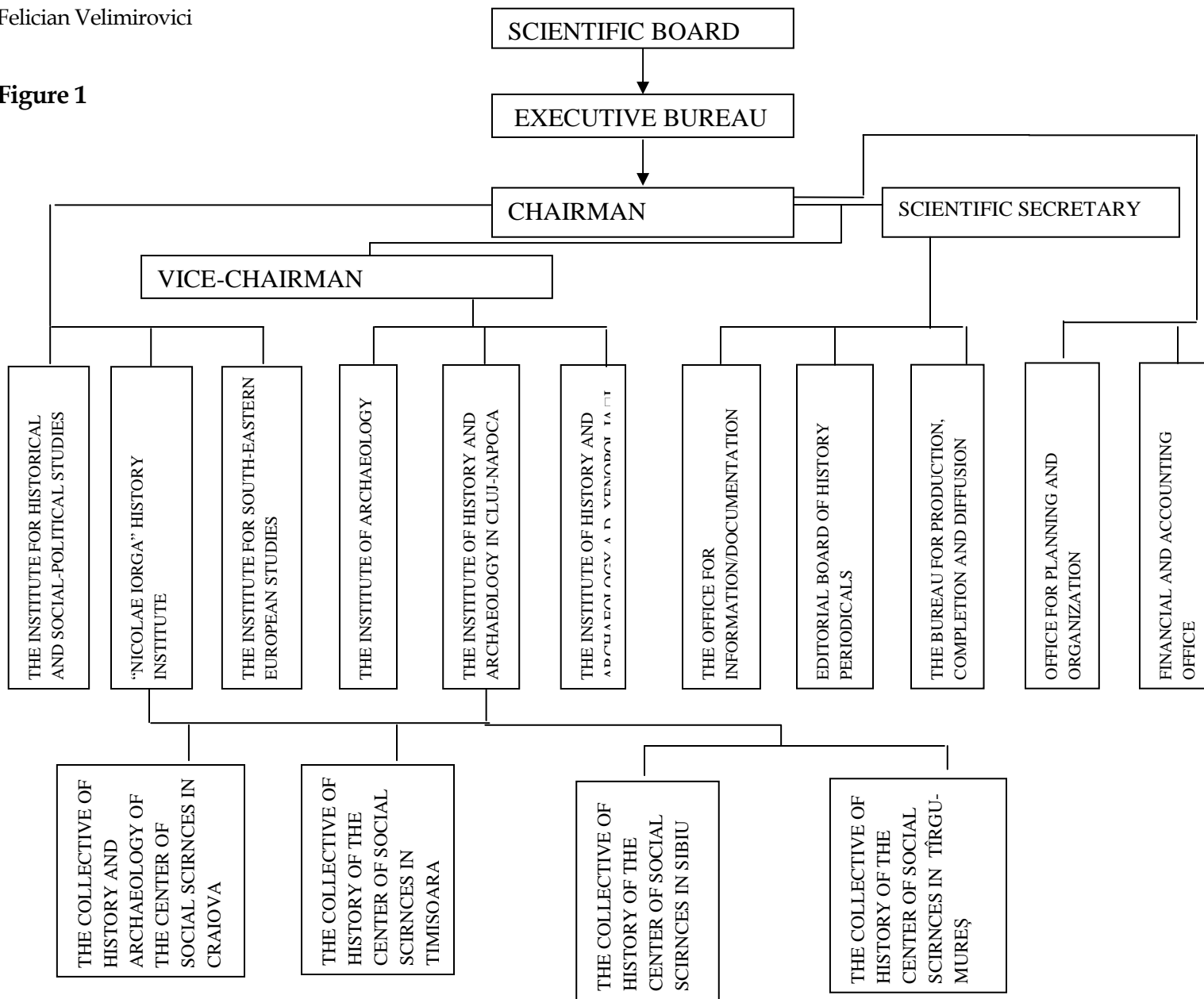


Table 1

INSTITUTION	Total	HIGHER EDUCATION STAFF	RESEARCHERS			RESEARCHERS
			R. I	R. II	R. III	
THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL-POLITICAL STUDIES	79	56	3	5	14	29
"NICOLAE IORGA" HISTORY INSTITUTE	62	54	-	4	22	18
THE INSTITUTE FOR SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPEAN STUDIES	32	28	-	1	5	14
THE INSTITUTE OF THRACOLOGY	5	5	-	-	-	1
THE INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY	56	43	-	2	23	11
THE INSTITUTE OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY IN CLUJ-NAPOCA	44	37	-	3	11	15
THE INSTITUTE OF HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY "A.D. XENOPOL" IAȘI	45	39	-	3	13	15
THE CENTER FOR STUDIES AND RESEARCH OF THEORY AND MILITARY HISTORY	54	48	-	-	-	-
THE CENTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CRAIOVA	7	7	-	-	3	4
THE CENTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN SIBIU	3	3	-	-	2	1
THE CENTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN TÂRGU-MUREȘ	8	8	-	1	2	4
THE CENTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN TIMIȘOARA	2	2	-	-	-	-
Total:	397	330	3	19	95	112

Welfare statistics. Analysing the quality of life in the 1950s Romania¹

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Abstract: *This article unveils how a project that refined social sciences research methodologies to envision the general well-being was articulated by the Romanian state during the early 1950s. It uses as a case study the research conducted in the 1950s on family budgets. The central element of this investigation consists of contextualizing social policies based on the reconstruction of postwar Europe. It pays a particular attention, therefore, to identify differences between East and West by comparing the social welfare approaches suggested by the propagandist rhetoric, policy makers and professional authority. It aims to establish to what extent approaches to well-being during the 1950s Romania reflected ideological and professional tensions across the Iron Curtain and, on another level, if they were articulated by utopian or pragmatic goals. Equally important, it also aims to open up a discussion on the accuracy and relevance of official statistics, which is central to understanding if and how the national prestige of a state may be articulated by standardization.*

Keywords: *Romania, family budgets, quantitative research, Cold War, living standards*

By well-being we usually mean a good material situation, prosperity and abundance. Yet, the defining landmarks of the concept are the outcomes of ideological and cultural constructs, which greatly differ from one socio-political or economic context to another.² The fact

¹ This work was possible due to the financial support of the Sectorial Operational Program for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Fund, under the project number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/132400 with the title „Young successful researchers – professional development in an international and interdisciplinary environment”.

² Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 28; Arjun Appadurai, „Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” in Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective. Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 4; Liviu Chelcea, “The Culture of

that what illustrates a high standard of living in certain areas or historical moments may resemble poverty or backwardness in other contexts unveils the fluidity of the concept and questions the political and social implications of materiality. Who are the actors involved in conceptualizing these discursive constructions about well-being? How influential is the political authority in this process? Which are the levers through which the meanings of standard of living are instrumented?

Such questions are important not only because they reveal social dynamics as a result of material changes, but also because they unveil how decision-making factors altered the professional autonomy of those responsible with handling issues related to the quality of life. For example, one of the central feature of modern states consisted of developing programs of social disciplining and control. Statistics, censuses or surveys fleshed out the bones of individual practices and values, provided useful information about economic and social dynamics and served the state's endeavors to assemble bureaucratic structures, develop welfare systems and create programs of mass mobilization. As scholars have recently pointed out tying the police over people to institutional construction would further enhance the political legitimacy at home and would raise the state's national prestige and visibility abroad.³ However, the extensive use of statistics and other quantitative methodologies of social research in the making of modern states were far from making an infallible strategy. On the contrary, the universal claim that scientific approaches - that is mathematical informed research methodologies - could record objectively the myriad facets of social transformation was shortly questioned. It became increasingly evident that information collected as a result of such investigations was, in fact, highly subjective. The biased dimension of quantitative approach would arise from the methodology itself; selecting subjects, reading collected data, calibrating research results or making

Shortage during Socialism: Goods, Strategies and Consumption Practices in a Romanian Village," *Cultural Studies* 16 (2002), pp. 16-43.

³ Michael Foucault, "Space, Knowledge and Power," in James D. Faubion (eds.), *Michel Foucault. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984. Power*, vol. III. (London: Penguin Books, 2002), pp. 349-364; David Hoffman, *Stalinist Values. The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917-1941* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 7; Martin Kohlrausch, Helmuth Trischler, "Introduction," in Martin Kohlrausch, Helmuth Trischler (eds.), *Building Europe on Expertise: Innovators, Organizers, Networkers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 1-4.

additional development strategies carried a significant amount of arbitrariness and became subject to state's political and economic interests and dominant ideologies.⁴ In this respect, it becomes interesting to analyze how a program of making modern states had been materialized by the Socialist Bloc authorities. Such approach would contribute to the growing body of scholarship that situates the economic and social changes occurred in the East-European countries in the postwar period and Western developments of the time not as conflicting categories, but as processes that mutually reinforced one another within broader frameworks of postwar modernization. Thus, the technologies of constructing the everyday are not understood in opposition with global/non-socialist paths, but as shaped under regional, national and transnational sources of power and agency.⁵

This article builds on the idea of tying the state's modernization to welfare programming and aims to unveil how such a project that refined social sciences research methodologies to envision the general well-being was articulated by the Romanian state during the early 1950s. I use as a case study the research conducted in the 1950s on family budgets. I premise on the assumption that the Romanian state actions to

⁴ Susan Leigh Star, Martha Lampland, "Reckoning with Standards," in Martha Lampland, Susan Leigh Star (eds.), *Standards and Their Stories. How Quantifying, Classifying, and Formalizing Practices Shape Everyday Life* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 11-15. For additional perspectives on the connection between the modern states and the production of knowledge see: Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State," in Aradhana Sharma, Akhil Gupta (eds.), *Anthropology of the State. A Reader* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006); John V. Pickstone, *Ways of Knowing: A New History of Science, Technology, and Medicine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Tom Crook, Glen O'Hara, "The Torrent of Numbers: Statistics and the Public Sphere in Britain, 1800-2000," in Tom Crook, Glen O'Hara (eds.), *Statistics and the Public Sphere. Numbers and the People in Britain, 1800-2000* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Richard Coopey, Alan McKinlay, "Power without Knowledge? Foucault and Fordism, 1900-50," *Labor History* 1 (2000), pp. 107-25.

⁵ August Carbonella and Sharryn Kasmir, Introduction. Toward a Global Anthropology of Labor, in Sharryn Kasmir and August Carbonella (eds.), *Blood and Fire. Toward a Global Anthropology of Labor* (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 3; Johanna Bockman, *Markets in the Name of Socialism: The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Sharad Chari, Katherine Vrdery, "Thinking between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism, and Ethnography after the Cold War," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 51., No. 1 (2009), p. 6-34.

collect information about people's daily experiences was partially informed by the methodologies of "empirical sociology" widely applied throughout the Socialist Bloc in the 1950s after the banishment of sociology as an academic discipline.⁶ However, unlike recent scholars who stated that empirical sociology researched Romanian everyday transformations without any concrete follow-ups,⁷ I argue that the authorities were concerned not only with assessing population's experiences but also made use of such information to adjust ongoing social programs. My investigation builds on archival materials.

Studying family budgets in the 1950s Romania in this key is fertile because it can unveil the management of everyday lives as an outcome of entangled influences of political programs and population's responses. In fact, quality of life was not only a central concept of the official propaganda, but part in the process of constructing domestic political legitimacy for the Romanian Communist Party's leaders. Thus, article 15 of the 1948 Romanian Constitution held that "the state directs the national economy and plans the economic development to ensure the people's well-being and guarantee the national independence."⁸ Furthermore, article 10 of the 1952 Romanian Constitution stated that "the people's democratic state would support peasants owning small and medium farms and artisans so that they would be protected against the capitalist exploitation, which would increase productivity and raise their well-being." Three other articles of the same act - 6, 13 and 17 - stated that the economic program endorsed by the communist regime would ensure the growth of "material and cultural conditions of the working people."⁹ Both 1948 and 1952 acts echoed the political leaders' endeavors to shape a democratic appearance of the regime; it also targeted an attempt to consolidating their power. However, the concern for quality of life was equally illustrative of a complicated socio-

⁶ For empirical sociology see Gennady S. Batygin, Inna Deviatko, „The Metamorphoses of Russian Sociology,” in Mike Forrest Keen, Janusz L. Mucha (eds.), *Eastern Europe in Transformation: The Impact on Sociology* (Westpoint: Greenwood Press, 1994), pp. 15-16.

⁷ Cătălin Zamfir, Iancu Filipescu (eds.), *Sociologia românească: 1900-2010. O istorie socială* (Cluj Napoca: Eikon, 2015).

⁸ <http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/constitutie/constitutia-republicii-populare-romane-1948.php> (accessed 27 April 2015).

⁹ <http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/constitutie/constitutia-republicii-populare-romane-1952.php> (accessed 27 April 2015).

economic context that became increasingly visible by 1952. On one hand, the conflicts consumed at the top of the communist party surfaced around that time, and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej saved no effort to explain the difficulties to supply population with basic goods as a result of "anti-democratic" actions of the so-called Muscovit group.¹⁰ On the other hand, the steady worsening of the quality of life forced the political decision-making factors to identify solutions to better the everyday experience. Thus, specific measures adopted after August 1953 Party Plenary Meeting targeted the improvement in the distribution of goods towards the population and an increasing support for agricultural modernization.¹¹ In this respect, the family budgets in the 1950s Romania showed a paradoxical situation. Firstly, conducting research on family budgets proved beneficial for the state's institutions, which could reconfigure economic programs and assess the real impact of state interventionism based on individual everyday experiences. Secondly, such investigations unveiled numerous instances of marginal behavior like illegal networks of circulation of supplies, bargaining, theft, or the crystallization of alternative social hierarchies based on access to material goods and public visibility of those who enjoyed access to goods.

Furthermore, such an approach can integrate the national policies within the broader frameworks of international dynamics. By doing so, my goal is to situate the methods of social research within the fluid dynamics of the Cold War. During the 1950s, both in the Socialist Bloc and the Western countries, social modernization projects employed specific quantitative analysis methodologies. However, as tensions on the international stage increased, the instrumentation of social policies highlighted surprising dialogues and abrupt splits between East and West.¹² The central element of this investigation consists of

¹⁰ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale [Romanian National Archives] (hereafter ANIC), Fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file 223/1952, p. 41. For an overview of the conflict consumed at the top of the Romanian Communist Party in 1952 see: Robert Levy, *Gloria și decăderea Anei Pauker* (Iassy: Polirom, 2002).

¹¹ Ghiță Ionescu, *Communism in Romania, 1944-1962* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 285-287 and 305-309.

¹² Mark Solovey, Hamilton Cravens (eds.), *Cold War Social Science. Knowledge Production, Liberal Democracy, and Human Nature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Michael E. Latham, *Modernization as Ideology: American Social Science and "Nation Building" in the Kennedy Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 7 and 22; Pieter Spierenburg, "Social Control and History. An Introduction," in Herman Roodenburg, Pieter Spierenburg (eds.), *Social Control in Europe. Volume 1, 1500-1800*

contextualizing social policies based on the reconstruction of postwar Europe. I am concerned, therefore, to identify differences between East and West by comparing the social welfare approaches suggested by the propagandist rhetoric, policy makers and professional authority. I aim to establish to what extent approaches to well-being during the 1950s Romania reflected ideological and professional tensions across the Iron Curtain and, on another level, if they were articulated by utopian or pragmatic goals. Equally important, I also aim to open up a discussion on the accuracy and relevance of official statistics, which is central to understanding if and how the national prestige of a state may be articulated by standardization.¹³

Welfare approaches behind the Iron Curtain.

The onset of the Cold War faced both Western and Eastern states with new challenges. Although the tension between former allies augmented, it soon became apparent that military force was not sufficed to articulate power centers. Rather, it was crucial to develop alternative mechanisms to fragment the impenetrability of the Iron Curtain. In this respect, approaches to quality of life on both sides of the Curtain opened up numerous opportunities to blend scientific endeavors with propagandistic rhetoric, which best illustrated the ideological and political valences of statistical research in the postwar years. Or, as one scholar has recently pointed out, in the 1950s the social sciences were perceived to have the potential to reshape the postwar world in the same way that atomic physics had previously changed the course of the Second World War.¹⁴ This is particularly important since the research methodologies and questions applied by Western and Eastern specialists alike were informed by interwar models. Social research revolved around models developed by behavioral sciences and an investigative agenda fully altered by the profound socio-economic implications of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

(Columbus: Ohio State University, 2004), pp. 1-21; Philip Abrams, "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State," in Aradhana Sharma, Akhil Gupta (eds.), *Anthropology of the state. A Reader* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 115.

¹³ Susan Leigh Star, Martha Lampland, "Reckoning with Standards," pp. 11-15.

¹⁴ David C. Engerman, "The Rise and Fall of Wartime Social Sciences. Harvard's Refugee Interview Project, 1950-1954," in Mark Solovey, Hamilton Cravens (eds.), *Cold War Social Science. Knowledge Production, Liberal Democracy, and Human Nature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 28.

In fact, researchers embarked themselves on extensive interrogations on how the development of industries – particularly the heavy industry – could serve the needs of modern society and could prevent another economic collapse. They also problematized about the possible role that the state could play in this context.¹⁵ Accordingly, some themes dominated the research agenda on both sides of the Iron Curtain; as Johnna Bookman has recently pointed out, these approaches echoed the influence of neoclassical economics,¹⁶ and aimed to identify a method to quantify people’s decisions.¹⁷ The study of everyday life afforded social scientists a good opportunity to unveil if and how the state adjusted its policies under population’s actions, but also provided empirical data that could shed some light on issues that were crucial for both researchers and political decision-making factors: facets of the planned economy in relation to the market; price adjustments mechanisms; increase of labor productivity and efficiency and its impact upon rising the quality of living standards; social implications of industrialization, including various aspects of social mobility.¹⁸

Beyond these similarities, the political tensions surfaced some stringent concerns as well, which often took discursive forms. From the Westerner’s point of view, research on quality of life was carried out with the promise that social programs would ensure the safety of people against the growing pressure of the Soviet Union, and would also provide some hands-on solutions for postwar economic recovery and modernization in other less developed parts of the world.¹⁹ From the Easterners’ point of view, collecting information on the living standards of the population aimed to impose new benchmarks of socialist morality as well as new social hierarchies.²⁰ Furthermore, unlike the Western

¹⁵ David C. Engerman, *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 103.

¹⁶ J. Bookman, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ Jeffery Alexander, *Twenty lectures. Sociological theory since World War II* (New York: Columbia, 1987).

¹⁸ For a comprehensive overview on Abram Bergson, *The Structure of Soviet Wages. A Study in Socialist Economics* (Cambridge MA.: Harvard University Press, 1944); James Millar, “Bergson’s Structure of Soviet Wages,” *Comparative Economic Studies* 47 (2005), pp. 289–295.

¹⁹ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995.

²⁰ Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery, *Peasants under Siege: The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

countries, where statistical data were corroborated with information obtained through complex interdisciplinary methodologies, quantitative analysis dominated the social investigation programs in the Socialist bloc. The Easterners claimed that using mathematical models to study social processes would draw a fully objective image of social and economic realities and would ascertain a solid understanding of the everyday transformations. Discursively, this approach augmented the apparent discrepancies between the actors located on the two sides of the Iron Curtain, claiming that discrepancies were irreconcilable. On a conceptual level, however, these aspects led to numerous developments, including the emergence of the so-called new humanism, which informed eastern bloc architectural design practice in terms of utility and functionalism.

In this respect, statistics shortly became one of the most ideologized academic field.²¹ The confidence in the infallibility of quantitative analysis was fueled by the ideas of V. I. Lenin, who once argued that statistics belonged to "the working people in factories and plants, on the fields or in institutions. Statistical data are used practically every day for tracking the provisions of the state plan, they serve to illustrate the successes of the working people in building socialism in our homeland, they help the party and the government to guide and control the steady effort of the working people in building the new socialist society."²² In other words, statistic should emphasize the class structure of society. Issues related to labor productivity, efficiency, cultural processes, housing and sports facilities would be translated into figures, which would stress the transformation of economic relations and the increasing visibility of both urban and rural workers. The discipline was granted a special status, one that would emphasize the democratic features of socialist statistics over capitalist social research. In the West, the Easterners claimed, statistics were used to "pursue war budgets."²³ Contrary to that, the socialist statistics would unveil "the practical work" of the working class.

²¹ See „Decret nr. 246 pentru reorganizarea statisticii în RPR din 30 octombrie 1950,” *Buletinul Oficial al Republicii Populare Române*, part I, year II, no. 100 (31 October 1950), pp. 1109-1110; „Decizia nr. 2009 din 13 octombrie 1950 a Ministerului Construcțiilor privitoare la fazele de proiectare în construcție,” *Buletinul Oficial al Republicii Populare Române*, part I, year II, no. 93, (18 October 1950), p. 1019.

²² M. Biji, I. Stoichiță, *Ce este statistica* (Bucharest: Editura de Stat pentru Literatură Economică și Juridică, 1956), p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Conceptualizing the postwar world in "binary" terms, respectively the capitalist West and the socialist East, favored the crystallization of what Yurkov has coined as "the predictability of authoritarian language."²⁴ Thus, as the tensions on the international arena developed the East-European ideologues stressed the superiority of the East over the West by employing an official discourse consisting of a limited number of concepts. Such rhetoric turned into a *metadiscourse* - that is a "hyper-normalization of discourses and representations," which used the technological language to depict daily life in socialist countries as a sum of rituals performed in the public space as a sequence of automatic actions, inspired by industrial activity.²⁵ The prevalence of scientific rhetoric in studying social processes was closely linked to the authorities' preoccupation to assess the social impact of industrialization and collectivization. In this respect, building on many Taylorist inspired themes about labor models, statistics served as an excellent means to reveal the planned activity. For example, in an article published in *Lupta de clasă* in March 1958 entitled "Anti-scientific theories about classes and class struggle in contemporary bourgeois sociology," V. Semenov summarized the main arguments that placed statistical research practiced in the Socialist bloc on a position of superiority in relation to the social analysis conducted in the Western countries. Semenov claimed that Western researchers' main purpose was to serve the interests of "imperialist" politicians by describing the social and economic realities of Western countries in "rosy colors." Accordingly, the Western social sciences would have explained the social nature, including the social stratification, as a result of the people's behavior and different lifestyles. Semenov asserted that that was a subjective representation of daily realities by blatant falsification of research data.²⁶ Easterners identified in the Western remuneration system and pricing mechanisms of goods and services the main cause of differences in living standards and social status of various socio-professional categories in capitalist countries. As a result, concluded Semenov, the structure of socialist society could not be the expression of revenue, level of education, daily practices or

²⁴ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

²⁵ Ion Bălănescu, „Însușiri asemănătoare și deosebiri esențiale între mașinile automate și creierul uman,” *Cercetări filozofice* 4 (1956), pp. 45-64.

²⁶ O. Snak, „Indicele costului vieții în statistica burgheză,” *Revista de statistică* 1 (1956), p. 133.

accessibility of consumer goods, but of the production realities transposed into unquestionable statistical figures.²⁷

In such a context, investigating the quality of life by statistical data resumed older discussions on the accuracy of data collected in the West and their interpretation. A particular attention was given to the terminology used by academics on both sides of the Iron Curtain, an issue of paramount importance given the ongoing international debate between Western economic historians on the impact of industrialization upon the workers' standard of living as well as the part that quantitative investigations could play in it.²⁸ While in the West, the debate between *pessimists* (Marxists) and *optimists* led to the crystallization of a sophisticated economic analysis of household economics - that is material well-being,²⁹ in the East the issue made way for additional ideological claims. For example, the concept of "standard of living," frequently used by socialist statisticians, would have represented "a concrete historical concept"³⁰ that delineated the collective values of society and "all material and cultural goods that working people have managed to conquer from the exploiting classes."³¹ The notion "way of life," on the other hand, frequently used by the Western specialists - and developed based on Max Weber's theorizations - represented merely proof that diversity and individual choice were inconsistent with socialist aspirations. In other words, the socialist economy defined the concept of "standard of living" as "the material and cultural welfare of the working people."³² More problematic were the Westerners'

²⁷ V. Semenov, „Teoriile antiștiințifice despre clase și lupta de clasă în sociologia burgheză contemporană,” *Lupta de clasă, Organ teoretic și politic al Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român* (March 1958), pp. 40-50.

²⁸ Carole Shammas, "Standard of living, consumption, and political economy over the past 500 years," in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 211-2.

²⁹ Richard Easterlin, "The Worldwide Standard of Living since 1800," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14/1 (2000), p. 215-9.

³⁰ E. Barat, M. Vasilescu, M. Capătă, *Cercetarea bugetelor de familie în RPR. Metodologia și organizarea* (Bucharest: Direcția Generală de Statistică de pe lângă Consiliul de Miniștri al RPR, 1959), p. 4.

³¹ I. Pisarev, „Cu privire la metodele de studiere a nivelului de trai al oamenilor muncii din URSS,” *Probleme de Statistică Economică și Socială, Extrase din literatura de specialitate* 8 (1958), p. 37. See also M. Biji, M. Trebici, „Calculul indicelui costului vieții și al salariului real,” *Probleme economice* 5 (1957), pp. 17-34.

³² E. Barat, M. Vasilescu, M. Capătă, *Cercetarea bugetelor de familie în RPR. Metodologia și organizarea*, p. 4. See Mara Mărginean, „Minimal, necesar, discreționar.

increasingly concern to understanding individual aspirations and needs.³³ As such, Eastern European theorists read terminology changes occurred in North American practice from "index of living cost" to "index of consumer goods" as evidence of political attempts to cover up the degradation of living standards.

Articles like the one authored by V. Semenov were frequently reprinted in Romanian reviews and books. One of the many specificities of the knowledge production within the Socialist Bloc was a sort of transnational circulation of research articles, which consisted of reviews and collective volumes entitled "From the Experience of ... colleagues." In Romania, for instance, a collection of programmatic texts were published by each ministerial structure. The content was rarely made available to the wider public audience, but it was distributed through institutional channels to every local institution in the country, including statistics departments, local party structures, urban and regional administration. Yet, translations from Eastern bloc literature were meant to serve as guidelines in practicing various professions in the "Soviet style." Surprisingly, however, behind the rhetoric imbued with official language, such articles discussing the faulty practices of the Western specialists described in quite detail the Western social science research methodologies. Texts authored by Soviet, Hungarian, Polish and Czechoslovakian specialists unveiled in great details Western calculations of life standards, family sampling, or household economic projections. This is illustrative not only of the subversive strategies that often made use of the press to transmit various information by eluding an open engagement with sensible topics, but of the immediate developments occurred within the society that required the reconfiguration of research methodologies beyond the strict idealized functioning of socialist planning.

Ideologizarea nevoilor ca proiect de integrare a marginalității sociale, 1945 - 1960," in Luciana M. Jinga, Ștefan Bosomitu (eds.), *Marginalități, periferii și frontiere simbolice. Societatea comunistă și dilemele sale identitare. Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc*. Volume IX (2014). (Iassy: Editura Polirom, 2015), pp. 87-109.

³³ I. Pisarev, „Cu privire la metodele de studiere a nivelului de trai al oamenilor muncii din URSS,” p. 41.

The family budget - a "real" image of the new socialist world.

Given the ideological tensions between East and West, it becomes interesting to assess what was the communist authorities' understanding of "true reality"? Or, to put it in other words: To what extent were the Eastern European regimes truly interested to collect information about real changes occurred in society as a result of collectivization and industrialization and how willing were the states to use such information to adjust social programs?

To answer these questions I use the case of family budgets, a type of social research conducted in both Western and Eastern Bloc to investigate welfare. Family budgets represented the ratio between a family's monthly income and expenses corroborated with the availability of consumer goods and services. Such surveys took into account various aspects: number of hours worked by each family member, household's structure, level of prices, availability of services, level of education and training, the availability of alternatives in the supply of goods such as agricultural activities or unpaid work.³⁴ The methodology used in such research was quite straightforward. Each family selected to participate in the research had to keep a sort of daily journal where all expenses would be mentioned. The questionnaire was usually quite detailed. For instance, the authorities required each family to provide as much information as possible about the type and quantities of food consumed by each household member, as well the source and quality of these products. Usually, this information was collected based on standardized forms approved by the state's authorities. Every month, the questionnaires were gathered and the data was synthesized into a single document that represented a kind of "average" value of the quality of life. In this respect, statistics was very important because it provided the means to convert individual practices and options into figures. Theoretically, the questionnaires used to investigate the family budgets could provide the authorities with an "objective" perspective upon household consumption in different countries. Furthermore, it could be useful in constructing comparative narratives about quality of life in various states. However, such strategy was doomed to failure from the very start because these surveys involved numerous limitations; often the differences in consumption recorded from country to country, both

³⁴ R. Cresin, L. Apolzan, „Cercetarea selectivă a bugetelor de familie,” *Revista de statistică* 2 (1958), pp. 28-38.

in the East and in the West, did not count national or regional gastronomic traditions.³⁵

According to the official definition of the concept proposed by the socialist authorities, family budgets represented the index of quality of life based on researching the daily life of "a certain number of typical families."³⁶ Yet, the selection of typical subjects became in itself another source of ideological tension between East and West. Thus, the Western statisticians would have practiced an arbitrary selection of subjects since, the Easterners claimed, such investigations included a high number of members of the so-called "labor aristocracy" and not enough workers.³⁷ Easterners have argued that such distortion of social reality sought to mask the obvious trends of impoverishment of the working class, the increasing inflation, sluggish consumption and rising share of using "forged products."

Problematic was not only the selection of families included into the investigation, but the analysis of the structure of monthly spending as well. Some Romanian theorists claimed that prices of some commodities, which formed the basis of daily consumption of Western workers, depreciated at a faster pace than the average rate of inflation. This was illustrative of the fact that the quality of life worsened to a greater extent than the official figures had claimed. For example, housing or medical expenses were not included in the official Western data, while statistics from Western countries included in a significantly higher share products that, from the Easterners' perspective, were not basic necessities. While diversity would generally testify the improvement in the quality of life, Easterners have argued that this was an additional evidence that the Western states falsified official data.

As a counterweight to the claimed mystified results provided by the Western investigations on the family budgets, the Romanian state officials have conducted their own research on family budgets. The idea was not new. In 1947, Miron Constantinescu said in a letter addressed to the sociologist Dimitrie Gusti that the Romanian state would employ the social sciences' skills to study how industrialization impacted upon the

³⁵ J. Walter, „Câteva probleme privind statistica consumului populației,” *Probleme de Statistică Economică și Socială, Extrase din literatura de specialitate* 7 (1958), p. 10.

³⁶ M. Biji (ed.), *Dicționar statistic-economic* (Bucharest: Direcția Centrală de Statistică, 1962), p. 434.

³⁷ O. Snak, „Indicele costului vieții în statistica burgheză,” *Revista de statistică* 1 (1956), p. 134.

family budgets.³⁸ However, by the early 1950s the authorities aimed to unveil the particular experience of several socio-professional categories: industrial workers, technicians, engineers, small and middle peasants, and kulaks. Thus, in the same logic of a class-structured society, it was argued that it was necessary to achieve clear differentiation between various social categories in order to articulate an accurate image on the people's everyday experiences.³⁹

Research on quality of life in postwar Romania aimed primarily to provide an accurate image upon the circulation of products in a system dominated mainly by ration cards. While the first ration cards were imposed in 1941 in order to ascertain that every single person would have access to basic products in spite of war's difficulties, the system of rationalized products was maintained until December 1954. According to regulations adopted by the Romanian authorities after 1948, there were five types of cards: "A" for workers who performed the hardest work; "B" for steelworkers and miners; "C" for functionaries and other employees; "D1" for pensioners; "D2" for children under seven years. Daily food allowance varied from one category to another. For the employees included into the first two categories, food intake was much higher, while people who did not work received coupons to purchase bread only.⁴⁰ Ration cards did not exclude free commerce, yet products included on the coupons were commercialized at lower prices than those available on regular market. In this context, the study of family budgets within the Romanian economic system unveils consistent methodological differences from that applied in the Western world. In other words, the communist authorities were not interested to capture the standard of living of a typical household - family of four formed of husband, wife and two children aged up to 10 years old, where the only head of the household was employed - but they sought to capture the standard of living of various "social classes."

³⁸ Letter of Miron Constantinescu addressed to his former professor, in Dimitrie Gusti, *Opere*, vol. V (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1971), pp. 418-419, reprinted in Sanda Golopenția (ed.), „Școala Sociologică de la București. Publicații, expoziții și proiecte internaționale,” *Revista Transilvania* 1 (2014), p. 83.

³⁹ The same methodology was applied in the Soviet Union as well. See for instance: Stephen Shenfield, "A Note on Data Quality in the Soviet Family Budget Survey," *Soviet Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1983), pp. 561-568.

⁴⁰ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Economică, file 339/1952, ff. 4-8.

Family budgets were collected based on national guidelines developed by the National Direction of Statistics and approved by the Council of Ministers.⁴¹ A representative number of households from each region were selected to be included in the survey. Regional officials had to take into account several aspects. First, it was mandatory to select families with a diversified structure in terms of number of members, age and gender. Then, instructors had to be particularly concerned with the wealthy of each family selected. Last, but not least, the authorities had to select as many representatives of the industrial working class as possible.

Questionnaires applied until the mid-1950s were extremely complex. The information collected would facilitate the reconstitution of social realities in various communities from various perspectives. The questionnaires contained several forms. First, the forms provided detailed information about the structure of household investigated, the age, occupation, salary level and permanent residence of each member. Then, revenues and expenditures were compared in two columns. The income section detailed all cash sources including grants, loans, welfare or maternity allowances. The expenditure category pointed out how the money were spent: the purchase of food and non-food, furniture, fuel, medicines, cigarettes and alcohol. Another category of expenditure referred to rent and housing maintenance, as well as fixing up basic products like clothing and household appliances. The last category detailed payment of current loans and other financial restrictions. The third form provided information about the types and origin of non-food products purchased: socialist trade, private traders or alternative exchanges. Each type of merchandise has been included: various categories of fabrics, including cotton, wool, leather, ready-made clothes and shoes, books, newspapers, magazines etc. Last form provided one of the most complex information about the inputs and consumption of food: wheat flour, cornmeal, bread, rice, various types of fruit and vegetables, meat, oil, cheese, eggs, sugar and other sweets. Family budget surveys differentiated between the origins of products used by the household members: items received from various people in exchange of unpaid work, "gifts" received from acquaintances, or acquired through socialist

⁴¹ „HCM nr. 860, privind cercetarea bugetelor de familie a oamenilor muncii din RPR, din 29 august 1952” and „ HCM nr. 3009, privind măsurile pentru extinderea cercetării bugetelor de familie din 7 septembrie 1953,” in E. Barat, M. Vasilescu, M. Capătă, *Cercetarea bugetelor de familie în RPR. Metodologia și organizarea*, p. 80. ANIC, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri, file 129/1956, pp. 1-8.

trade or consumption cooperatives.⁴² The questionnaires that investigated the quality of life in rural areas contained additional information on the size and type of land owned, number of animals and tools available.

These studies have shown, however, the limitations of the methodology applied. In 1956, the Council of Ministers requested that the structure of the family sample be re-evaluated. From that moment on, a particular attention would be granted to working-class families from the most dynamic and large industrial enterprises. For the first time since the end of the war, other socio-professional categories – like teachers or health employees – started to be investigated.⁴³

But beyond the clear provisions of these legislative regulations, difficulties to collecting information were quick to emerge, and arbitrariness of methodological norms required speedy drafting of additional guidelines. The first difficulty was the selection of subjects. To obtain accurate data, the questionnaires had to be completed over a period of time, usually several years.⁴⁴ But many of those who initially agreed to be included in the surveys refused to provide any information; the situation did not improve over time in spite of the authorities' willingness to increase the cash compensation for those who agreed to provide the necessary information. Furthermore, although the guidelines indicated that the surveys should include households located throughout the town or village researched, in the Livada or Baita villages in the Cluj region most of the households investigated were located on the main street, in the proximity of the church or the People's Council.⁴⁵

Another problem consisted of reading the research data. In fact, it was the basic methodology that rose problems, and the degree to which the data collected through family surveys captured the economic changes of the Romanian society. Several dispositions of the Council of Ministers established the caloric value of various foods, but did not allow adjustments of such values based on quality or origin of those products. This became evident shortly, as the population filled in

⁴² Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale, Cluj [Cluj County Department of the National Archives] (hereafter SJAN Cluj), Fond Direcția Regională de Statistică, file 21/1953 and 22/1953.

⁴³ SJAN Cluj, Fond Direcția Regională de Statistică, file 23/1957, f. 214.

⁴⁴ This represented a departure from the Western practice where the surveys were applied for a couple of weeks on several months.

⁴⁵ SJAN Cluj, Fond Direcția Regională de Statistică, file 24/1957, ff. 125-152.

numerous complaints about cases of forged products by diluting fluids with water or by including foreign bodies into products. Furthermore, the reorganization of research centers in 1956-7 and changes in the structure of questionnaires put the authorities in an unexpected situation: changing the type of investigation made it impossible to compare data before and after the reorganization.⁴⁶

Searching a socialist way of life?

The data collected by researching family budgets became relevant only through a comprehensive comparative analysis of nutrition scientific norms adopted by the State Committee of Supply of the Council of Ministers. Following the regulations in effect in the Soviet Union in the early 1950s, the Romanian government established a detailed structure of daily food allowance based on age, gender and type of work performed by each person. Official regulations about the optimal daily quantities of food were converted into caloric intake. They ranged from 5,500 calories a day for those who performed extremely hard work, up to 1,600 calories for children younger than 7 years old. Between the minimum and maximum values there were included other six categories: 3,000 calories for state functionaries, security employees, tailors; 3200 calories for upholsterers, painters, printers; 3,500 calories for roofers and machinists; 4000 calories for blacksmiths and bricklayers; 4500 calories for farm workers; 5000 calories for rock cutters and lumberjacks. The distinction between different socio-professional categories took into account both the type of work performed and the policy of the communist regime in terms of classes. At least theoretically, daily consumption structure would have to find a counterpart in welfare projections contained in the card supply system and salary regulations for each socio-professional category.

Such caloric intake may seem, however, exaggerated. According to official statistics about rationalized nutrition habits in Britain during the interwar period and immediately after World War II, regular citizens consumed an average of 2,500 calories a day. Usually, their meals consisted of potatoes and other kind of vegetables, while meat was available only from time to time.⁴⁷ In Romania, the estimations made in 1952 showed that labor force's meals were mostly based on bread; in

⁴⁶ SJAN Cluj, Fond Direcția Regională de Statistică, file 24/1957, f. 66.

⁴⁷ David Kynaston, *Austerity in Britain, 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), p. 45.

caloric terms, the meals consisted largely of vegetable protein. For example, in a ratio of 5500 calories, there were allocated approximately 2610 calories from bakery products (1 kilogram per day) and corn meal, while only 222 calories would come from meat (approximately 150 grams per day). Other products such as fats, eggs and dairy would be consumed in small quantities and their cumulative energetic intake would not exceed 600 calories a day. Other sources of energy were fruits and vegetables, which would be consumed in small quantities.⁴⁸

The nutritional structure of the Romanian workers' daily meals problematize about the impact of food on physiological functioning of the human body. It also questions how quality of food impacted upon labor efficiency in industrial activities. The terminology applied throughout Europe by the end of the Second World War divided food into three distinct categories: body building foods such as cheese, eggs, meat and fish; energy foods like bacon, ham, butter or margarine, cheese, dried fruits, honey, oatmeal, potatoes, rice and sugar; and protective foods such as milk, butter or margarine, cheese, eggs, liver, herrings (canned or fresh), green vegetables or salads, tomatoes, whole meal bread.⁴⁹ From this perspective, the nutritive structure proposed by the Romanian authorities in the context of intensified industrialization program unveiled an emphasis on food energy, especially on the consumption of fats, potatoes and sugar. These cumulated about 1,000 calories a day. The consumption of protective foods like milk, butter and vegetable was estimated to a maximum of 600 calories a day, while body builders - crucial to increase the muscular mass of the human body - like cheese, meat or fish barely cumulated 400 calories.⁵⁰ In the case of rations lower than 3000 calories, the authorities diminished significantly the ratio of bread and of the so-called energy food.

Furthermore, the regulation of workers' caloric intake in these terms questions the politico-ideological implications of such a policy and also unveils the regime's attempts to address critical issues pragmatically. The high quantities of bread to feed those benefiting of increased rations

⁴⁸ ANIC, Fond Comitetul de Stat al Aprovizionării, Direcția Agro-Alimentară, file 2/1951, pp. 13-24.

⁴⁹ M. E. Barker & J. D. Burrige, "Nutrition claims in British women's magazines from 1940 to 1955," *Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics* 27 (Suppl. 2), p. 119.

⁵⁰ ANIC, Fond Comitetul de Stat al Aprovizionării, Direcția Agro-Alimentară, file 2/1951, pp. 13-21; SJAN Cluj, Fond Sfatul Popular Regional, Secția Comercială, file 13/1954, pp. 44-233.

was illustrative of the Romanian authorities' strategies to substitute protein requirements with products cheaper and easier to obtain. The official statistics confirm this hypothesis. While in the interwar period the average annual bread consumption was of approximately 138 kilograms, in 1951 "the scientific eating regime of urban population was of 158 kilograms annually."⁵¹ The "C" ration cards guaranteed a yearly consumption of 127 kilograms of bread, respectively 350 grams daily. For other socio-professional categories, such as workers in the heavy industry and miners, the government supplemented the daily allowance of bread to up to 750 grams. Moreover, according to official data, during the interwar period, the average meat consumption of the urban population was about 50 kilograms annually. In 1951, the average yearly meat consumption was approximately 17 kilograms for urban workers, and 22 kilograms for functionaries. Successive governmental regulations attempted to increase the meat consumption over the next period.⁵² Also, several decisions of the Political Bureau of the CC of PMR and of the Council of Ministers adopted several measures to increase the ration of bread for certain socio-professional categories. Such decision was taken as a result of severe difficulties to supply the population with food and collect meat from collective farms.⁵³

Discrepancies between the scientific nutritional projections, institutional inability of the authorities to distribute food towards the population and real needs of each socio-professional category have shaped the context in which the surveys on family budgets was conducted in the region of Cluj.

By December 1954 when ration card system was abandoned, authorities used family budget surveys to capture the extent to which formal nutrition provisions made their way into the workers' daily meals. Workers selected from several industrial establishment in the city of Cluj, for example, testified a broadly similar structure of monthly expenses. From about 150 lei, which represented the average monthly income per each member of a worker's family, two thirds were used to

⁵¹ ANIC, Fond Comitetul de Stat al Aprovizionării, Direcția Agro-Alimentară, file 88/1953, p. 1.

⁵² ANIC, Fond Comitetul de Stat al Aprovizionării, Direcția Agro-Alimentară, file 10/1951, p. 16; Fond CC al PCR, Sectia Cancelarie, file 142/1951, pp. 59-79 and file 111/1952, pp. 47-52.

⁵³ ANIC, Fond Comitetul de Stat al Aprovizionării, Direcția Secretariat, file 16/1951, p. 41 and 255.

purchase food. Half of the amount spent on food was used for purchasing fruits and vegetables, and another 25% went to the purchase of bread and other bakery products such as black flour, pasta and cornmeal. Less than 10% of monthly expenditure for food were directed to purchase meat, while eggs, milk or cheese were almost insignificant in Cluj workers' daily expenses.⁵⁴ Such distribution of monthly expenses is less relevant unless corroborated with the prices of the basic products. Thus, until December 1954, the average price of black bread on ration coupons was of 0,7 lei per kilogram, while in free commerce the price varied around 2 and 2,5 lei per kilogram. The pork meat could be bought with no less than 15 lei per kilogram. Prices to basic vegetables and fruits varied depending on the season. In this respect, the data collected through family budgets unveil significant deviations from the official nutrition standards. Thus, in addition to significant quantities of bread bought monthly, the very low level of spending on meat – around 500 grams a month – unveils the precarious standard of living of the industrial employees.

However, this structure of daily expenditure of Cluj workers is only partially relevant for their nutritional practices. Very often, industrial workers used to sell the textile and footwear vouchers (distributed according to socio-professional status of the employee) in the villages around industrial centers in exchange for food that was unavailable in socialist trade network. While such information is not clearly stated in the official documents, numerous questionnaires applied in the rural area in the Cluj region mention that occasionally the members of the household had received shoes or textiles from acquaintances.⁵⁵ To get a complete picture of the workers' eating habits, such data should be compared to the dynamics of spending in the peasants' households. For families selected in Cluj, for instance, whether peasants were classified as small, medium or kulaks, the main source of income were agricultural activities; rarely, there were persons included in these surveys who had a waged job. Although peasants obtained the majority of their food in their household, most of the revenues were directed towards the purchase of goods available in state stores: sugar, bread, salt or alcohol.⁵⁶

In this context, the data collected from the family budgets' research unveiled the circulation of food and goods from urban areas to

⁵⁴ SJAN Cluj, Fond Direcția Regională de Statistică, file 21/1953 and 22/1953.

⁵⁵ SJAN Cluj, Fond Direcția Regională de Statistică, file 20/1953, p. 52.

⁵⁶ SJAN Cluj, Fond Direcția Regională de Statistică, file 20/1953, 25/1953, 24/1954.

the rural communities and vice versa. In the case of small and medium farms, the most important source of income was the commercialization of goods obtained within the household, as well as items received in exchange for services to the third parties. "The Gift" held a significant share in articulating the rural populations' interactions with the urban labor force. Both workers' and peasants' households traded apparently without money small and medium quantities of goods. Products contained in this category were meat, eggs, dairy, wheat or flour, potatoes and other vegetables or fruits. The fact that such exchanges played a significant part within the circulation of products is testified by the practice of collecting information about the "gift" through family budgets applied in rural areas in the Cluj region.

While in the case of industrial workers, the value of total goods received as gift were rarely higher than 1-2% of the food entries declared, the questionnaires applied in rural households unveiled underground circulation of products as well as the practice of selling rationalized products on the black market. For instance, one household in the Cluj region declared that it had purchased one kilogram of sugar at the price of 25 lei, which represented almost triple the official price of 9 lei per kilogram or to the price of rationalized sugar that was estimated at approximately 2,8 lei a kilogram.⁵⁷

Conclusion

This article aimed to unveil to what extent the social research in Romania was altered under the influence of the Cold War. This is particularly important since social sciences presented a high degree of mercantilism; in fact, they experienced a significant development precisely because of the applicability of scientific results, including in articulating a "national interest."⁵⁸ In this respect, addressing the quality of life during the first years after WWII is paradoxical. On one hand, despite the tensions between East and West, the disputes over scientific terminology opened up new interrogations on the transnational circulation of concepts and ideas. It questioned the postwar programs of social analysis in terms of continuity and rupture from the interwar

⁵⁷ SJAN Cluj, Fond Direcția Regională de Statistică, file 24/1954, p. 8. See also HU OSA, 300-60-1, box 542, 545 and 549.

⁵⁸ David C. Engerman, "Social Science in the Cold War," *Isis*, Vol. 101, No. 2 (June 2010), p. 393.

practices. Furthermore, it problematized about the degree to which propaganda could shape the scientific agenda. On the other hand, the social impact of rationalization was particularly deep across Europe, even though on the long term the implications of nutrition regulations differed from one country to another. An element of state modernization, nutrition conceptualization in terms of body builders, energizers and health protection allowed states to implement mass educational programs and improve the visibility of professional technocrats. As one scholar has pointed out, all over Europe „income differences in protein and fat consumption were effectively eroded and the gap in vitamin and mineral intake also disappeared. Hence, rationing and food control ‘revolutionised the social class distribution of the diet by redressing the imbalances which had been highlighted just prior to the war. Throughout the war and after, the income-group differences in diet were never as great as they had been before it.’”⁵⁹ Accordingly, a the research campaigns conducted in the 1950s Romania opened up further possibilities to developing mass social programs, which became increasingly visible in the 1960s simultaneously with the communist authorities’ new economic policies.

⁵⁹ Catherine Geissler, Derek J. Oddy (eds.), *Food, Diet and Economic Change: Past and Present* (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1993), p. 116.

Urban Construction Patterns in the City of Cluj, 1952-1965

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Abstract: *In the present study we intend to present the way in which communist authorities tried to solve the problems of the Romanian urban areas after the Second World War through recourse to urban planning. Between 1952 and 1965, there were two main construction patterns subsequently promoted in all communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The first one was that of the housing district in the style of Socialist-Realism architecture (accompanied by the construction of a limited number of monumental public buildings) while the second one was that of the micro-district (or microraiion) in the style of modernist architecture. What we found out is the fact that at a local level, in the city of Cluj, these models were not always implemented in accordance with the discourse of the time and that the central authorities, through institutional and economical reform, tried to set the Romanian architecture on a course of ideological orthodoxy.*

Keywords: *architecture, urban planning, Housing District, Socialist Realism, micro-district, modernism.*

Following World War II, the Soviet Union imposed the so-called "popular democracy" regimes in the countries under its influence, which included Romania. Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery used the concept of technological transfer in order to explain the process through which communist authorities had taken over the institutional organization of the state, the political practices, the strategies of governing society based on the Stalinist model. After the revolution, the Bolshevik regime needed to take control of different territories, to create a new form of political organization (of the party-state), to train party activists, to gather economic resources for industrialization, in other words to create a series of strategies (or 'technologies') in order to achieve its goals.¹ The local implementation of the soviet model in Central and Eastern European countries had led to what Ken Jowitt named 'replica regimes'. Subsequently, during the first years of the communist rule in Romania, the communist party was consolidated, the

¹ Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery, *The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), passim.

economy was nationalized, the forced industrialization process was initiated in parallel with the collectivization of agriculture and the oppressive institutions of the state had gained an ever-growing influence within society.

The fast-paced industrial development of the 50s and 60s had had major consequences both at economic and social levels due to the massive migration of the rural population to industrial cities.² The statistics are highly revealing. In 1930, out of 14,280,729 Romanians, 11,229,476 lived in rural communities, and only 3,051,253 resided in cities. After WWII, the urban population increased significantly³, it had reached 5,474,264 by 1956 and 7,305,714 by 1966⁴. A similar trend was seen in the city of Cluj-Napoca, with the population increasing from 117,915 inhabitants in 1948 to 185,663 inhabitants in 1966⁵. The main cause of the increase of population was the migration from rural areas in the context of the city's first industrialization stage after 1948.

These tendencies had led to a major challenge - local authorities from Romania had to manage urban spaces in poorly developed cities. The problems of the urban world during the first decades of communist administration were numerous: from the chronic lack of dwellings to a poor urban infrastructure, to the problems issued from the inability of rural communities to adapt to the rigors of urban lifestyle. Subsequently, following the pattern of the Soviet Union, Romanian authorities had implemented a series of urban development policies. Among them, one should note the attempt to systemize territories and cities following a 'rationally' planned out pattern. Urban systematization had to ensure an economically balanced and efficient development of the building infrastructure of cities, based on long-term development predictions. In order to achieve this, the regime implemented several urban construction patterns⁶ which have evolved in compliance with dominant

² The collectivization of Agriculture played a major role in this phenomenon.

³ The rural population between 1948 and 1965 was preserved at the level of 12 million.

⁴ Vasile Cucu, *Orașele României*, (Bucharest: Științifică, 1970), p. 54.

⁵ By 1992, the city population had reached 328,602 inhabitants as shown in, Bolovan Ioan, Sorina Paula Bolovan, *Populația Orașului Cluj în secolul al XX-lea*, în Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, Corneliu Pădurean, *Transilvania în secolele XIX-XX. Studii de demografie istorică* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2005).

⁶ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan, 1945-1968*, doctoral dissertation at the George Barițiu Institute of History of the Romanian Academy in Cluj Napoca, 2013, p.5.

architectural styles. Between 1948 and 1965, we can speak of two main models promoted in all communist countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The first one is the housing district in the style of Socialist-Realism architecture (accompanied by the construction of a limited number of monumental public buildings) and the second one is the organization of urban development based on the modernist principles of the micro-district (microraión).

According to the official discourse, urban systematization would lead to the accomplishment of the 'Socialist city', which was considered to be radically different from the 'Capitalist city' of the exploiting interwar period social classes. This would become a haven for equality and social equity, a quintessence of egalitarianism, just like the political regime itself. Similarly, all citizens would have equal access to services: education, healthcare, recreation, city transport, regardless of their status, in the center or on the outskirts of cities. As some studies have already pointed out, the egalitarian principles of organizing cities have not been put into practice in the Soviet Union or elsewhere in Central and Eastern European countries⁷. In fact, the cities of the communist world were places of profound inequalities between inhabitants, generated by aspects such as geographic position within the city, the redistribution system of the state in what regarded consumer goods, dwellings etc⁸.

This article aims to make a comparative analysis of urban construction patterns promoted in the official Romanian discourse, and of the implementation thereof in the city of Cluj. Chronologically, the analysis aims the period between the implementation in 1952 of socialist realism in Romanian architecture under pressure exerted by the Soviet Union following adoption of Central Committee Decision of the Romanian Labour Party (PMR) and of the Council of Ministers regarding "The Construction and Reconstruction of Cities and the Organization of Planning and Architecture Activities" and the year 1965 which marked the end of the first year of the six year national economic

⁷ Ivan Szelenyi, *Urban Inequalities under State Socialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983), passim.

⁸ In this paper we do not intend to provide a detailed analysis of the daily life in communist urban environments. Though, it is important to note that this topic is well researched. See for instance the work of Stephen Kotkin, Lewis Siegelbaum, Susan E. Reid or Juliane Fürst, to name only a few well known researchers.

development plan and the installation of Nicolae Ceaușescu at the head of the communist party.

We intend to answer four main research questions. First, which were the architectural styles and urban construction patterns promoted by the authorities between 1952 and 1965? Second, which were the measures taken by central authorities, at an institutional level, for their actual implementation? Third, how were these central directives implemented at a local level? Fourth, what can answering all of the above questions tell us about the communist regime itself?

Numerous works touched upon the subject of Romanian architecture and urban planning, both before and after the revolution of 1989. For example, worthy of mention are two histories of Romanian Architecture written by Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura din România în perioada anilor 1944-1969* [*Architecture in Romania in the period between 1949 and 1969*, 1969] and Gheorghe Curinschi Vorona, *Istoria Arhitecturii din România* [*The History of Architecture in Romania*, 1981]. Even though these books are written in accordance with the official ideology, and therefore should be critically questioned, they provide useful descriptions of what the communist authorities considered to be the most important architectural projects of the time. After 1989 the number and thematic diversity of the research concerning these topics significantly increased. Besides technical analysis of the communist architectural programs many researchers, architects as well as other social scientists, researched more and more the links between the architectural practice and political power, highlighting the huge influence that the party-state had on this field. Ana Maria Zahariade's book *Arhitectura în Proiectul comunist: România 1944-1989* [*Architecture in the Communist Project. Romania 1944-1989*, 2011] is an illustrative example in this regard. Of great importance for the research was another recent contribution to the field by Mara Mărginean *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan, 1945-1968* [*The Urbanization Process in the Industrial Cities of Hunedoara and Călan, 1945-1968*]. In this thoroughly researched and well-written doctoral dissertation Mara Mărginean provides the reader with a complete picture of the process of urbanization in one of the most important industrial regions of Romania in the first decades of the communist regime, Hunedoara. Unfortunately there are not many scholarly works that focus on the architectural development of the City of Cluj in the communist period. A notable example though is the book authored by Mitrea Vasile, Emanoil Tudose, Buzuloiu, Aurelian and Panescu

Eugeniu, *Cluj-Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010* [Cluj-Napoca in Projects. 50 years, 1960-2010, 2011].

The main primary sources used for the research are archival document such as the meeting minutes of the Executive Committee of the Cluj People's Council, other documents found in different sections of the above institution (including the Section for Architecture and Systematization) as well as the issues of *Arhitectura*, a journal published between 1950 and 1965. It should be mentioned that we could not consult all archive sources relevant for our research⁹, therefore, the analysis should be completed with new ideas and facts in the future. Nonetheless, we do believe we have managed to amend certain beliefs pertaining to the urban development of the city of Cluj, which have only been briefly discussed so far and that our study may be the starting point for further more applied research. In order to better organize our work, based on our findings, we divided the researched period in two main stages of urban development, the first one between 1952 and 1956 and the second one between 1957 and 1965, which we shall further detail hereinafter.

Strategies at the Central Level, from Socialist Realism to Modernist Experiments

Following the process of sovietization, major changes, including in the Romanian architectural field were bound to occur. The first actions of communist leaders were related to the promotion within Romanian architects' groups of Socialist Realist architecture principles. Thus, in *Arhitectura* (the most important professional journal in the field published after the War) one shall find an aggressive promotion campaign of Socialist Realism, highlighting the architecture programs implemented by Moscow. For instance, between 1950 and 1952 there were no less than 40 articles on this topic¹⁰. It is interesting that most of the authors were Romanians. There were only five Soviet authors publishing articles within this time frame¹¹. Among the most important names, we shall

⁹ We could not gain access to the Archive of the Cluj-Napoca City Hall nor to a very important source for research, the Archive of the Regional Institute of Planning of Cluj, currently undergoing inventorying at the National Archive County Representative, Cluj-Napoca.

¹⁰ Ioana C. Popovici, *Star-topped Spires and Cardboard Heroes. Soviet Socialist Realism in Aritectura RPR (1950-1952)*, în *Studies in History and Theory of Architecture* (București: 2013), passim.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

mention: H. Manciu, N. Bădescu, L. Adler, Z Solomon, H. Marcus, A. Moisescu, with the most published articles, but also G. Gusti, P. Macovei and G. C. Vorona who wrote several articles¹². Meanwhile, several major architectural projects were initiated in Bucharest, chief of which was *Casa Scânteii* (1951-1954) replicating Lomonosov State University of Moscow.

Nonetheless, despite the fact that following the nationalization of the economy the state had become the main commissioner of real estate and a part of the best known Romanian architects seemed to adhere to the new ideology¹³, the architectural development of Romania between 1948 and 1951 was still influenced by the Interwar patterns. Overall the field was characterized by the lack of a clear and coherent nation-wide strategy. Highly revealing for the matter are the conclusions of the Soviet counselor on architecture issues in Bucharest, I.A. Zvezdin, who, following several visits to the most important construction sites in the country, was worried because Romanian architecture was governed by bourgeois interests and lack of professionalism as well as by cosmopolitanism and formalism as elements specific to the avant-garde¹⁴. In order to solve this issue, Zvezdin thought it was highly necessary to establish a coordinating and controlling institution, based on the Stalinist model.

The set up of the State Committee for Architecture and Constructions (Comitetul de Stat pentru Arhitectură și Construcții - CSAC) in 1952 was the turning point for the implementation of the Socialist Realist style in Romanian architecture. In this context, it is important to highlight that the institutionalization of Socialist Realism was carried out later than in the case of other Central and Eastern European communist countries. This belated implementation was probably due to the conflicts within the leadership of the Romanian Labour Party, between Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, Teohari Georgescu on

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ The issue regarding the collaboration between architects and the Communist regime is still very delicate in the Romanian public debate. There have been cases of architects refusing to collaborate, such as G.M Cantacuzino who was subsequently sentenced to 10 years of prison. Other important figures of Interwar architecture such as Duiliu Marcu and Octav Doicescu accepted the influence of the regime and continued to practice their profession. While the personal motivations for individual decisions are difficult to establish, it is clear that Communist authorities needed highly qualified professionals to implement the new vision for Romanian architecture.

¹⁴ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 108.

the one hand and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej on the other hand. The former three had a major influence in the structures of the state party until their elimination. The arguments at the head of the party had therefore affected the leadership and administration of the country.

The role of the CSAC was to check "from a quality point of view the construction programs, the organization of construction sites in accordance with the provisions of the State Planning Committee (Comisia de Stat a Planificării), the status of works and the compliance of the architectural style with the clear decisions and doctrines imposed at the central level, the quality of works and of the used materials - of local origin - or the contractor's adherence to the standards and advice of the project author¹⁵. The CSAC was made up of The General Direction of State Constructions for Architecture and Constructions, the Regional Inspectorates of Control for Architecture and Constructions (functioning within the Executive Committees of Regional People's Councils, under the supervision of the Head Architect of the Region) and the City Inspectorates of Control for Architecture and Constructions (functioning within the Executive Committees of City People's Councils). The General Direction would check major projects, while Regional Inspectorates would check regional and city constructions or local refurbishing"¹⁶.

The following were set up as central planning institutions: "The Institute for City Planning and Public and Housing Constructions [Institutul pentru proiectarea oraşelor și construcțiilor publice și de locuit - ISPROR]", whose duty was to carry out "the entire planning of systematizations, constructions and reconstructions of cities, as well as the elaboration of important projects for public and housing buildings for cities across the country, excluding the capital¹⁷", the institute for Industrial Facility Planning [Institutul pentru Proiectări de Construcții Industriale - IPCI] and a special institute for the capital-city "Proiect-București". Other institutions established in Bucharest were the Institute of Architecture [Institutul de Arhitectură] based on the Faculty of Architecture of the Institute of Construction of Bucharest [Facultatea de Arhitectură a Institutului de Construcții București] and the Scientific Institute of Architecture [Institutul științific de arhitectură] within the Academy of the People's Republic of Romania¹⁸". Last, but not least, it

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁷ *Architecture and Urbanism*, no. 11, 1952, p. 3.

¹⁸ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 110.

was decided to set up The Architects' Union of the People's Republic of Romania [Uniunea Arhitecților din Republica Populară Română], which aimed to "help increase the ideological level, artistic capabilities and technical skills [of architects], in order to enable them to have as high a contribution as possible to the accomplishment of Socialism¹⁹".

At first glance the solution of decision makers was viable, at least from the perspective of the characteristics of the most important architecture and systematization projects of those times. The pre-war avantgardist principles had been abandoned for good in favor of the Soviet Socialist Realist models. The most emblematic examples of Socialist Realism in Romanian architecture were the great public buildings mainly erected in the capital city (Casa Scânteii, The Romanian Opera House or the Summer Theatre in the Nicolae Bălcescu Park, nowadays known as Teatrul Masca). Another good example of the implementation of Socialist Realism principles is the development of city systematization plans, especially for expanding industrial cities such as Hunedoara. Along with Braşov and later with the towns of the Jiu Valley, Hunedoara had a strategic importance for the regime since it was the main siderurgical center of the country - the quintessence of the Stalinist vision on Socialism. As one might expect, authorities aimed for increasing the industrial production and for planning the city within the parameters of the official ideology²⁰.

After the first stage of a systematization plan which followed the principles of the "garden city" (1947-1949), the new systematization plan of 1949 already respected the Stalinist principles, with the "housing district" at its core. As an architectural unit, the district designated "the inner space delineated by the intersection of four boulevards or main avenues (...). The area would be enclosed by cornering buildings, such as L-shaped blocks or colonnades as compositional solutions for linking buildings²¹" The average surface of housing districts had to be 5 hectares²². It was thus decided to replace individual housing buildings with multi-floor blocks of flats. The housing districts would surround the city center. The entire establishment, thanks to the disposition of parks and social-cultural institutions had to ensure the universal and equal access

¹⁹ *Architecture and Urbanism, loc.cit.*

²⁰ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan, passim.*

²¹ Mara Mărginean, *Ibid.*, p.165.

²² *Ibid.*

of inhabitants to all modern facilities (schools, libraries, cinemas etc.). Collective dwellings were built according to the same principles, with the housing district at the core, in Bucharest, Petroșani, Vulcan, Brașov etc.

The death of Stalin in 1953 had major consequences on all Communist countries, including in the fields of architecture and constructions. His successor at the head of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, publicly denounced the Socialist Realist architecture in 1954, labeling it as a time of excess and extravagance. He proposed instead the implementation of modernist-inspired policies based on standardization and industrialization of constructions with the main aim to solve the stringent housing crisis in the Soviet Union²³. Only two years after the institutionalization of Socialist Realism, Romanian architecture was again confronted with major changes imposed by Moscow.

The main role in the paradigm shift was played by Nikita Khrushchev's speech at the USSR Architects' Congress of December 1954²⁴. Khrushchev highlighted the urgent need for modernization (industrialization, standardization, the use of pre-fabricated assemblies) in the construction field. Promoting the idea that "decorations are a crime" (or in the socialist logic "politically incorrect") he stressed that monumental buildings had to be abandoned and functional buildings had to be constructed instead, with minimalistic decorations²⁵. This process would lead to the reduction of construction costs per square meter. The effects of the policy promoted by Moscow were immediately assumed by the Romanian architectural discourse.

Thus, during the plenary session of the Architects' Union of 1954, a series of solutions were identified for the problems in the fields of architecture and constructions. The first solution consisted in the implementation of several nation-wide projects, able to ensure an optimum inhabitable surface regardless of the local conditions, exposure to natural light or cost limitations. The second decision imposed the

²³ Khrushchev's motives for the implementation of this nationwide housing program were more complex and cannot be fully presented here. For a more detailed analysis see: Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and de-Stalinization. The consolidation of the modern system of Soviet Production Relations 1953-1964* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

²⁴ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 111.

²⁵ Ioan Augustin, *Power, Play and National Identity, Politics of Modernization in Central and East-European Architecture. The Romanian File* (Bucharest: The Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1999), pp. 63-65.

standardization of the size of living quarters to approximately 40 square meters for a two-room flat. The third decision aimed a reassessment of room size, including vestibules, in order to allow appropriate furnishing. Finally, the fourth measure consisted in the temporary reassessment of sanitary norm legislation, by reducing the value to an average of 7 sqm/person²⁶.

Despite the efforts of achieving industrialization and cost reduction, the success of this attempt was limited in Romania. After 1954, housing districts and public buildings alike were erected with few decorations but were, at the core, similar to Socialist Realist buildings. Also, the use of pre-fabricated assemblies proved to be a costly solution considering that this branch of industry was still new for Romania.

The 1952-1958 phase. The implementation of central strategies at the local level

The first Mayor of Cluj following the reintegration of North-Western Transylvania into Romania was Tudor Bugnariu, appointed by the Soviet Commanding Authority. His deputy was Ioan Demeter. Both Bugnariu and Demeter had been active members of the Romanian Communist Party during the Interwar period.²⁷ Initially, the Mayor's House maintained its organizational structure, according to which commune administration and urbanism matters were handled by the Head Engineer of the city²⁸. The Mayor's institution was dissolved on 1 April 1949, and was replaced by the "Ad Interim Committee of the Urban Commune of Cluj" (presided by Vasile Deac). The Service for Commune Administration and Local Industry was established within the *ad interim* Committee, under the supervision of engineer Gheorghe Ghișe. The service was divided into three sections: Housing and Goods, Economic, Municipal and Urbanistic Enterprises (under the supervision of Virgil Salvanu senior)²⁹.

The first elections for the local and regional people's councils were held at the end of the year 1950. The deputies were elected on

²⁶ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p.111.

²⁷ Marian Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului: 1919-2012*, vol.II (Cluj Napoca: 2013), p. 160.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.160.

regional, department, city constituencies, and on lists for villages³⁰. Although in theory local and regional people's councils were coordinated by the Council of Ministers, in reality the activity of the former was controlled by party structures who issued (compulsory) directives for various areas as well as through the selection of deputies and candidates by local party structures. The *ad interim* Committee of the city of Cluj was dissolved following the elections of December 1950, leaving room for the People's Council of the City of Cluj. Initially, matters pertaining to constructions as well as those pertaining to urbanism were coordinated by the section for Commune Administration and Local Industry. The Architecture and Systematization Section, established following adoption of decision "Regarding the Construction and Reconstruction of Cities and the Organization of Planning and Architecture Activities" (1952) whose role was to represent the CSAC authority at the local level, began functioning at the end of 1953³¹. According to the payroll, the section had the following structure: Leadership: Head Engineer and Head Architect, Balint Mircea and Bărăscu Iordache, respectively; the Department of Project Approval and Expertise: architect Valkay Pavel, the Department of Authorizations and Construction Quality Control, architect Salvan Virgil, Administration - Secretary, Bala Cristina³².

From the very beginning the activity of the section was confronted with major difficulties. Firstly, the position of head of section/head architect of the city was vacant until the beginning of 1955 (initially, the position was held by Bărăscu Iordache, who was also head architect of the region, but he was removed on 15 February 1954³³). In 1955, Ștefan Gonosz was appointed as head architect³⁴, although his tenure was short-lived, lasting only a year. It was only in 1957 that Ștefan Floriansics³⁵ began his longer tenure at the head of the section. Secondly, due to the former attributions in this area of the Section for Commune Administration and Local Industry, as it is noted in the meeting minutes

³⁰ Mihaela Cristina Verzea, *Partidul Stat structuri politice, 1948-1965* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2012), pp. 305-306.

³¹ Marian Lazăr, *Primarii Clujului: 1919-2012*, p. 206.

³² Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Cluj, (SJAN Cluj), The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 22/1954, ff.19-20.

³³ *Ibid.*, ff. 23-24.

³⁴ Lazăr Marian, *Primarii Clujului: 1919-2012*, p. 206.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206-207.

of the Executive Committee, conflicts had arisen with the Section for Architecture and Systematization regarding the competences of each of these sections³⁶. The confusion seemed to be quite substantial within the People's Council considering that by means of Decision 42/1954, the Section for Architecture and Systematization was forced to present to the Executive Committee "the rules of procedure with a clear indication of the duties and obligations of the Section, as well as the competence of other Sections of the Council in the field of constructions³⁷", a decision which was issued more than half a year after its establishment. Another issue generated by the conflict with the Section of Commune Administration and Local Industry was the delay in the handing over of the necessary inventory: maps, plans, equipment, and furniture necessary for the systematization activity. The transfer of the inventory was carried out in July 1954 even though, as we have mentioned earlier, the Section was established in 1953³⁸. Last but not least, the members of the Section did not have cars, and in order to inspect the status of works, more often than not they had to walk. This led to serious disturbances in the construction quality control procedures.

According to the instructions issued by CSAC the activity of the Section for Architecture and Systematization should have been based on the systematization plan of the city. A characteristic of the first development stage was the very lack of such a document with the approvals of the central authorities. A first systematization plan for Cluj was elaborated between 1949 and 1952 and was approved in June 1952 by the State Committee for Architecture and Constructions within the Council of Ministers. The approval was carried out with several amendments³⁹. Construction authorizations had to be issued based on this plan and in compliance with the Regulation for City Planning and Setbacks of the city of Cluj⁴⁰.

³⁶ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 22/ 1954, ff. 3-11.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 24.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, f.20.

⁴⁰ We are not sure whether the document makes reference to the regulation of the Interwar period, but even if it had been amended, it most probably had similar provisions: the zoning of the city based on the types of constructions allowed, the rules for street setback etc.

However, following the creation of the CSAC in 1952, it was established after several checks at the center that the aforementioned plan did not correspond to "the current needs" and it should thus only be used "for guidance"⁴¹. As a temporary solution, it was decided to set up a local committee made up of representatives of the section, of the State Healthcare Inspectorate, of the Fire Prevention brigade and of other involved parties in order to decide over the disposition of buildings. The committee elaborated a draft for a new zoning plan of the city⁴². Nonetheless, they failed to adopt a coherent strategy concerning the disposition of buildings. A revealing example is the adoption of Decision 20/1955 of the Executive Committee of the People's Council of Cluj which provided the implementation of a table for each housing district, which should indicate which streets are suited for 4 story, 3 story, 2 story and single story buildings and which streets are suited for individual ground-floor dwellings 'in order to ensure an order in the construction pattern within the city'⁴³.

Due to the urgency of this situation, in 1955, the clerks of the Section and the representatives of the Executive Committee were granted permission to include the systematization task into the planning scheme of the Central Institute of City and Regional Systematization (Institutul Central pentru Sistemizarea Orașelor și Regiunilor - ICSOR) for the year 1955 with the first two stages - documentation and preliminary study. The document was drafted on time and it included a documentation section, with a critical analysis and development perspectives for a 20-30 year time span, as well as a preliminary study⁴⁴. The involvement of the Section in the elaboration of documents was substantial, they helped gather the information required by the ICSOR and they hired many local experts in the field, especially University professors. In order to draw up systematization drafts, geological studies were initiated in 1956 for various city zones and steps were taken to update cadastral maps⁴⁵. The target of the study was to systemize the main avenues of the city, a project which was set to run from the end of 1956 until mid-year 1957. It mainly aimed Horea, Doja and Molotov

⁴¹ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 22/ 1954, f. 25.

⁴² *Ibid.*, f. 21.

⁴³ *Loc. cit.*, file no. 24/1954, f. 328.

⁴⁴ *Loc. cit.*, file no. 38/1956, f. 434.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

streets, and subsequently: Kosuth, Jokai, 30 decembrie, Moșilor, Armata Roșie, B.N. Antal streets and Mărăști square. According to the meeting minutes of the Executive Committee of the People's Council of the city between 1952 and 1956 the decisions of the local administration concerning the city development were made based on circumstantial concerns rather than on a long-term plan. The lack of a coherent systematization plan had a negative impact on constructions in the city, especially on housing constructions.

The organization and optimization of the construction system at the local level was of utmost importance taking into account the major unresolved housing crisis after more than 4 years of communist administration. The pressure exerted on local authorities was even greater considering that party leaders were highlighting the need for improving the living conditions of workers. For instance, at the plenary session of the Romanian Labour Party of August 1953, Dej announced the directive according to which the state was supposed to build homes for over 50,000 families⁴⁶.

Similarly to other country regions, the central investment funds of the country or of enterprises were mainly used for the construction of collective dwellings, based on the Stalinist model already implemented in the rest of the country. However, due to the issues concerning the selection of appropriate dispositions for a great number of blocks organized in districts, they were built individually or in small groups on the lands held by the People's Council⁴⁷. The information on the structure and disposition of these blocks is scattered and fragmentary in the archive documents we have consulted. Nonetheless, we have identified several buildings dating from the covered area. For instance, three blocks of flats were built for railway workers in Jaures square with a total of 75 flats in 1951, two blocks were built at 9-11 B.N. Antal street in 1952⁴⁸, another

⁴⁶ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section; SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 118/1956, f. 325; *Rezoluții și hotărâri ale Comitetului Central al PMR; Rezoluții și hotărâri ale Comitetului Central al PMR* (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură Politică), pp. 451-471.

⁴⁷ In 1953 a disposition plan was drafted, but because it provided dispossessions it was not approved by the Council of Ministers, SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 22/1954, f. 26.

⁴⁸ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 12/1954, f.33.

block with 24 flats was built at 2 Beloianis street, inaugurated in 1953⁴⁹. Also in 1953, 5 MFA (Minister of the Armed Forces) one storey blocks were erected on B.N. Antal and Pietroasa streets. In 1954, another block with 22 flats was built at 7-8 Pavlov street (10 two-room flats and 12 one-room flats), complying with the indications from CSAC⁵⁰.

It is important to highlight that in Cluj, special attention was given to the construction of individual or collective dwellings financed from state loans. These loans were regulated by Decisions of the Council of Ministers no. 758/1951 and no. 4015/1953. The loans were granted by the state Investment Bank to enterprises who further distributed them to employees. The latter were supposed to cover at least 30% of the costs of dwellings in money or materials/work. The People's Councils had to allocate land for such buildings especially in areas with utilities, whereas enterprises had to provide help by any means possible (from materials to transport) in order to finish up works.

Eight standardized house building projects were elaborated, which through the "rational" design of the living quarters would ensure a high degree of comfort for tenants. These projects mainly aimed the construction of "twin" houses - with two separate entrances and yards, but with a single roof. This large scale project in Cluj meant, along with the extension of the interwar principle of parceling/zoning and of individual dwelling construction, the continuation of the city development based on the avant-garde model of garden city. Without attempting to make a complete inventory of the zones where such houses were built, we shall mention: Grigorescu district (Gelu Street), Vama Someșeni, Calea Turzii, Iris district, La Passionaria (Fabricii Street), Bulgaria district etc.

By 1954, according to a report of the Section for Architecture and Systematization sent to the People's Council of the city of Cluj, 232 authorizations had been issued for "twin" individual dwellings on 190 parcels held by the state and on 42 private lands⁵¹. Due to the growing number of applications for loans and lands for individual dwellings, in 1956 local authorities initiated a campaign with the aim of convincing citizens to give up the construction of individual houses and opt for

⁴⁹ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 118/1956, f. 349.

⁵⁰ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 118/ 1956, f. 349.

⁵¹ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 24/1955, f.337.

cooperative blocks⁵². The efforts of the People's Council and of the Section for Architecture and Systematization had little success. The citizens were not the only ones refusing to associate, local administration clerks and party members were also reluctant: "[...] it is not easy to convince citizens when certain important people refuse to build in cooperation; we cannot expect workers to build in cooperation when they are used to having their small household"⁵³. This is proof that the decisions of Bucharest authorities had been negotiated on a local level according to private interests. The explanation given by the Executive Committee for the great number of individual dwellings built in Cluj was that it was a temporary solution for the housing problem. With the growing development pace of the city, these dwellings would be replaced by blocks of flats⁵⁴.

To conclude, it is important to highlight that despite its competences, the Section for Architecture and Systematization had little control over the constructions in the city. For instance, many citizens, but also enterprises applied for construction authorization only after the works were completed in order to obtain the use titles for the dwellings⁵⁵. This situation was due not only to the lack of personnel and means of transport, but also to the fact that the only legal sanction that could be imposed at the time was the demolition of the buildings, which would have led to the dissatisfaction of the population and to expenditures on behalf of the People's Council. Subsequently, the quality control personnel was forced to issue authorizations even if the buildings in question were non-compliant from the point of view of esthetics or disposition. Also, although during controls non-authorized construction sites were found, the city militia did not take measures to stop constructions⁵⁶. Furthermore, a common practice was for enterprise managers to make use of their influence to obtain construction authorization for dispositions which had been declared as unfit for construction⁵⁷.

⁵² SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 38/1956, f. 420.

⁵³ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of the Cluj Region, Secretariate Section, file no. 28/1956, f.422.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Reference is made to the need for stopping this "custom" of citizens, *Loc. cit.*, dosar nr.24/1955, f. 326.

⁵⁶ *Loc. cit.*, file no. 24/1955, sheet 326].

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, f. 325.

Making a comparison with the evolution within the field of architecture and constructions at the national level we may note that although from an institutional point of view, the situation of Cluj was in compliance with the decisions issued at the center, by setting up the Section for Architecture and Systematization of the city, from an architectural point of view, the directives promoted in Bucharest were only carried out to a small extent. The construction of collective dwellings was relatively limited and did not comply with the principle of the housing district. Furthermore, due to the construction of many individual dwellings, the tradition based on the principle of "garden city" was carried on.

Central policies and the institutionalization of modernist architecture.

The events from Poland and Hungary in 1956 were perceived as a significant danger by the communist leaders from Eastern Europe. Therefore more funds were allocated for housing and general goods production, decisions which were aimed at increasing the standard of living and so lowering the popular unrest that was looming over the communist regimes in Europe. In Romania the policy adopted by the central authorities was different than that promoted by the Soviet Union. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej decided to re-launch the mass industrialization program⁵⁸ and the collectivization of agriculture. At the same time more resources were allocated to the housing industry. These decisions were taken in the context of the retreat of the red army troops from the country and the worsening of the soviet - Romanian diplomatic relations. Dej, remaining faithful to the Stalinist ideology considered the industrialization proses as the key to maintaining Romanian's independence from the Soviet Union. But industrialization required not only the allocation of resources to certain segments of the economy like the heavy industry, but also the consent of the working force to joining this collective effort. The first steps to improving the standard of living in Romania (even though the most significant achievements actually materialized during the 60's and 70's) were taken, at least in regards to the housing program, as early as 1957. Some historians talk about this as

⁵⁸ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 121.

a social pact⁵⁹ in which workers subscribed to the effort of mass industrialization in exchange for a higher standard of living⁶⁰.

Up until 1957 the poor results of the socialist city planning program in Cluj can be considered as a generalized situation in most of the Romanian cities, especially so since authorities were complaining about the small number and poor quality of the new constructions that had been built in areas essential to the Romanian economy like Hunedoara⁶¹. The leadership of the communist party addressed this problem by implementing a decentralization plan of the architectural and construction fields in 1957. This step was taken because almost all of the architects and engineers (96% of them) worked in the state institutes located in the capital city of Bucharest. Because of this they had little knowledge of the regional realities and so the building plans they created were usually hard to implement⁶². Regional Institutes of Design and Architecture [Institutele Regionale de Proiectare] were created in major regional cities. The institutes were subordinated to the Executive Committees of the People's Councils and had to create building projects for collective dwellings, public buildings, natural gas and electricity's distribution systems, sewage, public transport networks etc⁶³.

Two years later, in 1959, the Regional Institutes of Design and Architecture [Institutele Regionale de Proiectare] were transformed to Sections for Systematization, Architecture and Building Design (Direcții de Sistemizare, Arhitectură, și Proiectarea de Construcții-DSAPC)⁶⁴. These changes emphasized the growing concern for urban planning. Beside the process of institutional reform the communist leadership clearly stated that the Stalinist architecture must be abandoned in favor of the modernist architectural principles implemented in both the Soviet Union and in Western Europe. Of these the most important one was the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Numbers are highly revealing in this regard. According to Ana Maria Zahariade between 1951-1960 66.000 conventional dwelling units were built, 538.500 between 1960-1970, 1.320.000 between 1971-1980 and proximately 1.700.000 for the period between 1981-1990, Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989*, (Bucharest: Simetria, 2011), p.44.

⁶¹ Mara Mărginean. *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p.249.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 236.

⁶³ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 28/1957, f.36.

⁶⁴ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p, 253.

concept of “form follows function” according to which a building had to be first and foremost functional, meaning that its shape must be based on its intended function or purpose.

The problems which existed in the field of urban planning and constructions were also addressed by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej at the General meeting of the Romanian Labour Party in November 1958. In many ways G.G. Dej’s speech resembled that of Khrushchev’s from 1954 as it marked the institutionalization of the modernist architecture in Romania.⁶⁵ During his speech, Dej highlighted the fact that “even though in recent years the number of new houses increased steadily and that new materials, equipment and technologies were used the production cost of houses remained unacceptably high⁶⁶”. He stated that “if in the last 7 to 8 years the production cost of new houses was not artificially increased, from state funds, there could have been built as much as 640.000 extra square feet of inhabitable space which represented around 21.000 new dwelling units⁶⁷.” In his opinion this was a clear proof of the inefficiency of the system since between 1956 and 1968 the total number of apartments built with central funding was of about 40.000 units⁶⁸.

In the last part of his speech, Dej formulated a series of solutions to these problems. The most important directive was the imposition of maximum price to the construction of one dwelling unit (30.000 to 40.000 lei for a two room apartment) with the possibility of increasing it up to 50.000 for the blocks of flats built on the main avenues of the capital city of Bucharest. Under the slogan “Let’s build cheap and good quality housing⁶⁹” a new program was started in 1959, when the resources allocated to building new collective dwellings increased by 25% as compared to 1958.

The directives given by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in the 1958 speech were implemented by local authorities mainly in three ways. The first was the building of blocks of flats on vacant areas in the city centers and/or on the main traffic arteries. Such buildings were constructed on Calea Victoria and Calea Grivița in Bucharest, Calea Mărășești in Bacău, Calea Bucureștilor in Brașov or on Horea Street in Cluj. In the second category one can include the re-systematization of important streets and

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.251.

⁶⁶ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Expunere făcută la ședința plenară a CC al PMR din 26-28 noiembrie 1958* (București: Politică, 1958), p.44.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.14.

central city squares. Illustrative examples in this regard are some of the previously mentioned streets (including Horea Street in Cluj⁷⁰) that underwent a major refurbishing and many of the most important city squares in towns like: Ploiești (Centru Civic al orașului), Iași (Piața Unirii), Bucharest (Piața 30 decembrie, Piața Gării de Nord, Piața Sălii Palatului Republicii), Cluj (Piața Mihai Viteazu și Piața păcii)⁷¹ etc.

Last but not least was the building of blocks of flats in accordance to the concept of micro-districts (or microraiioane)⁷². For the first six year national economic development plan between 1960 and 1965 authorities set a target of 300.000 new apartments constructed in this way. After 1960 such micro-districts were built in almost every Romanian town until the revolution of December 1989⁷³. The micro-district, as it was defined in the professional discourse of the time, represented a residential complex perceived as an “organic ensemble” in which its inhabitants enjoyed similar living conditions⁷⁴ and had equal and direct access to public service facilities such as: kindergartens, schools, playgrounds, commercial centers etc⁷⁵.

Next we will address the way in which these strategies were implemented locally in Cluj between the years 1958-1965 (what we called to be the second phase of the city’s urban development after the establishment of the communist regime in Romania).

The 1957-1965 phase. The implementation of central strategies at the local level

As we have seen in the first phase of urban development in Cluj there was a limited congruity between the strategies elaborated by architects and party leaders at the central level and local realities. Starting with the year 1957 the evolution of the urban planning of Cluj followed the

⁷⁰ Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România în perioada 1944-1969*, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1969), pp. 71-72.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.72-74.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.66.

⁷³ The design of the Romanian micro-districts was significantly altered in the 70’s under the influence of the new leader of the Communist Party, Nicolae Ceaușescu.

⁷⁴ Effort was made to increase the degree of comfort for tenants by, for example, by increasing the inhabitable surface of the apartments or by improving the quality of the materials used. It is important to mention that, because of the strict budgetary constraints, the actual implementation of this objective had mixed results, Ana Maria Zahariade, *Arhitectura în proiectul comunist. România 1944-1989*, p. 49.

⁷⁵ Grigore Ionescu, *Arhitectura în România în perioada 1944-1969*, p. 74.

general principles of modernist architecture which were generally applied in most of the other Romanian towns. This was made possible by a significant increase of central funding and also the starting up of a nationwide planning program in 1959.

One of the main concerns of the local authorities in Cluj was the increase of the population density of the city since its value in 1956 was of only 50 inhabitants/ha compared to the desired national average of 70-100 inhabitants/ha⁷⁶. The main way of dealing with this situation was the building of multi-story apartment buildings in the central areas of the town where the needed infrastructure such as natural gas and electricity distribution systems, sewage, running water etc. could be found. According to the national building regulations the placement of the new buildings had to be established based on the systematization plan of the city but the project started in 1956 by ICSOR was never finished. Yet again the city of Cluj remained without a general systematization plan⁷⁷. Therefore the construction authorizations were issued based on the 1956 unfinished plan (used "for guidance only") and in compliance with a new Regulation for City Planning and Setbacks of the city of Cluj approved in 1957, along with several CSAC directives⁷⁸.

The problems of urban planning in Cluj Napoca were solved only in 1959 when a nationwide systematization program was implemented. In the same year CSAC was replaced by the State Committee for Architecture, Constructions and Planning [Comitetul de Stat pentru Arhitectură, Construcții și Sistemizare - CSACS] and the Regional Institute for Design and Architecture (created in 1957) was replaced by the Section for Systematization, Architecture and Construction Planning of the Cluj region (Direcția de Sistemizare, Arhitectură, și Proiectarea de Construcții Cluj - DSPAC-Cluj). The systematization plan of Cluj was conceived by the State Institute for Construction, Architecture and Systematization [Institutul de stat pentru Construcții, Arhitectură și Sistemizare] between 1959 and 1961⁷⁹. The final product was approved by CSACS in 1961⁸⁰, and the Regional

⁷⁶ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 36/1956, f. 436.

⁷⁷ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 27/1957, f. 110.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 119.

⁷⁹ Vasile Mîtreă, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Imprimeria Ardealului, 2011), p. 58.

⁸⁰ *Loc. cit.*, file no. 22/1961, f. 525.

Committee of the People's Council of Cluj in 1963⁸¹. According to the systematization plan, the regional function of the city was that of an economic⁸², cultural and administrative center⁸³. According to predictions, it was estimated that the town's population would increase by 50.000 inhabitants over the following 15 years from 181.000 in 1960 to 230.000 in 1977⁸⁴. Also, in order to accommodate the new residents and increase the average inhabitable surface to 8sqm/ person, it was estimated that another 32.500 new dwelling units needed to be built by 1975⁸⁵. Last but not least it was stated that the city's infrastructure needed to be brought up to date with the ever-growing expectations of the inhabitants⁸⁶. After subsequent changes to the plan the industrial function was considered to be preeminent along with the role of the city as a university center⁸⁷. A new systematization plan was elaborated in 1965 by DSPAC Cluj and was approved in 1969.

Just like in other cities throughout Romania in 1957 some of the town's most important avenues underwent significant changes. The first of such avenues was Horea Street. The street was first to be taken into consideration by the authorities because it functioned as the main link between the railway station and the city's center⁸⁸. It should be noted that the street and subsequent buildings need major repairs because of the damages done by the bombings during the Second World War. This provided the local communist leaders with a perfect place to build modernist multi-story apartment building on a historical relevant street and with an important function in the city. This was not only a part of

⁸¹ Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.58.

⁸² Without any preference for any one segment of the economy.

⁸³ Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.58.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ According to the 1951 legislation, 8sqm/ inhabitant was considered to be the absolute minimum surface necessary for one person to live in a healthy environment. Despite this in 1959 the average inhabitable surface in Cluj was of around 5.9 sqm/ inhabitant, SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Commune Administration, file no. 28/1959, f. 183.

⁸⁶ Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.58.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁸⁸ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Architecture and Systematization, file no. 27/1957, f. 176.

the communist regime's housing program but also a statement, that communism would triumph and inevitably replace the old. Following the same logic local authorities also decided upon the major refurbishment of two of the city's central squares. This was done between the years 1960 and 1965. The construction of the Republica block of flats⁸⁹ (arh. Alexandru Nemeș) and the nearby 1000 seats cinema (arh. Ioana Schipor și arh. Eugeniu Pănescu) completely transformed Mihai Viteazul Square. Similarly in Păcii Square along with two new blocks of flats (Păcii and the corner block of flats at the end of Napoca Street)⁹⁰ another highly relevant building from an architectural and ideological point of view was constructed - the Students Cultural House. It was part of a larger project of the central authorities, started in 1959, who provided special funding for constructions needed by the local universities⁹¹. Beside this another project of the early 60's was the rehabilitation of the city's slums areas, many of which were in the proximity of the city center like Dragalina Street and Cetățuie area, Cipariu Square and Între Ape district.

One of the most important achievements in regard to the city panning of Cluj during the 60's was the building of the micro-districts Grigorescu (1962-1965) and micro-district I Gheorgheni (1965-1967)⁹². This was a common practice of the time in the Soviet Union and can be considered as yet another model exported to socialist countries. But at the same time we can affirm that the implementation of the modernist principles of the notion of micro-district was also a first moment of reorientation of Romanian architectural practice towards western European models because of the dialog between Romanian and western professional in the context of the increasingly good diplomatic relations with the United State and other capitalist countries. Better said the architectural and city planning practice of the time can be viewed as a mix between western and soviet models that produced syncretic results⁹³.

The micro-district was a residential area composed of blocks of flats along with public buildings like schools, kindergartens, health-care facilities, grocery shops etc. Its borders where clearly marked by high traffic arteries, water flows or railroads. It was designed in such a way

⁸⁹ Din activitatea Institutelor Regionale de Proiectări, în *Arhitectura RPR*, nr. 3/1959, p.12.

⁹⁰ Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.96.

⁹¹ Lazăr Marian, *Primarii Clujului: 1919-2012*, pp.238-139.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁹³ Mara Mărginean, *Procesul de urbanizare în centrele industriale Hunedoara și Călan*, p. 264.

that every inhabitant enjoyed similar living conditions and had equal access to all of the public facilities. For example, everyone was supposed to live in a 500m radius of any such facility. This made it possible to walk everywhere and so no major motor roads where to cross the micro-district's territory⁹⁴.

It was believed that micro-district would become an actual manifestation of the egalitarian principles professed by the official ideology, a quintessence of the superiority of the communist regimes compared to the bourgeois past. As we shall point out later the two micro-districts built in Cluj between 1960 and 1965/67 followed all of the above principles but other conditions made the goal impossible to achieve.

The placement of the first micro-district built in Cluj, Grigorescu I, in the central part of the future Grigorescu neighborhood had several reasons of which the main two where the relatively low density of the population in this area of the town⁹⁵, which reduced the amount of money needed for the expropriation compensations, as well as the fact that the area had the need infrastructure (though incomplete) which would further lead to a reduction of the construction costs. Grigorescu district was designed to be made up of three micro-districts. As we already mentioned the first one built was the central one, micro-district I, followed by the western micro-district built after 1972⁹⁶. The eastern part of the district with its interwar villas remained relatively unchanged. The district was designed for a population of 25-28.000 inhabitants who would benefit of all the modern amenities. Inside the micro-districts area the inhabitants moved around on foot as no heavy traffic was allowed. For instance, in the area of the present day Alexandru Vlahuță Street in the early 60's was the micro-district's garden. The project though was never completed because several public buildings like the cinema, the hospital, the library and the police station were not built. In the original projects the architects also included the creation of an artificial lake on the nearby Someș River but that was also abandoned⁹⁷. Gheorgheni neighborhood was designed in two stages: first the micro-district one and two in 1963, and then the micro-district three and

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266.

⁹⁵ Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.162.

⁹⁶ Vasile Mitrea, Danciu I Maxim, Sandu Alexandru M, *op.cit.*, p.15.

⁹⁷ Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p.142.

Alverna after 1969⁹⁸. The works at the micro-district 1 Gheorgheni started in 1964-65 and ended in 1967. It was also built according to modernist principles and still to this day remains the only part of the city largely unaffected by further building projects.

Even though the effort of the architects to use modernist principles⁹⁹, similar to those from western Europe, in order to solve the housing crisis in Cluj during the 60's needs to be acknowledged it must also be stated that the architects work was significantly controlled by the decisions makers of the communist party. For example, even though micro-districts were also built in the western world the projects from Cluj were the sole creation of the state. Citizens could in no way control or influence any of its characteristics¹⁰⁰. This sometimes led to popular unrest as, for example, many of the residents who lived in the area where micro-districts were built did not want to leave their homes¹⁰¹. Also, towards the early 70's party officials decided that the density of the population in these areas was too low and so decided the building of new blocks of flats between the existing ones, radically altering in this way the original design. In the end Cluj (Napoca) became one of the most crowded city in Romania.

Conclusions:

To conclude, after the Second World War the communist authorities implemented several urban construction patterns as a way of managing the urban spaces throughout Romania. Our major finding was that, at least in the case of the city of Cluj, there was little congruity between the architectural model of Socialist Realist housing district promoted by the central decision makers and the local development of the city which followed to a greater extent the avant-garde principle of the garden-city. This is what we call the first stage of the city's architectural evolution, between 1952 and 1956. After 1957, the communist authorities found solutions to these incongruities by allocating more resources as well as

⁹⁸ Vasile Mittrea, Danciu I. Maxim, Sandu Alexandru M., *op.cit.*, p. 15.

⁹⁹ Vasile Mitrea, Tudose Emanoil, Aurelian Buzuloiu, Eugeniu Penescu, *Cluj- Napoca în proiecte. 50 ani. 1960-2010*, p. 161.

¹⁰⁰ Juliana Maxim, *Mass Housing and Collective Experience: on the notion of microraiion in the 1950s and 1960s*, in *The Journal of Architecture*, (14, 1, 2009), p.13.

¹⁰¹ SJAN Cluj, The People's Council of Cluj Region, Section for Commune Administration, file no. 19/1963, f.93.

implementing an institutional reform in the fields of architecture and urban planning. The result was the building, in most Romanian towns (implicitly in Cluj), of residential areas in accordance with the modernist concept of the micro-district.

Constructing Socialism at "Tehnofrig". A social history case-study into the ethnic structure of the Cluj workforce during the mid-1960s¹

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Abstract: *The advent of the Communist regime in Romania led to great social and economic transformation with immense consequences for the population. For a poorly developed country the insistence of heavy industry growth led to the development of its urban centres, and of the surrounding rural areas. Cluj's fate during the 1960s was no different as it represents a perfect example of these changes. The following paper looks at how complex said transformations took place in terms of ethnicity, education, gender, and migration by emphasizing the example of the "Tehnofrig" factory. The first part is an attempt at explaining the relation between ethnicity and skill by observing the dynamic between traditional work ethics and the numerical report of Hungarians and Romanians. The second part marks a look at links between age/generations and education. The third part stems from gender studies and is focused on the limited entrance women got in the 1960s in skilled positions. Finally, understanding migrational patterns between periphery and centre is essential to explaining how the ethnic balance change, and how this marked not only the evolution of Cluj's urban landscape, but also work ethics.*

Key words: *urban centre, rural area, ethnicity, education, gender, migration.*

Introduction:

In 1962, an informant of the Securitate reported to his bosses in Bucharest that Dezideriu Jenei, chief engineer of the "Tehnofrig" factory in Cluj, was guilty of 'chauvinism', favouring the hiring of Hungarians, and discriminating Romanians. These accusations continued throughout the rest of the 1960s and 1970s, making it seem as if the enterprise had become a nest of national revisionism and sabotage.²

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² The accusations brought forth against chief engineer Jenei Dezideriu by the Securitate seemed to have been mostly based on his prior work experience and education in Hungary, during the Second World War, aspects of his life constantly

Allegations of this type must be seen within their own historical context. It was only seven years earlier that the Hungarian Revolution had shaken the fabric of the communist experiment in East-Central Europe. In Romania it marked an increasing mistrust of ethnic and national minorities, the Hungarian one even more so, being perceived as a threat to state order because of its open support of the events in Budapest. This escalated to as far as making it a prime directive of the Securitate to keep Hungarian populated areas under strict surveillance (decree 70/1957).³ In fact, the first use of accusations of 'chauvinism' dated from when Soviet-Romanian troops entered Transylvania, and were also linked to propaganda against Fascism. It would remain characteristic to Hungarians, while Romanians guilty of the same crime would be called 'nationalists'.⁴ Under such circumstances, these allegations regarding Dezideriu Jenei's conduct are the result of higher political and social tensions and not necessarily a result of actual facts.

The chief-engineer's past is one characterized by a high-degree of professional training and much practical experience in high-end industrial facilities. He had a double university equivalent education both in Cluj and in Budapest, and during the war he had worked for the Siemens factory in Hungary, focusing on machines and electric appliances, this last one fitting more than perfectly with "Tehnofrig"'s profile. After the war he worked as a professor at a technological high-school, thus further developing his skills before being fired by the regime most likely because of his middle-class origins. To further add to his qualifications he opened a tools workshop after the war, hiring around thirty to forty workers. He was eventually forced to get a job at the "Tehnofrig" factory as his business was nationalized by the

mentioned in the studied files, see National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (CNSAS), *Dosar Informativ, I 235724*, Vol. 1, ff.6-7, and *Dosar Informativ, I 235724*, Vol. 2, ff. 100-105, 247-249, 257-258.

³ Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State 1948-1965*, (London: Hurst & Company, 1999), pp.260-262, We should also take into account Gheorghe Gheorghiu's general mistrust of Hungarian diplomacy and the activation of the Hungarian intelligentsia in Romania. The revolution itself led to a verification of society, and the attitude of the Hungarian minority became of main importance for the regime. Csaba Zoltan, *Politica P.C.R. Față de Minoritățile Naționale, 1948-1975*, Teză Doctorat, (Bucharest: Academia Română, Institutul de Istorie "Nicolae Iorga", 2010), p.159.

⁴ Novak Csaba Zoltan, *Politica P.C.R. Față de Minoritățile Naționale*, pp.37, 90.

Communist regime.⁵ Under such circumstances it is highly doubtful that he would have hired individuals based on simple preferences, and that even those who had previously been his employees would not have been as qualified.

As historians we must ask ourselves to what extent are we to believe the fictitious reality constructed by the secret police? If the sources are not read appropriately one risks perpetuating the Securitate's story by following their reading of the information.⁶ Reconstructing the past implies exploring multiple dimensions as means of attempting to understand it more objectively. The best means of illustrating the true reality of the chief engineer's life is to research the evolution of his enterprise's workforce. By doing this, we can better emphasize were the Securitate exaggerated certain aspects, under the influence of a changing historical context.

The "Tehnofrig" factory was created in 1949, based on a decision from 1948 for the nationalization of all private enterprises. The initiative of creating it was the result of the entire Council of Ministers decision making process. This action can be seen as part of the Stalinist type industrialisation, which relied heavily on the idea of self-sufficient modernity. Thus, according to documents from the Securitate the main purpose of "Tehnofrig" was that of creating a means of production of machines for the national refrigeration industry. The man charged by the regime with laying the basis of the new factory was Hartman Ludovic, who had owned a scrap metal shop, he quickly hired Dezideriu Jenei to be his chief-engineer. He was not the sole former proprietor chosen to help, Baatz Erwin was one other. Even the person responsible for hiring new personnel was Branzas Isabela who had previously worked in another factory. By 1954 the enterprise already had no less than 760 employees with the firm objective that by the end of the year the number grow to 1,100. It was only a couple of months earlier, in 1953, that the secret police had identified 25 so-called potential enemies.⁷ Yet despite their categorisation as thus, the regime did not take any steps in stopping their entrance into the new system, although this was the time of high-Stalinism in Romania. This is very similar to

⁵ Ibidem, ff. 6-7.

⁶ Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp.11-20.

⁷ CNSAS, *Dosar Obiectiv Tehnofrig, D 2777*, Vol. 2, ff.1-5.

Fitzpatrick's explanation for what happened in the 1920s in the Soviet Union, when specialists from the old regime were co-opted for the construction of socialism.⁸

It is desirable that we attempt to illustrate the social and economic background of Cluj during the seventh decade of the 20th century. Thus realities tied to the origins, age group, gender, education, and ethnicity of workers become the focal point of this analysis. This shall serve to explain the current ethnic and national landscape through the understanding of past socio-economical processes. As we shall see in the following pages, there are important nuances to the information gathered by the Securitate, nuances which serve to change the initial conclusion. Indeed, there were more Hungarians hired at the "Tehnofrig" factory, many of the specialists did in fact have prior ties to the chief engineer, but these were in fact consequences of how society was back in the 1960s.

Any research has its limits, be it in exact sciences or Humanities, all because of the resources we have at our disposal. This is also true for this paper. While the documents used reveal a great deal of information about the lives of individuals from decades ago, they can also go only so far. The "Tehnofrig" fond held by the Cluj County Direction of the National Archives contains relevant information up to the 1960s, although some files do go further. Hiring sheets were the most relevant documents for this research, as they contain information regarding ethnicity, place of birth, address, age, education, familial status, and most importantly profession. Unfortunately there is a lack of continuity from file to file, as in more than one case, documents varied both in style and information. Thus, following the individual evolution of these workers over a long period is impossible, and this leaves only the possibility of a macro-history analysis. For obvious reasons this can lead to a more sociological approach, yet this can be avoided by the emphasis on historical context explanations.

Files from the former Securitate reveal a great deal of information regarding the lives of individuals. Dezideriu Jenei's case is not different, as there is much detail about both his private life and career. But as mentioned earlier, historians have to be prudent in how they read these reports, and for this it is essential to identify the

⁸ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Education and Social Mobility in the Soviet Union, 1921-1934*, (New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.16.

motivation behind this surveillance operation or any other for that matter. Individuals were not the sole targets of the Securitate. There are a great deal of files on various enterprises the regime had deemed essential to the national economy. One can find extensive knowledge on the history of factories from the first laid brick to the 1980s economic crisis. This information does not focus solely on machinery or the performance of the administrative staff and management, it also reveals much about the daily activities of workers, especially if it was something breaking with routine. Yet, even this can help only so much in illustrating social and economic developments at "Tehnofrig" in the mid-1960s.

Finding a place in the overall historiography of the subject can, at times, be somewhat difficult. This is because of a lack of Romanian papers and monographs of workers' lives during Communism. Historians have mostly focused on the hardships of intellectuals, and former political elites. While this is honourable and very-much welcomed we have reached a point where we must attempt to change our perspective. Communism was in fact something that touched the lives of all Romanian citizens, be they peasants, intellectuals or industrial workers. The proposed paper also aims at finding a place within the Western approach based on micro-history, which allows for a thorough understanding based on specific case studies. Unfortunately, Romanian historiography is lacking in such pursuits, that is not to say that the lives of workers have been totally ignored, yet most of what has been written was in a general key. One notable exception is the recently published *Ferestre spre Furnalul Roșu*, written by Mara Mărginean, a book in which she attempts to reconstruct the economic, urban and social evolution of the towns of Hunedoara and Călan, offering a new historical perspective.⁹

The proposed paper comes from the direction of approaches such as that of Stephen Kotkin's famous *Magnetic Mountain*, of course taking into account the many fundamental differences between what Magnitogorsk was and what Cluj's industrial landscape was.¹⁰ We shall follow the workers to their places of origin, attempting to reconstruct

⁹ Mara Mărginean, *Ferestre spre Furnalul Roșu. Urbanism și cotidian în Hunedoara și Călan (1945-1968)*, (Iași: Polirom, 2015).

¹⁰ It is imperative that we take into account the fact that the city of Cluj already had an industrial tradition by the time the Communist regime took power, while Magnitogorsk represents the Soviet attempt at constructing an industrial center from scratch in the middle of nowhere, Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1995).

migrational patterns, both from the periphery towards the centre (from the countryside to the city) and internally (from home to the workplace). This will also reveal economic decisions taken by individuals, in the sense of changing their livelihoods so as to improve standards of living. Age groups are relevant as they help us understand how individual aspirations change in the lines of generations. Gender is the elephant in the room that must be addressed as the Communist regime always claimed it had emancipated women, but then again as the work of some such as Melanie Ilic, Jeremy Smith, Liubov Denisova, and Lynne Attwood, Jill Massino, amongst many others have demonstrated this was done only to a certain degree, and that every new leader had his own contribution to the landscape of "gender equality".¹¹ Education and ethnicity are more linked in Transylvania than in any other part of Romania, as social stratification can be explained through their analysis. As a result of the pre-war political situation in this region it might be possible to assert that certain groups had better access to education as well as representing most of the urban landscape, a situation which, to a certain degree, perpetuated itself even after 1945.

I. Workers between ethnicity and skill:

This segment of the paper aims at establishing if Jenei Dezideriu was indeed a chauvinist or if the ethnic structure of the "Tehnofrig" workforce was the result of a broader phenomenon. We should ask ourselves if one single individual could manipulate the system in such a manner, especially one which the regime clearly mistrusted. In fact, his influence had little to do with the large number of Hungarians hired by "Tehnofrig", the cause laying in the changing ethnic structure of Cluj at the time.

¹¹ Ed. Melanie Ilic, Jeremy Smith, *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2009), Ed. Melanie Ilic, *Women in the Stalin Era*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), Liubov Denisova, *Rural Women in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, Ed. & Translated Irina Mukhina, (London & New York: Routledge, 2010), Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman. Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922-53*, (New York: Macmillan, 1999), Ed. Shana Penn, Jill Massino, *Gender Politics and Everyday Life in State Socialist Eastern and Central Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2009, Coord. Corina Doboş, Luciana M. Jinga, Florin S. Soare, *Politica Pronatalistă a Regimului Ceauşescu. O perspectivă comparativă*, (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010).

There are indeed clear ties between the chief engineer and some of the people hired at the factory, they had previously been employed at Dezideriu's private enterprise before nationalization, a tool shop called "Meopel". But then again were such decisions strictly motivated by personal ambitions, affinities or was there something more to it? In this sense it would be useful to say more about this business he had. Hiring around 30 to 40 workers and an engineer who would end up also working at "Tehnofrig" this could be categorized as a mid-level enterprise. In fact, there were no less than five individuals we know for certain that worked at "Meopel" and then moved to "Tehnofrig". They had varying backgrounds being previously employed as lawyer, cashier, accountant, clerk or plain skilled worker, yet found a way of reintegrating themselves in the economy as chief of financial service, maintenance, planning department, chief accountant or just plain workers.¹²

Looking at the ethnic structure of Cluj throughout its recent history (late 19th and early 20th Centuries) the only logical conclusion one can come to, is that for a very long time after the First World War there was a balance between the number of Romanians and Hungarians living and working in the city. According to the research done by Rogers Brubaker and his collaborators, until the mid 70s most of the working force, especially skilled, was Hungarian, as they represented the majority of the city's population.¹³ This is a more than pertinent explanation, but in the interest of furthering the analysis we should take a close look at the workers hired by "Tehnofrig" in the first half of the seventh decade (1960-1966), relying on employment sheets, and on the enterprise's technical school lists of skilled workers trained.

From the beginning it must be said that after extensive research the main conclusion is that indeed the largest part of those hired by the factory were of Hungarian origin, comprising the majority of the workforce, while Romanians came in second, though in considerable numbers as well. As for other nationalities their presence is next to inconsequential, especially taking into account that most of Cluj's Jewish community had ended up in Auschwitz or migrated to Israel in the first post-war decades.¹⁴

¹² CNSAS, *Dosar Informativ*, I 235724, Vol. 1, f.7, 43.

¹³ Rogers Brubaker, Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, Liana Grancea, *Politica Naționalistă și Etnicitate Cotidiană Într-un Oraș Transilvănean*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Institutului Pentru Studiarea Problemelor Minorităților Naționale & Kriterion, 2010), p. 126.

¹⁴ For more details see Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, *Istoria evreilor din Transilvania (1623-1944)*, (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1994), and Moshe Carmilly-

Beforehand, a methodological issue must be brought into discussion for the purpose of clarifying certain aspects of establishing nationality. While most workers' ethnicity is easy to establish based on their names, in some cases this proved somewhat more difficult as their family names were clearly Hungarian, while their first names were written in their Romanian variant. While this might pose an epistemological barrier, by relying on the fact that these names have a correspondent in Hungarian, and that mixed marriages were not common (it should be noted that this is strictly when referring to the "Tehnofrig" case), we can describe most of these individuals as being of Hungarian descent. This phenomenon is most likely due to clerical error, if it could be called as such, as there was yet no official policy of Romanianization.¹⁵

I.1. Majority and Minority, Hungarian and Romanian workers:

In 1960 there were approximately 180 Hungarians hired at the "Tehnofrig" factory. The number of Romanians is somewhat lower, at around 130. While there is a pretty solid Hungarian majority, one can easily assert that at this particular point there was a balance.¹⁶ Going forward, to 1961, the gap between these two nationalities further increased as there were around 189 Hungarians and no less than 100 Romanians.¹⁷ It would thus seem that despite massive migration of people from the countryside, the ethnic structure of the skilled workforce remained mostly unchanged.

The following year, 1962, brings a balancing of the nationalities numeric report as there are 71 Romanians hired, and 73 Hungarians, the two person difference is quite negligible. Further expanding on files from 1962 there were another 97 Hungarians and 51 Romanians hired,

Weinberger, *Memorial volume for the Jews of Cluj-Kolozsvár*, (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1988).

¹⁵ If those filling up the papers were Romanians then it would have been easier for them to write their version of the first names, as most of them have an equivalent in both languages, also see Iorgu Iordan, *Dicționar al Numelor de Familie Românești*, (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983), also see for "Romanianization", Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally. Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-44*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 23, 30.

¹⁶ Direcția Județeană a Arhivelor Naționale Cluj (DJAN CLUJ), Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 168, 169, 170, 171/1960, *Fișe de Angajare*.

¹⁷ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 234, 235, 236/1961, *Fișe de Angajare*.

putting the first at almost double the others, a considerable difference.¹⁸ This trend continues way into 1963 and 1964, when the number of Hungarians was more than double compared to the Romanians, 280 to 105, and 295 to 145.¹⁹ Based on the few documents available from 1965, for the first time we come across an instance where Romanians are almost double the number of Hungarians, 94 to 55.²⁰ Yet, this does not mark a definitive change in trends as again in 1966, the Hungarians once more dominate the fresh workforce of "Tehnofrig", 102 to 73.²¹

I.2. Skilled or unskilled? Hungarians and Romanians workers at Tehnofrig:

The quantitative analysis rather raises more questions than it offers answers. Despite massive migration from the countryside to the cities, as described by Rogers Brubaker, Hungarian workers still dominated the landscape of the factory. This is explainable by the nature of "Tehnofrig", which focused on the production of machines, requiring a certain degree of specialisation in using complex machinery. This ties in perfectly to Brubaker's assertion that until the mid-1970s, the majority of skilled workers had been of Hungarian descent. There is no indication that children were inclined to seek employment at "Tehnofrig" because their parents had previously been hired there. Yet, looking at Virgiliu Țărău and Tamás Lónhárt's study, one can notice some patterns of skilled workers' children joining their ranks. In fact, starting from here there is another issue, as there are at least two interpretations to how skilled workers were formed. For older skilled workers trained under the previous system, one had to start as an apprentice and labour up through effort and sacrifice, ultimately learning through practice. The new category was the result of formal education, and thus with a whole different work ethic.²² This issue was not specific only for "Tehnofrig"

¹⁸ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 275, 277, 278/1962, *Fișe de Angajare*, and File No.276/1962, containing Hiring sheets, school sheets, graduate lists.

¹⁹ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 326, 327, 328, 329/1963, *Fișe de Angajare (Contracte de Ucenicie)*, and Files No. 369, 370, 371, 374/1964, *Fișe de Angajare, Fișe de Angajare și Contracte, Cereri de Angajare*.

²⁰ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 39/1965, *Corespondența în legătură cu angajări*, 50/1965, *Evidența Încadrărilor*.

²¹ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File No. 76/1966, *Evidența Încadrărilor*.

²² Tamás Lónhárt, Virgiliu Țărău, "Remembering the Old City, Building a New One"- The Plural Memories of a Multiethnic City. The transformations associated

and Cluj or for that matter Romania, Sheila Fitzpatrick identified very much the same pattern in the Soviet Union, where apprenticeship was also perceived as the best method of learning practical skills, but it also angered syndicates because it threatened the welfare and security of the existing workforce.²³

Starting from the same files we note that beginning with 1960, and up until 1966, the general trend is in favour of Hungarians as skilled workers. There are two major categories which were employed by "Tehnofrig", machinists, and turners. Of course these were not the sole skilled jobs individuals could get as there were many trained for the foundry as casters or some as cutters (for mills), yet the first two seem to have clearly dominated the landscape of the factory.²⁴ Before moving on with the analysis it must be said that there were around three sub-categories of machinists: simple trained machinists who judging by the terminology used in documents might just well have been re-trained locksmiths (at least in the earlier years of the enterprise's existence, until it had managed to establish its own training/educational facilities),²⁵ then we have maintenance mechanics, who looked for, and repaired equipment, and lastly engineers specialised in mechanics (these seem to appear more often from 1962 onwards). To skilled jobs we also add occupations such as drivers, since this required a specific qualification obtained through an official examination. Here we also include electricians, who though not many, were still a constant presence worth mentioning.

Alongside skilled workers there were three other significant categories of workers at "Tehnofrig" in the 1960s. First of all we count the administrative staff, comprised of calculators (abacists), accountants and bookkeepers, typists and various other similar occupations. Secondly, there were specialists, not that many were hired between 1960 and 1966, but enough to be worth mentioning, here we include technicians, and

with Communism as remembered by Hungarian workers from Cluj/ Koloszvár/ Klausenburg", in ed. Maria Todorova, Augusta Dimou, Stefan Troebst, *Remembering Communism: Private and Public Recollections of Lived Experiences in Southeast Europe*, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014), pp.313-314, 318-319, 324.

²³ Sheila Fitzpatrick, , *Education and Social Mobility*, p.14, 48, 59.

²⁴ At first glance, the historian might be tempted to believe that each nationality had a preference towards one specialisation, instead of the other, but as the research progressed this proved to be a mere illusion as any possible trend in this direction does not last over time.

²⁵ The "Tehnofrig" professional school, which functions to this day, although no longer as part of the factory's infrastructure.

engineers. Although this categorisation poses two essential problems or questions. Where do we place draftsmen and technical drawers? Undoubtedly these individuals needed a certain amount of skill and training, yet they had close ties to the administrative sector since their work was more tied to orders coming from central planning than other skilled workers.²⁶ Since the aim of this study is to look at how "Tehnofrig" fits into Cluj's industrialisation in relation to the workforce, and less to explore the relation between certain levels of the enterprise, this type of worker will be placed alongside other skilled workers. The other question we must ask regards foremen, if they are simple skilled workers or can we count them as specialists. Their additional training, which based on student lists from the "Tehnofrig" school lasted between two to three years²⁷, can indeed be counted as a further form of specialisation though their basic knowledge and qualification remained the same. Thus, we consider that they remained skilled workers, though better equipped for 'modern' industry. Starting from the issue of further training we must take into consideration the language of study at the professional school. It is more probable that it was Romanian, especially after the events of 1956, and the fall from power of higher Party members with ethnic minority origins. Thus this would have marked a further blow to traditional work ethics, widening the gap between new and old skilled workers.

The last category is that comprised of various jobs as unskilled workers. Most individuals placed here had only the most basic education, four to seven elementary classes. But these were not the only ones, people with diplomas from theoretical high-schools, professional schools, and in some cases even with university degrees could end up in such jobs,²⁸ although it can be noticed that there was some effort in putting them in better positions, usually in administration/ management. Among those deemed by the regime as unskilled we also count school

²⁶ See the Securitate's interest in designs, and relations between administrative and technical sectors, CNSAS, *Dosar Informativ, I 235724*, vol. 2, ff.103, 120-121 (the case of the hidden failed milk separator), CNSAS, *Dosar Informativ, I 235724*, vol. 3, ff.30, 34, 47-49, 70.

²⁷ Looking at any of the hiring sheets, one can observe that those in skilled positions had a usual of seven primary classes and three more years of training at a professional school (there were rare exceptions with just two years).

²⁸ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File no.171/1960, *Fișe de Angajare*, ff.94, 153, 169, 193, File no.234/1961, *Fișe de Angajare*, f.163, File no.235/1961, *Fișe de Angajare*, ff.98, 113, File no.236/1961, *Fișe de Angajare*, ff.92, 133, File no.370/1964, *Fișe de Angajare și Contracte*, f.291.

teachers, security guards, loaders, and carriers, since most had limited education, as mentioned above. Also, it is important that we distinguish between those who at the time they were hired were still pupils at the factory's professional school, and until they passed the final examination were counted as unskilled workers.²⁹

In 1960, "Tehnofrig" hired around 147 skilled workers, and 104 unskilled ones. Thus most Hungarians were skilled while Romanians were less qualified, the difference explains why the first group was more numerous, making the Securitate's accusations towards Dezideriu Jenei false and malicious. Of all skilled workers, no less than 92 of them were of Hungarian descent, the rest being Romanians with a few exception (a Turkish turner). When looking at the composition of the unskilled group we conclude that more than half were Romanians, 53 to be more precise, while 50 were Hungarians and one Saxon. To further disprove the Securitate's claims one needs only to look at the administration and specialist categories' composition, with 17 Hungarians in the first group and just four in the second, while thirteen Romanians were hired in the administrative sector, and eleven as specialists, much more than any other ethnic group. There is no proof to the Securitate's accusations of Dezideriu's involvement in the Hungarian management of Tehnofrig³⁰. The number of Romanians in the administrative sector increased starting from 1960, changing the previously mentioned order of things.³¹

The following years seem to add weight to this primary conclusion. Of 147 skilled workers hired in 1961, most, 117 were Hungarian, and only around 30 were Romanians. We counted no less than 57 unskilled workers, which emphasizes "Tehnofrig"'s character as a factory focusing on the production complex machinery, thus requiring skilled workers. Twenty-six were Hungarians, the rest Romanians, further illustrating that Romanians comprised mostly the unskilled workforce. Thus, it is unsurprising that under these conditions the ethnic structure of employees was as it was, certainly not the result of a chauvinistic conspiracy. Also, the process of Romanianizing the enterprise's

²⁹ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File no.329/1963, *Contracte Ucenici și Învățământ Tehnic*, ff.159, 161.

³⁰ CNSAS, *Dosar Informativ*, I 235724, vol.1, ff.89-92, CNSAS, *Dosar Informativ*, I 235724, vol.2, f.102.

³¹ DJAN CLUJ, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 168, 169, 170, 171/1960, *Fișe de Angajare*.

administration continued, as there were only eight Hungarians hired to twelve Romanians. This was also available for specialists.³²

By far the most illustrative documents are those referring to 1962, as they contain lists of students at the factory's school, revealing much about the ethnic composition of the workforce of the 50s. This year saw "Tehnofrig" hire no less than 211 skilled workers, of whom 139 were Hungarians, and only 72 were Romanians. As far as unskilled workers go there was a total of just around twenty, with most, thirteen, Romanians. We can hardly accuse anyone of having a hiring policy aimed at favouring a certain group more than others.³³ As school lists show, there were far more Hungarians enrolled in school to become foremen than Romanians, considering that this type of further specialisation was only available for already skilled workers. Thus the lists should be relevant to showing us the ethnic structure of the individuals hired before the 1960s. There were 217 people enrolled, 162 Hungarians and only 55 Romanians. There is however a level of doubt regarding these lists as there is one, following the evolution of somewhere between twelve and fourteen workers at a time, and most of them come from other enterprises, such as Steagul Roşu, in Braşov. This means there is a possibility that some of those on the lists were not in fact "Tehnofrig"'s own workers. Yet what we can say is that there was a practice of taking workers out of production during this education period, and still paying them, which does beg the question if they were used by the "Tehnofrig" factory as workers. We could speculate that this was part of a work-exchange program, there is no such clear indication in the archival sources. Unfortunately the documents studied or made available by the archives do not reveal much in this sense, though more research in the future could be useful.³⁴

Going back to the increasing number of Romanians hired in the administrative sector of the enterprise, it should be noted that in 1962 this process seems to have suffered changes as in this sector there were more Hungarians hired than Romanians, nine to six. Not the same can be said when it comes to specialists, where the pre-existing trend continues with more Romanians than Hungarians, most of them in fact

³² DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 234, 235, 236/1961, *Fişe de Angajare*.

³³ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 275, 277, 278/1962, *Fişe de Angajare*, and File No.276/1962, containing Hiring sheets, school sheets, graduate lists.

³⁴ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File No.276/1962, containing Hiring sheets, school sheets, graduate lists, ff. 109, 110, 111, 112, 114, 116-117, 119, 120, 202, 256, 261.

being graduates of the Polytechnic Institute in Cluj and Iași, making them engineers, individuals with a higher education. This played an important role at the beginning of the Cold War as it was seen as a tool for the purpose of furthering national goals, by creating cadres for the planned economy.³⁵ Calling them specialists is not exaggerated at all as there were characteristics of a class. In the Romanian case only around 8 percent of secondary education were allowed to get to university, making this category numerically reduced. While one could argue that this would have generated a system promoting quality over quantity it ended up being another mechanism of control.³⁶

An interesting fact is that unskilled and specialist positions were mainly concentrated in the hands of Romanians while skilled jobs remained the principal profession for Hungarians.³⁷ Thus, there is a gap between certain social categories of Romanians, and an absence in them of Hungarians. This could be explained by the migration from periphery to centre (countryside to city), with more and more Romanians having access to industrial jobs and better education, while the overall number of Hungarians decreased quite considerably.

The following two years, 1963 and 1964, do not stand outside this pattern we have so far discovered. In fact, 1963 highlights the discrepancy between the number of Hungarians and Romanians hired as skilled workers, of 376, only around 151 were Romanians with the rest being of Hungarian descent, except for two individuals who were Jewish, and respectively of mixed origins.³⁸ In 1964, the situation suffered merely numeric changes as tendencies continued to be the same. From a total of 352 people hired for skilled workers' positions around 242 were Hungarians, one was of mixed origins, and the rest, slightly over 100 were Romanians. This is in relation to the hiring of unskilled labourers which was quite insignificant, at only 58 in two years, making any comparative analysis in this sense useless.³⁹

³⁵ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File No.275/1962, ff.47, 79, 108, 123, File No. 276/1962, ff.90-95, 160-162, 167, 170, 174, 176, 185-186.

³⁶ Lona Withmarsh, Roxandra Ritter, "The Influence of Communism on Career Development and Education in Romania", in *The Career Development Quarterly*, Vol.56, September 2007, pp.87-88.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, ff. 90-95.

³⁸ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 326, 327, 328, 329/1963, *Fișe de Angajare (Contracte de Ucenicie)*.

³⁹ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 369, 370, 371, 374/1964, *Fișe de Angajare, Fișe de Angajare și Contracte, Cereri de Angajare*.

In these two years there were around 37 people brought into the administrative sector of the enterprise; most were Romanians, although in 1963 there were only three of them hired by "Tehnofrig", while in 1964 their numbers once more increased. Despite the rise in employments, these years representing the peak of the period under analysis, there were quite few new specialists, only 27, with very few Hungarians among them. It would not be hazardous to assert that the Romanianization process mentioned throughout this chapter continued unhindered.⁴⁰

Documents relating to 1965 and 1966 are few and far between with the only three files containing hiring requests or contracts. There is no reason to believe that this is owed to a reduction in employment levels⁴¹, but it is more probable that this situation is strictly the result of the loss of documents in the chaos of 1990s privatization of state owned enterprises.

Yet from what can be gathered, these two years mark a complete break with previous patterns when talking about skilled workers. If between 1960 and 1964 there were more Hungarians in these jobs, now the situation is completely reversed with Romanians dominating. While this change might seem as a sudden one, there might be another explanation (except the migration one) showing towards a gradual change. Looking at the ages of those hired between 1962 and 1964 we notice that most of them have been born in the late years of the war or in the first three after it. This in corroboration with more educational opportunities, such as the creation of professional schools, "Tehnofrig" having its own, might explain or lead towards an increase in the number of Romanian skilled workers. It can also be related to what Rogers Brubaker discovered, namely an increase in the number of Romanians in the city at a higher rate than Hungarians.⁴²

II. Workers' Age and Education:

Continuing from the previous chapter, it must be stated that the 1960s marked not only changes in terms of ethnicity and qualification, but also generational transfers. The decline in numbers of hired unskilled

⁴⁰ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 326, 327, 328, 329/1963, *Fișe de Angajare (Contracte de Ucenicie)*, and Files No. 369, 370, 371, 374/1964, *Fișe de Angajare, Fișe de Angajare și Contracte, Cereri de Angajare*.

⁴¹ This is based on Socialist economy's functioning, as it relies on continuous growth rates so it can integrate individuals in the workforce.

⁴² Rogers Brubaker, *Politică Naționalistă și Etnicitate Cotidiană*, p.93.

workers and the rise of those with certain skills can be explained by the coming of age of youngsters born in the last or immediate post-war years.

Between 1960 and 1963, those born before the Second World War, and in the inter-war period were an important component of the freshly hired workforce. The first noticeable tendencies towards a change in this sense can be noticed starting with 1964, even if the previous year had already marked a sharp decline. Of course, one could argue that such a conclusion is also the result of a lack of sources. But then again, it must also be mentioned that by this time "Tehnofrig" had its own well-developed system of training the new workers. This is clearly illustrated both from available student sheets, also from the development plans drawn in 1960. These clearly show the importance of the factory's professional school in the future of this enterprise.⁴³ It is not surprising if we take into account the Soviet experience of integrating peasants into industry and the system they wished to create, thus schools would have the purpose of preparing individuals for their new world.⁴⁴ The creation of schools which were under the patronage of factories seemed to have two reasons, that of solving issues regarding tuition, as class differences still survived, and making it seem it would offer a similar education to the previous one, keeping in tune with traditional ethics.⁴⁵ This was also a perfect means of finding workplaces for young graduates, as the regime had set the goal of eliminating unemployment, through the 1973 Work Code which officially banned it, thus forcing the state to ensure jobs for fresh graduates.⁴⁶ The attachment of schools to industrial enterprises and the subsequent investment made, determined the introduction of apprentice contracts, forcing graduates to continue working there for at least a couple of years.⁴⁷

⁴³ Sketches and plans drawn and written in 1960 reveal what the regime envisaged for the "Tehnofrig" factory, see DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File no. 166/1960, *Dezvoltarea Finală a Întreprinderii Tehnofrig*.

⁴⁴ Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization. The consolidation of the modern system of Soviet production relation, 1953-1964*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.129.

⁴⁵ Mervyn Matthews, *Education in the Soviet Union. Policies and Institutions since Stalin*, Volume 9, (London, New York: Routledge, 1982), p.70, 82.

⁴⁶ Lona Withmarsh & Ruxandra Ritter, "The Influence of Communism on Career Development", p.88, for a broader understanding of this system and phenomenon also see Mervyn Matthew, *Education in the Soviet Union*, pp.82-84.

⁴⁷ Tamás Lőnhárt, Virgiliu Țărău, "Remembering The Old City", p.319.

Looking at previous years we also notice that there were some individuals engaged in either traditional occupations such as blacksmiths, whose occupation had been rendered obsolete by the new industry developing in Cluj, or in those who had lost their prestige (including a decrease in remuneration), and who found it easier to change what they were doing before. For some this meant becoming unskilled workers, this despite having education.⁴⁸ This leads back to the issue of traditional work ethics, but here one must take into account economic constraints felt by individuals, aptly illustrated by the witnesses interviews by Virgiliu Țărău and Tamás Lőnhárt.⁴⁹

There is also the issue of age. There were some cases, although not that many, of the people born either at the end of the nineteenth century or in the first decade of the twentieth. These are interesting as these individuals had quite an advanced age for that period, most of them coming back from retirement to join the workforce. They found employment as unskilled workers, mostly as watchmen as this did not involve any physical effort, but some also enrolled in school to gain a qualification.⁵⁰ Their decision raises an important question, what drove these individuals to seek jobs at such advanced ages?⁵¹ It is highly unlikely that this was the result of having to raise underage children, although it is possible that they would have had to contribute to the welfare of the extended family, thus prompting them to find jobs in industry. We must also take into account changes in the economical structure of the countryside, as a result of collectivization, as many families lost their previous means of supporting themselves (land,

⁴⁸ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File no.170/1960, *Fișe de Angajare*, f.49, File no.171/1960, *Fise de Angajare*, f.119, File no.329/1963, *Contracte Ucenici și Învățământ Tehnic*, f.104, also see footnote 20.

⁴⁹ Tamás Lőnhárt, Virgiliu Țărău, "Remembering The Old City", p.316-317.

⁵⁰ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File no.168/1960, ff.64, 170, 183, 227, File no.169/1960, ff.159, 216, 248, 254, File no.171/1960, f.361, File no.234/1961, ff.238, 256, File no. 235/1961, ff.47, 146, File no.236/1961, ff.179, 245, 248, File no.275/1962, ff.15, 50, 58, File no.277/1962, f.222, File no.278/1962, f.22, File no.326/1963, ff.107-110, 118-121, 162-165, 198-201, 281-284, 321-322, File no.327/1963, ff.50, 58, 89, File no.329/1963, ff.98, 101, 290, File no. 371/1964, f.212, File no.373/1964, f.175, File no.374/1964, f.6, File no.39/1965, f.167, File no.76/1966, ff.19, 34, 77-78, 94.

⁵¹ The Securitate went as far as to accuse Dezideriu Jenei of hiring retired individuals which had previous ties to him, although unlike other mentioned accusations this was more subtle, see CNSAS, *Dosar Informativ*, I 235724, vol.1, f.31.

animals, machines, etc.) and were forced to seek alternative means of gaining access to the necessary resources for survival.

III. Gendering the workforce:

As mentioned in the introduction, gender is an important issue when talking about the social history of communism. While there was indeed some progress in regard to helping women enter paying jobs, most historians agree that this comprises only half of the story. East-Central European societies, at the beginning of the twentieth century still displayed many traditionalist ideas regarding gender roles in the economy.

There are many similarities between Romania and the Soviet Union at that time, according to Gail Kligman and Katherine Verdery, both were mainly rural countries with a similar agricultural background, thus after collectivization this pattern only deepened.⁵² Thus it would be safe to say that this was a world of hardship, and that mothers raised their children to look towards a brighter future, now represented by the rapidly growing towns and cities near-by or far-away.⁵³

The main issue with the Communist emancipation of women is that while it offered them the opportunity of entering the ranks of the workforce, it was also restrictive. It mainly succeeded in further burdening them as now they had to worry about their new jobs, but at the same time responsibilities of the household remained theirs.⁵⁴ Secondly, the so-called policies implemented by the regime were inconstant, and had little capacity for piercing pre-existing gender mentalities. There were considerable differences between Stalinist "emancipation" and the ones that followed under Khrushchev's, Brezhnev's and Gorbachev's rules.⁵⁵ "During the 1930s, the success of women's liberation and equality was measured by the numerical absorption and accommodation of women into traditional male spheres of activity in politics and the economy, in culture and the arts."⁵⁶ This is

⁵² Gail Kligman, Katherine Verdery, *Peasants Under Siege. The Collectivization of Romanian Agriculture, 1949-1962*, (Princeton & New York: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp.49-50.

⁵³ Liubov Denisova, *Rural Women in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia*, p.1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.9, also see Jill Massino, "Workers under Construction: Gender, Identity, and Women's Experiences of Work in State Socialist Romania", in Ed. Shana Penn, Jill Massino, *Gender Politics and Everyday Life*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

⁵⁶ Melanie Ilic, *Women in the Stalin Era*, p.5.

the mentality on which communism based its assertion that it had emancipated women. But as most scholars have now proven in fact women suffered very much from discrimination, as the regime did little in terms of changing the patriarchal way of seeing both the role of women and of their role in the economy.⁵⁷ The "Tehnofrig" factory in Cluj was no exception from the existing state of facts.

Despite the growing number of women entering the workforce after the war, very few managed to become part of heavy industry, and even less were offered the opportunity of becoming skilled workers, which would have meant higher wages, and more independence.⁵⁸ Even the few who were given such a chance were assigned to unskilled or auxiliary positions for the management of the factory. Yet this does not mean there were no exceptions from the general trend. Some women managed to join either the rows of the skilled or that of specialists (such as technicians or even engineers), in fact, the second category was more likely.

In 1960, "Tehnofrig" hired thirty-five women in various positions, of which surprisingly enough only nine were in unskilled jobs, while there were five as specialists with university degrees. The rest were typists, accountants or book-keepers. The following year saw more women being hired by the factory, around forty-six. Of these, the majority of twenty-six were with some skill, for example, there was one who was a welder, a job specific to males, but again most were put in the administrative sector as auxiliary personnel. There were very few as specialists, only four. The rest were unskilled labourers in the cleaning or food-serving⁵⁹ (for the factory's canteen)⁶⁰.

The next two years brought about very little change, if none at all. The number of women hired by "Tehnofrig" increased, with only thirteen in 1962, and twenty-eight in 1963. If the documents in the archives are even remotely complete, then we could even assert that the hiring rates for women decreased considerably, with two years making

⁵⁷ Jill Massino, "Workers under Construction: Gender, Identity, and Women's Experiences of Work in State Socialist Romania", in Ed. Shana Penn, Jill Massino, *Gender Politics and Everyday Life*, pp.14, 26.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

⁵⁹ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 168, 169, 170, 171/1960, *Fişe de Angajare*.

⁶⁰ It can be linked to Khrushchev's attempts at modernizing the U.S.S.R. with such communal facilities, and its subsequent failure, see Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization*, pp.32-34.

up only half of the quota of 1961.⁶¹ Following the same methodology of reading the sources, there were no further improvements until 1966, with just thirty-two women hired in 1964, of which one was a technician, and nineteen as auxiliary to the administration.⁶² While in one of the only files available for 1965 we can find only one woman hired, as a cleaner,⁶³ the last year under analysis does however seem to show changes in the system as there are four women training to become winders, these being skilled positions.⁶⁴

Explanations for the general lack of hired women at "Tehnofrig" could reside in the nature of the work done there. It is more than probable that daily tasks there involved heavy lifting or other activities of this type. Of course this does not inherently mean that women are incapable of performing such tasks, but we must understand that despite the regime's so-called emancipation of women, the dominant mentality remained pretty much the same. Thus they were seen as incapable of replacing men on the work-floor or in some instances this was unwanted by male workers and managers, as this could threaten their role as bread-winners.⁶⁵ Still, this is not to say that there was a stern opposition to women working in factories, after-all this meant more financial resources for the family, thus a higher standard of living. The only condition was that they mostly seek jobs in the textiles industry⁶⁶ or in less paid and less prestigious positions if engaged in heavy industry.

Earlier we mentioned the existence of a canteen at the enterprise. This, if properly functional, could have indeed alleviated much burden from workers, especially commuters, who would not have to bring food with them. However there is no mention of any facilities for day-care of

⁶¹ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 234, 235, 236/1961, *Fișe de Angajare*, Files No. 275, 277, 278/1962, *Fișe de Angajare*, and File No.276/1962, Files No. 326, 327, 328, 329/1963, *Fișe de Angajare (Contracte de Ucenicie)*.

⁶² DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 369, 370, 371, 374/1964, *Fișe de Angajare, Fișe de Angajare și Contracte, Cereri de Angajare*.

⁶³ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No.50/1965, *Corespondența în legătură cu angajări*, 50/1965, *Evidența Încadrărilor*, f.27.

⁶⁴ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File No.76/1966, *Evidența Încadrărilor*.

⁶⁵ Wendy Goldman, "Babas at the Bench: Gender Conflict in Soviet Industry in Soviet Industry in the 1930s", in Ed. Melanie Ilic, *Women in the Stalin Era*, pp.70-71

⁶⁶ This was a sector rapidly developed in the first decades of communist rule, see David Turnock, *The Economy of East Central Europe, 1815-1989. Stages of transformation in a peripheral region*, (New York & London: Routledge), 309-311, also see Wendy Goldman, "Babas at the Bench", p.77.

children although this would have been quite helpful as many hired women had children, with some having more than just one.⁶⁷ Those who were childless belonged to a certain age group, younger women, though not always as there were spinsters, yet most remained skilled ones, as their priorities had changed. Of course exceptions from this trend existed as women who followed education and started families were not that uncommon.⁶⁸ Still, there might be a different explanation for this lack of day-care facilities, as this might not even have been economically profitable, as the "Tehnofrig" factory had a mostly male workforce. Also it would be useful if future research looked at the number and capacity of all day-care centres in the city. This would illustrate how much was the regime willing to invest in women's efficient integration into the 'modern workforce'.

When discussing gender issues in industry one should also look, at least shortly, at wages. One, and probably the best example, is that of engineers, a profession in which there was a better chance of finding women, when looking at heavy industry. According to one such list from "Tehnofrig", gender was not a factor, as both were paid the same, 1,100 lei per month.⁶⁹ This indicates that wages were calculated based on qualification and difficulty categories. This would merit a more ample analysis, which could extend in several directions (age, gender, nationality, etc), but the current paper has other questions to answer.⁷⁰ Of course this cannot account for other issues such as gender discrimination on the factory shop-floor. As previously mentioned, men were less than happy to see their traditional position threatened or changed.

IV. Workers from villages to cities:

The Twentieth Century was one of great demographic change for Romania. Before the First World War this had been a country with an enormous rural population, and very poorly developed urban centres,

⁶⁷ Donald Filtzer emphasized the Soviet case, where a lack of such facilities eventually led to overcrowding which in turn led to disease, only further hardening the life of women workers who had to take care of the sick children, see Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and De-Stalinization*, p.201.

⁶⁸ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File No.236/1961, *Fise de Angajare*, ff.61, 87, 106, 109, 144.

⁶⁹ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File No.276/1962, ff.90-95.

⁷⁰ see as an example DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File No.65/1966, *Stat de Functiuni*.

most of them being organized around peasant fairs, and not truly characterized by merchant or crafting activities. After the 1918 union of Transylvania with the Old Kingdom the percentage of city dwellers increased, and although at a slow pace, this trend continued in the following decades.⁷¹

The rise of the communist regime, and its over-emphasis on heavy industry meant a further development of urban centres, with new factories being built and these requiring more and more workers. Towns and cities themselves could offer only so much, yet their hinterland held an insufficiently tapped human resource which the communists aimed at attracting into their grand plans by offering them the opportunity of bettering their lives. While this is an interesting subject, it will be the focus of a future paper, with this chapter dealing with internal and external migrational patterns.⁷²

IV.1. External migration patterns:

Many peasants from Cluj's hinterland were attracted to the city by the prospect of an improved life, due to higher incomes and access to more resources.⁷³ This pattern seems to have also been followed by the "Tehnofrig" factory, yet rural-urban migration in this case was somewhat more complex. Looking over employment records reveals that individuals from all over the country, and even some individuals from abroad, sought to get jobs here.

In fact, it would be quite difficult to argue that most had come from the countryside because those from cities or town were not so few. Of course, this is explicable through "Tehnofrig"'s type of production and heavy use of machinery, thus it needed mostly skilled workers, of whom experienced ones already lived in urban centres. For example, in 1960, there were no less than eight people from Turda hired by the

⁷¹ Keith Hitchins, *România, 1866-1947*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994), pp.334, 342-343, Bogdan Murgescu, *Romania și Europa. Acumularea decalajelor economice (1500-2010)*, (Iași: Polirom, 2010), pp.349-355.

⁷² Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and Communism in Romania. The Rise and Fall of Ceausescu's Personal Dictatorship*, (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p.34, also see William E. Crowther, *The Political Economy of Romanian Socialism*, (New York, Westport, London: Praeger, 1988).

⁷³ Rogers Brubaker, *Politică Naționalistă și Etnicitate Cotidiană*, pp.121-122, Donald Filtzer, *Soviet Workers and Late Stalinism. Labour and the Restoration of the Stalinist System after World War II*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.15-16.

factory, with four from Gherla and Dej, each. All three towns either had their own industrial facilities or one in their proximity (the wire factory in Câmpia Turzii).⁷⁴

While one could argue that since these were smaller urban settlements people might have been motivated to seek employment in a larger city, especially taking into consideration that Cluj was an important regional centre. But this does not hold up entirely as those who come from similar cities were not few. In the same year, 1960, there were three individuals from Oradea, two from Bucharest, and just as many from Alba Iulia and Braşov, with others from Targu Mures, Baia Mare, Hunedoara, Ploieşti, Bistriţa, and Galaţi following suit. This was probably due to the system of repartition, which characterised the regime's distribution of workers in various sectors of the state command economy.⁷⁵ Yet, this argument cannot be seen as a definitive answer. It was only in the 1970s that Romania's communist regime took serious legislative steps in this sense. In 1972 the state took it upon itself to eliminate unemployment, and a year later even went as far as banning it by law.⁷⁶

In fact, as time went by, the selection pool of the factory only further expanded, as individuals from Timişoara, Mediaş, Buzău, Vaslui, Ismail, Sibiu, Sebeş, Satu Mare or Deva joined the Cluj workforce. This is relevant as moving forward with the analysis towards rural-urban migration we come to realise that most peasants coming to "Tehnofrig" were from villages in Cluj County, thus movement over large distances was rather between cities than between countryside and cities. Of course, this does not mean there were no peasants from other counties, but their number was small, and they mostly came from neighbouring areas such as Sălaj, Mureş, Alba or Bistriţa-Năsăud.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No.168, 169, 170, 171/1960, *Fişe de Angajare*.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Lona Withmarsh & Ruxandra Ritter, "The Influence of Communism on Career Development", p.88.

⁷⁷ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No. 234, 235, 236/1961, *Fişe de Angajare*, Files No. 275, 277, 278/1962, *Fişe de Angajare*, and File No.276/1962, Files No. 326, 327, 328, 329/1963, *Fişe de Angajare (Contracte de Ucenicie)*, Files No. 369, 370, 371, 374/1964, *Fişe de Angajare, Fişe de Angajare și Contracte, Cereri de Angajare*, File No.39/1965, *Corespondența în legătură cu angajări*, File No.76/1966, *Evidența încadrărilor*.

It was easier for individuals to seek a workplace in Cluj if they were from a near-by village as that meant they did not require accommodation since they could always commute, at least at first, and later get an apartment. Although, we should not ignore the fact that many were former students of the "Tehnofrig" professional school, and had come from the countryside⁷⁸, in their case it would be difficult to establish if their migration would end up being permanent or only temporary, but since life in the village offered mostly agricultural perspectives⁷⁹ it would not be far-fetched to speculate that many thought of making their move permanent.

Those who had previously lived in Cluj, the traditional inhabitants, remembered how new apartment buildings sprung at a rapid pace so as to make possible the accommodation of new workers.⁸⁰ Somehow, Cluj's industrial tradition offered a basis for the construction of new industrial and residential zone, and thus seemed to have evolved more harmoniously.

IV.2 Internal commuting:

Firstly, we must attempt to understand the changes brought about by the advent of communism over the existence of Romanian settlements. One could argue that there are two major paradigms: that traditional centres became mere points of transition, as workers commuted to their factories, or that they continued to be the essence of the towns, cities or villages.⁸¹

According to Robert M. Fogelson the downtown or city centre, as we understand it, was something rather specific to the United States at the end of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, while Europe had no such thing.⁸² Indeed many European cities had been systematized by the end of the nineteenth century but he only focuses on those examples, overemphasizing his comparative analysis on Western and certain parts of Central Europe. Yet, in the more Eastern parts of the continent we can clearly notice that most cities and towns

⁷⁸ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files No.326, 327, *Contracte de ucenicie*.

⁷⁹ Bogdan Murgescu, *România și Europa*, pp.349-355.

⁸⁰ Tamás Lónhárt, Virgiliu Țărău, "Remembering The Old City", p.318.

⁸¹ Mara Mărginean, *Ferestre spre Furnalul Roșu*, p.87-89, 145.

⁸² Robert M. Fogelson, *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880-1950*, (Yale University Press, 2001), p.2.

developed around the old Medieval fortresses. Cluj is one city that fits this pattern perfectly, with its traditional main square being around the Gothic St. Michael Church. The Romanianization efforts of inter-war governments have indeed led to the development of a second main square focusing around the Orthodox Cathedral, and National Theatre and Opera building. This can be seen as a split of the city centre and the legitimacy it traditionally holds.⁸³

Communist development plans and their inevitable influence on the evolution of Cluj serve to prove that the city developed something akin to a downtown. The rise in population, due to worker migration, led to the construction of new residential neighbourhoods around already existing structures (Mănăştur, Mărăşti, Gheorgheni, Zorilor, and Grigorescu), adding to this, new industrial areas (Iris, and Bulgaria)⁸⁴. These new zones ended up surrounding the old ones focused around the city centre. Thus, the downtown became a transit area, from home to work, while it also maintained some educational and entertainment values. Authorities did take steps to building alternative solutions, such as Cinema Mărăşti, Cinema Dacia in Mănăştur (two of the largest working neighbourhoods in Cluj) as well as a commercial points such as Mercur or Minerva. Schools were also targeted, there were many old, prestigious schools downtown,⁸⁵ but there were also neighbourhood ones built by the regime, while others came under the patronage of the various factories, as was the case for "Tehnofrig".

In fact, Cluj followed many of the aspects of the Soviet planning model. One such example is that of the Students' House of Culture in the Lucian Blaga square, a big building which serves to promote the regime's propagandistic ends under the guise of entertainment. In Vladivostok the Bolsheviks had followed a similar if not identical

⁸³ <http://www.primariaclujnapoca.ro/ghid-multicultural.html?show=Scurta%20istorie>, accessed on 14th August 2015, Rogers Brubaker, *Politică Naționalistă și Etnicitate Cotidiană*, p.110, also see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1995).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Ed. Ionel-Nicu Dragoș, Ștefan Damian, Ioan Ciupea, Marin Oprea, Traian Bradea, Virgil Salvanu, *Cluj-Napoca. Municipiu cu Vocație Europeană*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Studia, 2001), pp.45-46, 91-92, also see <http://www.romanalibera.ro/cultura/cultura-urbana/cum-au-aparut-primele-cinematografe-la-cluj-311226>, accessed on 14th August 2015, and <http://bunadimineata.ro/cluj/istoria-cinematografelor-din-cluj-napoca/>, accessed on 14th August 2015.

pattern constructing a Palace of Culture in a wide square.⁸⁶ According to the same author this can be related to the attempt at creating new central points for the city, thus gaining legitimacy by replacing the symbols of the previous age.⁸⁷

After careful analysis of employee records available from the "Tehnofrig" factory we must state that during the first half of the sixties one can notice no solid trend regarding internal commuting. Because of the ethnic composition of the enterprise there was no concentration of workers in one part of the city. There are in fact a couple of streets where larger numbers, though not very many, of employees lived, of these Horea, Traian, Armata Roşie, Anatole France, Deportărilor, Moţilor, Budai Antal Nagy, Janos Herbak, Republicii, Maxim Gorki, Someşeni, Karl Marx, Mihai Viteazul Square, and Libertăţii Square are the most noteworthy.⁸⁸

Starting from some of those listed above we realise that some of the most important human resources came from streets which are near or part of the city's centre. Under these conditions the 'downtown' is not a mere point of transit, but at that particular moment it also had a residential role, thus it also had to have had facilities such as shops, entertainment, and schools. This is hardly surprising, considering that the largest part of the "Tehnofrig" workforce were Hungarians, who lived predominantly in the central parts (an inherited characteristic from previous centuries)⁸⁹.

The various other streets spread all over Cluj are also explicable through migration from the countryside. Also the not so impressive number of individuals coming from new neighbourhoods illustrates that in fact the demographic boom took place later⁹⁰, and most neighbourhoods as known to us today were only built during the seventh decade of the twentieth century.⁹¹

⁸⁶ William Harrison Richardson, "Planning a Model Soviet City: Transforming Vladivostok under Stalin and Brezhnev", at 14th IPHS Conference, *Urban Transformation: Controversies, Contrasts and Challenges*, (Istanbul: 12-15 July 2010), p.5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁸⁸ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", Files no. 275, 276, 277, 278/1962, Files no. 326, 327, 328, 329, 330/1963, Files no. 369, 370, 371, 374/1964, File no. 39/1965.

⁸⁹ Rogers Brubaker, *Politică Naționalistă și Etnicitate Cotidiană*, p.102.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1956, 74,623 Romanians, and 77,839 Hungarians, 1966, 105.185 Romanians, and 78,520 Hungarians, 1977, 173.003 Romanians, and 86.215 Hungarians, p.102.

⁹¹ Interview with S.I. on 20th February 2014.

One aspect we do notice is that many workers, despite many being spread around Cluj, lived in Dâmbul Rotund. This is hardly surprising when taking into account that the settlement (since then turned into a neighbourhood of the city) was first known as Kerekdomb⁹², thus it had a mostly Hungarian population, and as we have already established they represented most of "Tehnofrig"'s workforce.⁹³ Also we should not ignore the proximity factor, as Dâmbul Rotund is not far from the factory. In fact, there were many workers living in other neighbourhoods in the proximity of "Tehnofrig", such as the train station area and the industrial zones, Iris and Bulgaria. We have two possible and plausible explanations for this. Firstly, the train station area had previously been heavily inhabited, with Horea street, which connects the centre to the railway, already an important one. Its closeness to the factory might have determined individuals in the area to seek employment at "Tehnofrig", for obvious reasons. The same is true for the Janos Herbak Colony, focused around the Clujana shoe factory; it housed a number of possibly skilled workers, making them perfect employment targets, while also being near "Tehnofrig".⁹⁴ The second explanation resides in previous arguments that other neighbourhoods have yet to have fully developed, although the number of workers from Mănăştur⁹⁵, Mărăşti, Zorilor, Gheorgheni, and another village encompassed by the expanding city, namely Someşeni⁹⁶.

Conclusions:

Without further expanding the paper, we must attempt to summarise the conclusions reached at this particular point of the research. The 1960s were without a doubt a time of transformation for Cluj and its citizens as the city expanded its industrial capabilities, a change which attracted many people from the neighbouring areas. The "Tehnofrig" factory is just one example of how both society and economy evolved during those times.

⁹² <http://www.primariaclujnapoca.ro/ghid-multicultural.html?show=Scurta%20istorie>, accessed on 14th August 2015.

⁹³ See Chapter I.

⁹⁴ DJAN Cluj, Fond 626 "Tehnofrig", File no.276/1962, ff.109, 110, 112, File no.328/1963, ff.238-240, File no.329/1963, ff.52-54, File no.369/1964, ff.353-356.

⁹⁵ Before becoming part of the city it used to be a village, and by the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, <http://cluj.com/articole/cartierul-someseni/>, accessed on 23rd August 2015.

⁹⁶ Traditionally occupied by Romanians.

Chief-engineer, Jenei Dezideriu, from whom our story started, was not part of the conspiracy drawn up by the Securitate, he was just another individual caught up in extraordinary times⁹⁷. His past and his attempts at making the enterprise function properly when resources were scarce, while also trying to bring on specialists made him collide with the ideals of the regime, who wanted to create a new order. In a way this is a story reminding us of the Soviet Cultural Revolution, when in the end previous specialists had to be integrated in communism, even if just for the purpose of making it function.⁹⁸

This paper has followed certain aspects regarding social change at "Tehnofrig" and in Cluj. There are others linked to wages and using the factory's resources to enhance one's standard of living. But from what we have brought to light we can conclude that the 1960s were a period of transition, in which Romanians were becoming part of the skilled workforce as the Hungarian population's positive demographic growth lost momentum. This was based mostly on massive migration, not only from the countryside to the city, but also from other regions of the country. Simultaneously, the number of women entering industry was increasing, and while those who held skilled jobs was small, they did manage to earn some money. Although it must be stated that this came at a price, since they had to carry the double burden of the factory and household.

The purpose of this endeavour has been not only to illustrate and make known certain social issues of those times, and the changes that took place, but also to help develop this new field of historical study so as to better understand the past, and its inheritance for us.

⁹⁷ See Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹⁸ See Ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Cultural Revolution in Russia, 1928-1931*, (Bloomington & London: Indiana University Press, 1978).

Institutional Practices of Propaganda in Nicolae Ceaușescu's Regime

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Abstract: *The aim of this study is to analyse the link between the evolution of the Department of Propaganda and Agitation and the evolution of the internal and foreign policy in the Nicolae Ceausescu regime. Could the communist propaganda system be simply a bureaucratic construct that created an artificial speech? If not, what would be the connection between the institutional practices of propaganda and the evolution of the regime? In order to answer these questions I used, in particular, archival documents from The National Archives of Romania and the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party Fund from the Department of Propaganda and Agitation. My analysis follows two key moments related to the reorganizations of the Central Institution of Propaganda from the years 1968 and 1973. In this respect, I analyse the changes imposed on these institutions and their connection with the internal and the external context of the regime.*

Keywords: *propaganda, propagandist, institutional practices, communism, television.*

The organization of internal and external propaganda in communist Romania involved the existence of an administrative staff that operated both vertically and horizontally. This mechanism was organised and supported by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Party. Territorial divisions were coordinated by the Department of Propaganda and Agitation. This Department was one of the main components of the Central Committee since its establishment.

The premise of this study is that the changes in the internal and external politics of Nicolae Ceausescu's regime were also reflected in the institutional practices. The institutional construction in a communist regime is one of the most important elements in maintaining the perennality of the regime. In this respect, I believe that the system of communist propaganda was not just a bureaucratic construct that created an artificial speech. To create and administrate such a complex system, it required was necessary a permanent care for reevaluation, an effort of perfecting and educating the staff, and the development of specific mechanisms.

From this perspective, the aim of this study is to emphasize the transformation of the institutional practices of propaganda during Ceaușescu's regime and the ways in which those changes reflected the vision of political power. This study will focus on two key moments in the development of the central institution of propaganda: 1968 and 1973, in order to reveal the link between those institutional transformations and the development of the vision and the action of the political power towards society. The main questions that I intend to answer are: how would the political directives be reflected in the transformation and the dynamic of the propaganda institution? And if there is a reflection of that political direction, what would that be?

The study is mainly based on archival material, more exactly the Central Historical National Archives from Bucharest, the fund of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party. In addition, I also used literature regarding the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

In Romania historiography there are some important studies about the institutional construction of the communist regime, such as the study of Nicoleta Ionescu Gura.¹ However, the analysis is centered on the early days of the regime. Some considerations about the propagandistic mechanism of the communist regime in Romania are mentioned in the book of Cristian Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului lui Gheorghiu Dej*.² I would thus like to mention the studies of Eugen Denize and Cezar Măță³, Tiberiu Troncotă⁴, and Verzea Mihaela Cristina⁵. All these studies and a few others analyze the institution of propaganda only in its early years in the context of the regime's instauration.

From a post-revisionist perspective, Larissa Zakharova⁶, analyze the institutional practices of the communist regime as a strategy of communication and a social engineering technique from its

¹ Nicoleta Ionescu-Gura, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006).

² Cristian Vasile, *Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, (Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 2011).

³ Denize Eugen, Măță Cezar, *România comunistă. Statul și propaganda. 1948-1953*, (Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2005).

⁴ Troncotă Tiberiu, *România Comunistă. Propagandă și cenzură*, (Bucharest: Editura Tritonic, 2006).

⁵ Verzea Mihaela Cristina, *Partidul-Stat. Structuri politice. 1948-1965*, (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2013).

⁶ Larissa Zakharova, *La communication Totalitaire, une technique d'ingénierie sociale*, [laviedesidees.fr](http://www.laviedesidees.fr) (<http://www.laviedesidees.fr/La-communication-totalitaire-une.html>).

perspective to create identities. From this point of view I will start my own analysis. Beyond the technical or logistic development there is a social and ideological reason. In order to achieve its purpose, the institutional practices reflected not only the visions of the political authorities, but, also the requirements of society. Therefore the developments of the mechanisms of propaganda were related to the development of society.

1. A New Perspective on Propaganda: 1968

Even if the changing of leadership occurred in 1965⁷, a real change in the central Department of Propaganda was made in 1968. Several internal and external factors led to the decision of reforming the institution in that year. A first determining factor was the internal and the external contexts that involved a special evolution of the communist regime in Romania. Therefore, 1967 was the beginning of a diplomatic and economic opening for Romania, which started to develop relationships with Western Europe and the US. In 1967, Nicolae Ceausescu was the first East European leader who initiated diplomatic relations with West Germany⁸. In addition, a few days before the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops in Prague, Ceausescu visited Prague to show its support to Alexander Dubcek. Ceausescu did not send troops to Czechoslovakia. On the contrary, he denounced this act publicly. On August 23, the Grand National Assembly held (maybe use the word “discussed?”) the official position of Romania to these events. Because the information on the possible reaction of the Romanian army of the Soviet Union were contradictory, at that time Ceausescu had a meeting with the Yugoslav leader Joseph Broz Tito, to check his willingness to provide help to Romania in with the case of a Russian invasion⁹. As a result of this event,

⁷ Until 1965, the Department of Propaganda and Agitation suppose (?) almost the same organizational structure. A different situation was in early of the 1950s, when the regime needed to establish its principles and institutions. For more information on this subject, see Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *The Nomenclature of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006). (Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *Nomenclatura CC al PMR*, Bucharest: Editura Humanitas, 2006).

⁸ Also in this context, in June 1973, Ceausescu visited West Germany for five days and he was the first leader from Eastern Europe to do so.

⁹ Adrian Cioroianu, *On the Shoulders of Marx. An introduction to the History of Romanian Communism* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2005), p. 409. (Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe*

but also in other speeches and actions that followed, the Romanian leader contradicted the Brezhnev doctrine, insisting on the right of the socialist countries to decide their own path in domestic affairs. At that time, Romania was already having a special situation comparing with other socialist countries, as there were no Soviet troops in Romania and any maneuvering troops of the Warsaw Pact.

A second important factor was the territorial division of the country by introducing a new administrative-territorial structure, similar to that of the interwar period. The territorial and administrative reorganization of the country from December 1967 imposed some institutional transformations, too. The hidden proposal of this transformation was the fusion between political and state power. The propagandistic speech set out the decentralization policy and the public participation in economic and administrative decisions. But the intention to construct the party-state, and the accumulation of power in one single hand was revealed in 1967, at the moment when Nicolae Ceaușescu became head of the state¹⁰. At the same time, the structure of the central and local party assumed the direct responsibility for: problems of national defense, national security, foreign policy, personnel selection, and cultural problems. Meanwhile, the state institution has assumed direct responsibility for the economic policy, but accepted the guidance of the Central Committee for all the decisions¹¹.

The reorganization of the propaganda system met the strategic plan designed to operate over a long period. In this regard, two changes in the propaganda system proved this role in the domestic and foreign policy. The administrative and territorial reorganization of the country led to a re-evaluation of the territorial network of propaganda. The new changes led to a greater control over the territorial network and a faster route of information. The role played by propaganda in August 1968 demonstrated the existence of a well-defined strategy to capture the public support regarding that decision. Regarding foreign policy, the creation of a Commission of Foreign Propaganda in the Propaganda Department reveals the emphasis of the political leadership on this

umerii lui Marx. O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc, Bucharest: Editura Curtea Veche, 2005).

¹⁰ In 1965 he was designated General Secretary of the Party and in the 1967 he assumed the role of Chairman of the State Council.

¹¹ Paul Burton, *Radio and Television Broadcasting in Eastern Europe*, (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1974), p. 322.

dimension. The August 1968 moment increased the popularity of the new leader and helped the development of the cult of personality.

A visible transformation in this respect was changing the name of the institution. Until 1968, the name of the institution was The Department of Propaganda and Agitation. In 1965, the group of agitators attached to the Central Committee was abolished. The agitation activity was seen as an activity specific to villages, where people had minimal education and needed a simple explanation about communist ideas. In 1965, the management of the propaganda department found that the system was mature enough to spread communist ideas only through the work of propaganda. At the same time, people knew that a better political regime and its vision would be realized only through the work of propaganda. However, the change of the political vision was visible only in 1968, when the Institution changed its name to "The Department of Propaganda"¹².

Regarding the organization of the central section, the number of officials was the same, but two new sectors were created: the Sector of Propaganda and Social Sciences and the Sector on Foreign Propaganda. For the first one, the motivation was clear: the subordination of the social sciences to the political power. Social sciences were considered key to get to people's conscience, and for that reason, it could be an useful instrument of propaganda. In that way, the political leadership could better control the activity and the research of the social sciences.

The central structure of the Department of Propaganda tried to include only what they called "political propaganda". The Media Sector was organized separately from that of Propaganda. The new Propaganda Department included five sectors: Propaganda and Social Sciences, The Sector of Lecturers, The Documentation Sector, The Sector of Mass Political Work, and The Sector of Foreign Propaganda. In addition, there was a group of territorial instructors dealt with cadres. Along with the technical employees and the librarians, it reached a total

¹² I should mention that in the URSS, the same name, "The Department of Propaganda," was used in the period 1966-1970. Could that be the reason why the Romanian leadership changed the name of the Romanian central propaganda institution, too? The motivation of the URSS leadership, as that expressed by Ceausescu, was the need to modernize the system of propaganda and to accommodate a bigger audience. (Ellen Mickiewicz, *The Modernisation of Party Propaganda in the URSS*, in „Slavic Review”, vol.30, nr.2/1971, p. 260)

of 52 posts¹³. A first observation can be outlined regarding the creation of the new Sector of Lectures. A lecturer was a better qualified propagandist. The creation of a special Sector for them outlines one more time the development of the propaganda system. Therefore, on the one hand, one may observe a decline of the importance of the agitators and their activity. On the other hand, there was an increase in the importance of the lecturer and of the much more complex method of propaganda.

Regarding the local organisation, a first step was to create the existence of the interim county party committees, but in the autumn of 1968 they were functioning permanently¹⁴. The local party apparatus was formed by county and municipal party committees, party committees for the town: category I and II, and communal committees. In each local party structure there was a Department of Propaganda.

The communal committee was functioning only with the Organizational Department and the Commission for Propaganda and Culture. The head of this commission was also deputy secretary and also held the position of director of the cultural center. There were a total of 15-25 posts¹⁵.

The town Party committees that belonged to category II had a commission of propaganda and party education, with a total of 10-15 posts¹⁶. For the municipal party committees belonging to the first category, there were a total of 20-25 posts for: the Commission for Propaganda and Mass Politics and the Labour Party Cabinet¹⁷. The Propaganda Department of Municipal Party Committee had two commissions: the Commission for Propaganda and Mass Political Work, whose chief was one of the secretaries of the municipal committee. There was a total of 20-30 posts¹⁸. A total of 20-30 posts were made available.

The Propaganda Department of the County Committee was organised as follows: the Sector of Mass Political Work, the Commission

¹³ *The Organigram of the Department of Propaganda*, in National Central Historical Archives, fund of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, file no. 3/1968, page 260. (*Organigrama Secției de Propagandă*, în Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, dosar nr. 3/1968, f. 260).

¹³ *Ibidem*, page 223.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, page 223.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, page 246.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, page 244.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, page 242.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, page 236.

for The Press, print and radio(s), and the Party Cabinet. This meant a total of 32-51 positions¹⁹. The new scheme was improved with 6 posts: one for the chief of a Sector and five for instructors. One of the issues that followed the organization of the local party committees was related to the reduction of a number of positions. Until the autumn of 1968, the Department of Municipal Party Committee Propaganda was forced to cut 21 activists from its team, including six instructors for art and cultural issues, one for the propaganda committee and mass political work and 14 from the party offices. The Town Party Committees, which belonged to the first class, lost 8 posts in the field of propaganda: 3 from the Committee for Mass Political Work and 5 from the Party Offices²⁰.

Following these changes, to verify that the new instructions were implemented and whether the system worked efficiently, a meeting of the territorial instructors was organized in March 1968. I believe that this meeting was an important one which reflected both the position of the political leadership in society and the role played by propaganda. Analysing the stenogram of their discussion, it can be concluded that in the beginning, all those organisational changes that were made did not come with substantial changes in the propaganda rethoric. For example, the inspector assigned to the Satu Mare region stated that the main complaints of the people were related to the poor state of the roads, factories, hospitals and other problems related to the administration system. The recommendation for the instructors in this region was: "propaganda has to make people understand that all these problems will be resolved, but not instantly. This will take time, but it should not be a reason for people to lose their trust in the power of the party"²¹. The statement made by this propaganda instructor reinforces the idea that political power was truly interested in propaganda efficiency in the

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, page 231.

²⁰ *The Decision on Changing the Schemes of the functioning in the Local Party*, in National Central Historical Archives, fund of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, file no. 83/1968, pages 2, 3. (*Hotărâre privind modificarea schemelor de funcțiuni ale organelor locale de partid*, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, dosar nr. 83/1968, ff. 2, 3.

²¹ *The Verbatim report from 1 march 1968 with the teritorial instructors*, National Central Historical Archives, fund of Central Comitee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 1/1968, page 4. (*Stenograma ședinței de raportare ale instructorilor teritoriali din 1 martie 1968*, în ANIC, fond CC la PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, dosar nr.1/1968, f. 4).

territory and the propaganda instructors had the possibility to speak about the realities from the country. Just to affirm, even in an indirect way, that people might lose their confidence in the party, was important

From the beginning of that meeting, the propaganda instructors were asked to submit "some other important issues of their work, not just the issues concerning their cultural and mass political work"²². What are these "other important issues" during the meeting on mass political work? Could that be an impulse for territorial instructors to leave formal discussions, which were often criticized? What is the reason of this change of attitude and how did the political power perceive the direct confrontation with real issues affecting people? I believe that, more than ever, at that time particular attention was paid to the people's reaction to political activity. Reports of the territorial instructors proved this. They bring to light facts and criticisms that had not been said before. This is reinforced by the use of propaganda during the August 1968 moment. Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech in 1968 was popularized by every tool that the propaganda system had at the time. Thus, the echo of this event was amplified by all means of communication, a long time after the passing of the event. The observation made by Irina Gridan, in an article dedicated to this moment, responds to this idea. According to Gridan, Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech reproduced in „Scînteia” (The Spark) and on television was followed by a focus on people's perceptions of the political power and not vice versa, as it had been the case before. The political power seemed to be very interested in the manner in which the people perceived this speech²³.

Regarding the communication between political power and society, one can notice a break in the tradition of totalitarian communication. Adrian Cioroianu reinforces this idea by stating that the population was not convened, but informed and persuaded to participate²⁴. The context in which the people mobilized is also important, as they were already prepared for the demonstration on August 23rd. In the photos from those times, one can notice that only placards with messages for Czechoslovakia looked improvised²⁵. We

²² *Ibidem*, page 1.

²³ Irina Gridan, *Les communistes roumain face à l'été 1968. Strategies discursives et scenographies mobilisatrice*, in "Hypothèses", Paris, (nr. 1/2010), p. 47.

²⁴ A. Cioroianu, *Ce Ceaușescu qui hante les Roumains*, (Bucharest: Curtea Veche), p. 154.

²⁵ Irina Gridan, *Les communistes roumain face à l'été 1968. Strategies discursives et scenographies mobilisatrice*, in "Hypothèses", Paris, (nr. 1/2010), p. 41.

should note that the some opinion and position regarding the events in Czechoslovakia began to be made public through a series of articles in the newspaper "The Spark" between the months of July-August. The main point that emerges from these articles is not related to Romania's position regarding the Czechoslovak reform program, but to support the idea that the Communist Party in any country has the right to solve in its own way any internal problem that could arise: "in our opinion, when there are differences of opinion on an issue or another, those differences should be solved through friendly discussion, with patience and understanding coming from each party and each leadership, in a constructive way, listening to the voice of reason and to the interests of the people in the socialist countries"²⁶. Ceausescu's balcony speech was broadcast live by the state television, which had a more powerful impact. [That impact was reinforced by the free and fervent speech]. The enthusiasm and frenzy of the population, at least during the speech, were clearly visible and seemed sincere.

Returning to the meeting of the propagandistic instructors from March 1968, it can be observed that it has brought into discussion the issue of the propagandists. It has been observed that some propagandists of the Propaganda Department of the County Office Party gave up their post, returning to their former jobs as teachers. Their motivation was officially reported as "dissatisfaction from their activity"²⁷. That meant too much responsibility, the low payment (sometimes lower than the educational staff payment), and the difficulty of being promoted. This request for the promotion aims at a better payment, not necessarily a higher social status. The wages increased after some time, but not significantly. The issue of remuneration has always been a problem of the system. I assume that this dissatisfaction, specific to the year 1968 was mainly linked to the financial side. A second motivation was the moral and the intellectual dissatisfaction. It

²⁶ Nicolae Ceausescu's speech during a visit in Prague on August 17, "Spark", year XXXVIII, no. 7797, 17 Aout 1968, page 2. (*Cuvântarea lui Nicolae Ceaușescu cu ocazia vizitei de la Praga din 17 august*, în "Scântea", anul XXXVIII, nr. 7797, 17 august 1968, p. 2).

²⁷ *The Verbatim report from 1 march 1968 with the teritorial instructors*, National Central Historical Archives, fond of Central Comitee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 1/1968, page 5. (*Stenograma ședinței de raportare ale instructorilor teritoriali din 1 martie 1968*, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, dosar nr.1/1968, f. 5).

should be noted that all the propagandists wanted to return to their original job, especially those who were teachers. Therefore, intellectuals who had to do their propagandistic actions had other expectations from this status. In this case, it was not only about the issue of material satisfaction, but also the intellectual expectations. From this point of view, the inefficiency of the propaganda system can be observed from the discontent and mistrust of the propaganda instructors who had an intellectual formation. At this point, the power was confronting a new problem: that of the propagandists who gave up their responsibilities. What would the solution be in this case? How can you shape a better propagandist, who can communicate efficiently with the society? A first solution was designed in financial terms, but the wage increase could not be too high and, as a consequence, the problem persisted. A similar solution was applied in 1965, but it did not work.

A second solution seems to have worked more efficiently, and this was related to the responsibility of propagandist for the work that he submitted to outline this new manner of action, the instructors of propaganda did not receive anymore the propagandistic support (texts, bibliography) from the Central Committee of the Party. Their responsibility increased because of the necessity to construct their own propagandistic discourse and at the end of their actions, they could be blamed for their eventual failure. More than that, the number of propagandists was reduced, in order to keep a better control on improving their quality. In several counties, the party secretaries have complained that the people who were responsible outweighed the number of instructors of propaganda and that the department operating scheme was too weak to cover all the problems they had to solve. Therefore, the regime was facing a problem of confidence presented in the very center of the propaganda system, which affected even more the link between political power and society.

Above all, it can be clearly observed that the aim of the regime was to centralize the foreign propaganda activity by creating the Sector of Foreign Propaganda. Even if there were institutions that had in their responsibility the foreign propaganda, the management intended to create a central institution for a better control of the foreign propaganda. The establishment of this department had an external pulse, because in January 1968, a delegation of the Central Committee of CPSU visited

Romania to check on the evolution of the propaganda system²⁸. The main issues they were interested in, were the organization of the party education, the forms of propaganda work, and the topics discussed in the specialized study circles. The external delegation visited the Departments of Central Committee, especially the Department of propaganda, in order to demonstrate the new kind of open diplomacy started by Romania. This is also a reinforcement of the external propaganda²⁹.

2. The National Path of 1973

In the period between 1968-1973 one can notice a change in the vision of political power to the system of propaganda. Until August 1968, the agents of propaganda disposed much more discretionary power in their actions³⁰.

The reorganization in 1973 reflected very well the change of political discourse. After a period of political detente, the July 1971 Thesis imposed a national path in the cultural domain and in the domestic policy. The creation of the Council of Socialist Cultural Education in September 1971 also played a role in the redefinition of some rhetorical trail of the propaganda. The Central Section changed its name in the Department of Propaganda and Press and it was divided into four sectors: The Sector of Propaganda, The Sector of Political and Educational Work, The Sector of Cadres and the Educational Work in Schools and Faculty and Sector of Press, Radio and Television. Along

²⁸ *Information*, in National Central Historical Archives, fund of Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 5/1968, page 4. (*Informare*, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, dosar nr. 5/1968, f. 4).

²⁹ For a better organization in this sector, in 1969 the Foreign Propaganda Commission was created. It was subordinated to the Secretariat of the Central Committee and was led by the party secretary on issues of propaganda at the time, Paul Niculescu Mizil [(*The Proposals for the organization of the Commission of Foreign Propaganda, attached to the RPC*, in National Central Historical Archives, fond of Central Comitee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 32/1969, page 54. (*Propuneri privind organizarea și activitatea Comisiei de Propagandă Externă, de pe lângă CC al PCR*, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Cancelarie, dosar nr. 32/1969, f. 54)].

³⁰ The propagandist had been instructed to decide what the best method and the best discourse was in their activity. All those decisions should reflect the group of people who receive the information.

with these Sectors, there was a group of territorial instructors. From a total of the 75 employed in this section, 63 dealt with political work and 12 with the technical work³¹. An important change can be observed in the composition of this Departement. In this regard, the press activity was included in the Department of Propaganda and there was a special Section for Press, Radio and Television. In this context, the press has been seen like one of the main instruments of propaganda. The educational system and propaganda had to use modern tools in disseminating the information, but without abandoning the classic tool, the propagandist.

Why this change and why in the early 70s? After the July 1971 Thesis, the attention of propaganda was focused on the media, because the path of nationalism was imposed to all artistic areas. For that reason, the means of information were carefully supervised. In those directives the need of improving the activity of the Department of Propaganda was specified³².

A second reason was linked with the development of television. Until the early 70s that department of media did not enjoy too much attention from the political power. But in 1972, in a session attended by Nicolae Ceaușescu and the heads of the Department of Propaganda³³,

³¹ *The Scheme of the Department of Propaganda and Press*, in National Central Historical Archives, fond of Central Comitee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 73/1973, pages 15, 16. (*Schema Secției de Propagandă și Presă*, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, secția Cancelarie, dosar nr. 73/1973, ff. 15-16).

³² *The Proposal of measures for the improvement of politico-ideological, for the Marxist-Leninist education of the party members, of all working people*, in „Romania on the Road to Build the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society. Reports, speeches, articles. May 1971-February 1972”, volume 6, Bucharest, 1972, p. 194. (*Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii. 6 iulie 1971*, în Nicolae Ceaușescu, "România pe drumul onstruirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate. Rapoarte, cuvântări, articole. Mai 1971-februarie 1972", vol. 6, Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972, p. 194.)

³³ More specifically, Miu Dobrescu, Ion Totu, Lenghel Ladislau, Ion Zahiu, Ion Florea, Ion Dicu, Szabo Alexandru, Piucă Vicențiu, Fotache Petre, Nedelea Marin, Dumitrache Gheorghe, Gheorghe Pană and Dumitru Popescu. (*Minutes of the meeting of Nicolae Ceaușescu with the leadership of Department of Propaganda of the Central Committee of PCR. 8 February 1972*, in National Central Historical Archives, fund of Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 11/1972, page 2. (*Stenograma întâlnirii tovarășului NC cu conducerea*

Nicolae Ceausescu was alerted to the fact that the development of television made almost impossible a competition between the activity of that institution and propaganda. Upon hearing this, Nicolae Ceausescu commented that the television should not be compete with propaganda, but used it instead³⁴. With this short and firm comment, Nicolae Ceausescu indicated the trajectory of Television and of Propaganda, also. Faced with the development of Radio and Television, propaganda could no longer express its control function over them. The creation of other two institutions, the National Council of Radio and the Council of Socialist Culture and Education were not sufficient to control society. That is why the control of the Propaganda Department had to be strengthened. During these meetings, some more problems of the institution of Propaganda were revealed, such as the lack of organisation of the agitatoric actions, due the decision from 1965 to give up the Sectors of Agitators, and the decision from 1968 to stop sending the didactic support for the agitators³⁵.

For a better communication between center and periphery, the propaganda system proposed the organisation of the meetings with county secretaries, heads of propaganda departments and editors, two or three times a year. Dumitru Popescu together with other activists from the Council of Education were suggested to attend those meetings.

All those motives led to changes in the organisational scheme of the central institution of propaganda, in order to better reflect the ideological changes³⁶. For example, since the 70s, particular importance

Secția de Propagandă a CC al PCR. 8 februarie 1972, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, dosar nr. 11/1972, f. 2)].

³⁴ *Minutes of the meeting of Nicolae Ceausescu with the leadership of the Department of Propaganda of the Central Committee of PCR. 8 February 1972, in National Central Historical Archives, fond of Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section on Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 11/1972, page 2. (Stenograma întâlnirii tovarășului NC cu conducerea Secției de Propagandă a CC al PCR. 8 februarie 1972, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, dosar nr. 11/1972, f. 26.*

³⁵ *Ibidem, pages 2-5.*

³⁶ *Later, in 1976, the Department of Propaganda and the Press was split in Department of Propaganda and the Department of Press and Radio and Television. [(Protocol No. 11 of the meeting of the RCP Secretariat of day November 29, 1976, in National Central Historical Archives, fond of Central Comitee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 110/1976, page 2. (Protocol nr.11 al ședinței Secretariatului CC al PCR din ziua de 29 noiembrie 1976, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, secția Cancelarie, dosar nr. 110/1976, f. 2.)]*

was given to the dissemination of propaganda by museums. Increasing the path of nationalism and the desire of the regime to promote the national tradition of the Romanians, the museum has become an ideal tool in this respect. Therefore, in addition to the exchange the experience in this field, some cultural instructors attached to houses of culture and community centers consulted surveys and did some research on the activities of some museums in the West³⁷.

More than ever, after the July Theses, Nicolae Ceausescu searched for some tools of legitimation for his vision of leadership. In this way, the Department of Propaganda and Agitation received more responsibility in the guidance of the ideological vision. Each year, the Department of Propaganda and Agitation had the responsibility to develop the programs for the political courses and for the university departments of Marxism-Leninism. The main documents used were the volumes of the RCP programs and the directions of domestic and foreign policy of the Party and the state of the Nicolae Ceausescu regime³⁸. This change in the curricula of the party was a consequence of the desire to reinforce what he saw to be the "national power"³⁹. Therefore, the bibliographies used by propagandists had to comprise lessons such as: "Problems of organization and management of political, economic and social activities", "The creation of multilateral developed society", "Files of History" and to initiate themes for discussion such as "The International Issues", "Ideological debates"⁴⁰. This memory

³⁷ Ioan Jinga, *Cultura de masă*, (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1975), p. 216. (Ioan Junga, *Popular Culture*)

³⁸ *Politico-ideological education of the party from 1975 to 1979. Issues and bibliographies for guidance in courses and seminars*, (Bucharest, Editura Politică, 1975), page 9. (*Învățământul politico-ideologic de partid 1975-1979. Probleme orientative și bibliografii pentru cursuri și seminarii*, Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975, p. 9).

³⁹ At this point, Nicolae Ceausescu betrayed the Leninist idea of breaking the national borders and to promote Not sure what you want to say universal values to help create the people's unity. "Nations are the product of the bourgeois epoch in the social development. The develop of the nation broke the capitalist borders, destroyed national seclusion and replaced class antagonism with national antagaonismul". (V. I. Lenine, *Karl Marx et sa doctrine*, Paris, Editions Sociales, 1946 p. 30.) For Nicolae Ceausescu, one national border was necessary and it had to be defended with all costs.

⁴⁰ *Politico-ideological education of the party from 1975 to 1979. Issues and bibliographies for guidance in courses and seminars*, (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975), page 9. (*Învățământul politico-ideologic de partid 1975-1979. Probleme orientative și bibliografii pentru cursuri și seminarii*, Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975, p. 9).

handling by communist ideology through propaganda was possible thanks to the intervention of the ideology, using tools like the Department of Propaganda and Agitation, in the process of creation of identity and the public expressions of memory⁴¹. Propaganda developed a system of interpretation of events. This system is more than mere historical stories rebuilt from a communist perspective. They are a form of "storytelling"⁴² that scored historic speech in a logical manipulation.

The existence of the Sector of Cadres and the Educational Work in Schools and Faculty in the organization of the Department of the Propaganda and Press in 1973 outlines the desire of the regime to better control the educational system and, to manage the propaganda system like an educational tool. Disciplines such as History and Philosophy had to be guided and controlled by one force, that of the party. The July 1971 Thesis stated that "there must be a single Faculty of Philosophy, because the country has one philosophy. This faculty must work under the Central Committee, in close connection with the Academy of Political and Social Sciences"⁴³. In History there was the same problem: "We must have only one history, one conception of history, the dialectical and historical materialism," he said in the July Thesis. In general, teachers who teach social sciences had to be former party activists, recommended by the party institutions. In this way, the task of writing and interpretation of history fell into the hands of the party. Propaganda supported this process: the principle of a Marxist interpretation of history. The popularization of the Party history was supported by the entire propaganda system. "Class struggle" was one of the magazines

⁴¹ Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History and the Forgetfulness*, (Timișoara: Amarcord, 2001), page 104. (Paul Ricoeur, *Memoria, istoria, uitarea*, Timișoara: Editura Amarcord, 2001, p. 104).

⁴² The concept of "storytelling" appeared in 1990 in the US and it is a propaganda technique. The concept includes a form of control and power. (Christian Salmon, *Storytelling, la machine à fabriquer des histoires et à former les esprits*, Paris: Editions la Découverte, 2008, pages 7, 12)

⁴³ *The Proposal of Measures for improvement of politico-ideological activation, for Marxist-Leninist education of party members, of all working people, in „Romania on the Road to Build the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society. Reports, speeches, articles. May 1971-February 1972"*, volume 6, Bucharest, 1972, page 233. (*Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii. 6 iulie 1971, în Nicolae Ceaușescu, "România pe drumul onstruirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate. Rapoarte, cuvântări, articole. Mai 1971-februarie 1972"*, vol. 6, Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1972, p. 233).

that had to help to develop a social and national tradition. The main thematic directions included: "to analyze and generalize the experience in bringing the Romanian Communist Party revolution and the construction of socialism; studying the action and objective of socialism and the social-economic processes; the analysis of changes in our country in the stage of building the multilaterally developed socialist society"⁴⁴.

Summing up the arguments I put forth above, it can be concluded that the bureaucratic system of propaganda was closely linked with the transformation of the vision towards society. Beginning with 1968, considering that the propagandists were better qualified in their work, they did not receive all the documentary support from the Central Committee anymore. As I mentioned throughout this paper, the propagandists were a special category of propaganda actors who made the system of propaganda work. The propagandist should not be seen only as a manipulator of the word, but also as a simple man, who should construct his own propagandistic speech⁴⁵. However, in 1968, the reorganization of propaganda was accompanied by a change in the way the broadcast the system of propaganda and perception about himself. All the measures applied in the propaganda system had a consequence on the propaganda instructors, and on society as well.

The Propaganda Department was initiated as a vertical and horizontal flow of information. The hierarchy and the vertical control are necessary elements of existence and efficiency of propaganda. Jacques Ellul talks about propaganda that comes up, as characterized by passive attitude of the subject. The individual is manipulated, engaged in his actions, but turned into an object. This depersonalization of the individual is due to the fact that decisions are not of his own, but are suggested by a leader and imposed like a conditioned reflex. But still,

⁴⁴ Note on improving the activity and the content of magazine "Class struggle", "Contemporary", "Labor Party" and its supplement, "Helping the propagandist", National Central Historical Archives, fond of Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, Section of Propaganda and Agitation, file no. 24/1972, pages 2, 3. (Notă cu privire la îmbunătățirea activității și conținutului activității „Lupta de clasă”, „Contemporanul”, „Munca de partid” și suplimentul său, „În ajutorul propagandistului”, în ANIC, fond CC al PCR, Secția Propagandă și Agitație, dosar nr. 24/1972, ff. 2-3).

⁴⁵ The Propagandist is a manipulator behind the camera. He knows why he says something, and what should be the effect. His word is not human, but a technical one. He does not express a feeling, a spontaneous idea, but everything is calculated in advance. He was not required to believe in what he says, but to affirm those things as if they believe (Jacques Ellul, *Propagandes*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1962, page 35.)

this vertical flow of information would have never survived without the existence of horizontal propaganda created by other social bodies⁴⁶. Therefore, propaganda is characterized by the enormity of the hierarchy of the administrative apparatus, and horizontal propaganda is characterized by the enormity of the social organism.

The institutional transformation of the propaganda reflected the new political direction of the Ceaușescu's leadership. The national path became a mark for the propaganda institution as well. From this perspective, the propaganda organization can be perceived like an „organized faith”⁴⁷, which developed special tools for persuasion and control. This means that the implication of political power to perfecting the propaganda mechanism also presupposes the aim of the political power to engage people to support the regime. This does not only involve the dimension of manipulation, but it also involves a dimension of communication between the political system and society and the creation of a social identity.

⁴⁶ Brigitte Studer, *L'etre perfectible. La formation du cadre stalinien par le travail sur soi*, in "Geneses 51", (June, 2003), p. 94.

⁴⁷ Derek J.R.Scott, *Russian Political Institutions*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publisher, 1965), p. 187.

Contesting the Leader on Daily Basis: Everyday Resistance and Nicolae Ceaușescu's Cult of Personality

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Abstract: *My paper analyzes how a part of the Romanian people contested on daily basis their leader, Nicolae Ceausescu, and also the overwhelming presence of his cult of personality in their life especially during the 1980s. To this end, I will employ James C. Scott's concept of everyday resistance in order to map the array of means used by the people in order to express their protest towards the public homage paid to the Romanian communist leader.*

My examination of the documents created by the Securitate (the former Romanian political police) and also by the Romanian department of Radio Free Europe, of the memoir literature published after the demise of the communist regime helped me to identify the following forms of everyday resistance towards Nicolae Ceausescu's cult of personality: political discussions, individual or collective actions directed against the images of the Romanian communist leader, writing and spreading "documents containing hostile message" (unsigned letters, leaflets with messages against Nicolae Ceausescu) and political jokes.

They will be analyzed from two main perspectives that will show and explain in what their resistance core lies in. The first one underlines that these forms of everyday resistance reversed the meanings of the homage assumptions made by the Romanian propaganda about Ceausescu's leadership in order to identify what and particularly why certain aspects of his rule became the focus of the daily popular protest. The other perspective evaluates the role played by everyday resistance in the gradual undermining of Nicolae Ceausescu's domestic legitimacy that along other evolutions led to the popular revolt against his rule in December 1989.

Key words: *Everyday resistance, Nicolae Ceausescu, Communism, Cult of Personality, political.*

Introduction

From the perspective of Western observers, the end of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime represented a surprising and unexpected evolution. In the context of the events that took place in other countries of the former Soviet bloc during the year of 1989, the removal of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his leading team in December 1989 was not a surprise in

itself. What was striking in the Romanian case was the population's virulent contestation of the regime and its leader, and how they chose to act against them. This was because, despite the material deprivations population had to cope with during the 1980s, most of them seemed to have chosen the path of compromise and subordination to Ceaușescu's regime. Thus, with the exception of a few news about instances of Romanian intellectuals protesting against the policies and measures initiated by the communist government in Bucharest, the information which reached the West about Romania in the 1980s emphasized the apathy and the lack of any reaction from the population to the internal political and economic situation. Moreover, the Romanians' participation in large demonstrations organized with the purpose of bringing a public homage to Nicolae Ceaușescu completed the picture of society's acceptance and subordination to his leadership.

Using the documents of the former Securitate as a starting point, this article aims to challenge the unanimously accepted opinion of the complete subordination of the population to the Romanian communist regime. To this end, I intend to look at how some of the Romanians positioned themselves in relation to Ceaușescu's cult of personality. Using James C. Scott's perspective of *everyday resistance* to analyze the forms of public opposition to the public homage paid to the Romanian communist leader, I argue that individual and collective actions directed against his cult of personality, absent from official recollections of the past, did actually take place. Analyzing the *everyday resistance* of the population to Ceaușescu's cult of personality will highlight the gradual erosion of his political legitimacy, eventually throwing new light on the reasons which ignited the population's opposition to the Romanian communist regime in December 1989.

Defining Resistance and Everyday Resistance

Generally speaking, *resistance* implies an oppositional attitude translated in the refusal of accepting or subduing to something or someone. Analysed from the standpoint of people's relation with their authoritarian and oppressive regimes, the concept of *resistance* has been approached from different perspectives.

Violent or armed resistance deployed against a foreign power has been analysed in very diverse contexts from the oppositional actions aiming the Nazi occupation in Europe during the Second World War to

the civil war in China, military conflicts in Korea, Vietnam or Afghanistan. In all these cases, organized groups used bombings, kidnappings, assassination attempts or sabotages against a foreign regime, an occupation force or for preventing the rise to power of a certain political party.¹

On the other hand, *non-violent* or *civil resistance* employs organized and sometimes illegal forms of action against a political regime or party, a specific policy or decision-making. Consequently, civil resistance used protests, petitions, strikes, boycotts etc. to express opposition against colonialism, foreign powers of occupation, military *coup d'etats*, dictatorial regimes, racial, religious, gender discriminations or for defending human rights.² Civil resistance has also targeted democratic regimes in relation with preserving the constitutional order, regional autonomy, protecting the rights of national minorities or environment or protesting against a state's involvement in a military conflict.³

This analytical perspective, focusing only on organized forms of resistance, leads to a one-sided reading and understanding of the relation between the state and its population. In this respect, the power relations are accepted by default and contested only in open and direct

¹ See, for example, Bob Moore, *Resistance in Western Europe*, (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Roger D. Peterson, *Resistance and Rebellion. Lessons from Eastern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Raymond Aubrac, Lucie Aubrac, *The French Resistance, 1940-1944*, (Hazan, 1997); Terry Crowdy, *French Resistance Fighter: France's Secret Army*, (Osprey Publishing, 2007); Marcia Kurapovna, *Shadows on the Mountain: The Allies, the Resistance, and the Rivalries that Doomed WWII Yugoslavia*, (Wiley, 2010); Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich, Bavaria 1933-45*, (Oxford University Press, 2002); Peter Hoffman, *The History of the German Resistance: 1933-1945*, (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001); Yves Chevrier, *Mao and the Chinese Revolution*, (Gloucestershire: Arris Books, 2004); Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the Twentieth Century World. A Concise History*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010); Peter Calvoceossi, *Politica mondială după 1945*, (Bucharest: Editura Allfa, 2000); Henry Kissinger, *Diplomația*, (Bucharest: Editura ALL, 2007).

² See Adam Roberts, Timothy Garton Ash (eds.), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics. The Experience of Nonviolent Action from Gandhi to the Present*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Adam Roberts, 'Civil Resistance to Military Coups' in *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 12, nr. 1 (1975), pp. 19-36; Roger Bruns, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, (Green Press, 2006).

³ Adam Roberts, „Introduction” în Adam Roberts, Timothy Garton Ash (eds), *Civil Resistance and Power Politics*, pp. 2-3; Erica Chenoweth, Maria J. Stephan, *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*, (Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 6-13; Michael J. Nojeim, *Gandhi and King. The Power of Nonviolent Resistance*, (Praeger Publishers, 2004).

acts of protest. However, the low number of such events prompted discussions and analyses about the religious, cultural and political reasons that could have explained why people did not react to the domination imposed by the political power.

At the beginning of the 1990s, a series of anthropological studies on the colonial and post-colonial rural societies brought about the existence of forms of everyday resistance of the population towards the political and economical authority. Consequently, from James C. Scott's point of view, *the everyday resistance* represents the main means of opposition against power and domination that characterize the behaviour and the cultural practices of subordinated groups.⁴

The concept of *everyday resistance* and Michel Foucault's perspective on power as an everyday and socialized phenomenon has fundamentally redefined the understanding of resistance and its ways of expression. Consequently, the power/domination becomes the focal point of numerous and diverse contestations and indirect negotiations within the realm of social relations. These complicated webs of power and resistance workings are always interwoven with and mutually constitutive of one another.⁵

The revisionist school has approached the subject of *everyday resistance* in its drive of questioning the use of the totalitarian model for studying the interwar Soviet regime. One of its representatives, Lynne Viola, sets two main types of resistance. According to her, the *active resistance* is the most clear-cut type of resistance and it may include demonstrations and protest meetings, riots, rebellions, assaults, assassinations, protest letters, etc. 'An endemic and deeply rooted behaviour of subaltern classes', the *passive resistance* comprises the forms

⁴ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Douglas Haynes, Gyan Prakash, 'Introduction: The Entanglements of Power and Resistance' in Douglas Haynes, Gyan Prakash (ed.), *Contesting Power: Resistance and Everyday Social Relations in South Asian Society and History*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 1-2.

⁵ Steve Pile, 'Introduction' in Steve Pile, Michael Keith (eds.), *Geographies of Resistance*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 1-30; Joanne P. Sharp, Paul Routledge, Chris Philo, Ronan Paddison, 'Entanglements of Power. Geographies of Domination/Resistance' in Joanne P. Sharp, Paul Routledge, Chris Philo, Ronan Paddison, *Entanglements of Power. Geographies of Domination/Resistance*, (New York: Routledge, 2005).

of everyday resistance initially identified by James C. Scott, such as foot dragging, negligence, theft, feigned ignorance, dissimulation, false compliance. Also, Lynne Viola considers that it is more appropriate to speak of *resistances* or *acts of resistance* instead of resistance alone. That is because acts of resistance are influenced by and mirror the complexities of the societies in which they have emerged. Consequently, they reflect the existing social and political divisions and thus identify the conflicting forces present within the respective society. Moreover, Lynne Viola mentions that religious, national, gender or class determinants and also the proximity and threat of power forces shape the contours of resistance and its language.⁶

In her study about everyday life in the Soviet Union in 1930s, Sheila Fitzpatrick describes the behaviour and survival strategies employed by people to cope with the existing social and political conditions. She identifies the forms of *passive resistance* (such as rumours, gossip, jokes, political discussions, etc.) used by the subordinated groups to express their dissatisfaction with the harsh economic situation.⁷

Also, in the introduction to the English edition of the book *Sedition. Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev*, Sheila Fitzpatrick uses the term of *sedition* (the English translation for the Russian word *kramola*) to identify the various forms of everyday resistance in the post-war Soviet Union. Although she borrows the expression of *everyday resistance* from James C. Scott, she acknowledges that his theoretical model needs further amendments in order to fully reflect the nature of the Soviet daily resistance. Within the context of the post-war Soviet Union, the anti-Soviet speech and actions were not meant to remain hidden from the power holders or to be directed only at other subalterns as it was in the case of James C. Scott's *hidden transcripts*. On the contrary, given the nature of the subaltern conservation (anonymous letters denouncing the regime's misdeeds, the distribution of leaflets, the dropping of abusive notes to the authorities in the ballot boxes at election time, defacement or mockery of portraits and statues of leaders etc.), it was obvious that its initiators wanted the

⁶ Lynne Viola, 'Introduction' and 'Popular Resistance in the Stalinist 1930s. Soliloquy of a Devil's Advocate' in Lynne Viola (ed.), *Contending with Stalinism. Soviet Power and Popular Resistance in the 1930s*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), pp. 1-14 și pp. 18-20.

⁷ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism. Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

power holders to listen to their anti-Soviet speech. Hence, Sheila Fitzpatrick asserts that *kramola* represented the only political acts through which Soviet citizens could express or take a stand about political affairs as the Soviet democracy allowed only a simulated participation to the political decision-making. Also, the author makes an important semantic distinction between the different acts of resistance according to the social position of those involved in them. Consequently, *dissidence* was the domain of intellectuals while *popular sedition* was an activity appealing more to lower urban classes.⁸

By the same token, Kerry Kathleen Riley analyzes the non-violent yet subversive means by which citizens express at first indirectly and later on directly their opposition to the East German Communist regime, tracing the progressive evolution of what she identifies as *everyday subversion*. Then, she examines the long-term contribution of private forms of resistance (the sharing of political jokes) and of the 'quasi-public' ones (church-sponsored events, small group discussions or work, peace prayers, etc.) to the peaceful demise of the communist rule in East Germany in 1989. Moreover, in regard to the essentially interactional nature of the forms of *everyday subversion*, Riley claims that they function as *rhetorical antidotes* by which people counteracted the ills of living in a communist regime.⁹

Everyday Resistance and Nicolae Ceaușescu's Cult of Personality

In line with the previously mentioned works, my paper will analyze the Romanians' *everyday resistance* to Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality. Although retaining the basic meaning of James C Scott's *everyday resistance*, I will draw my own definition of the *everyday resistance* in the the particular case of Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality and based on Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner's definition of resistance.¹⁰

⁸ Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Popular Sediton in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union' in Vladimir A. Kozlov, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Sergei V. Mironenko, *Sedition. Everyday Resistance in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), pp. 1-24.

⁹ Kerry Kathleen Riley, *Everyday Subversion. From Joking to Revolting in the German Democratic Republic*, (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Jocelyn A. Hollander, Rachel L. Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing Resistance', in *Sociological Forum* 19 (2004), no. 4, pp. 533-554.

In James C. Scott's scheme, Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality represents a form of domination that triggers and becomes the target of the common people's daily protest. In this case, domination receives a broader definition and it refers to the omnipresence of Ceaușescu's cult of personality in the Romanians' everyday life. This pervasive presence was mainly achieved through the total takeover of the mass media by the laudatory works dedicated to the Romanian communist leader. Moreover, the forced participation of the population to an increasing number of public events (such as parades, festivities) counted as another means for ensuring the presence of Ceaușescu's cult of personality in people's lives.

Jocelyn A. Hollander and Rachel L. Einwohner set four characteristics, which in their view, are essential for defining *resistance*: action, opposition, visibility and intention.¹¹ Here, resistance implies a daily active behaviour (verbal, cognitive or physical) of the people that articulates their protest or opposition towards Ceaușescu's cult of personality. Their opposition element is concealed and expressed through more or less ordinary actions. In this regard, I have identified several forms of everyday resistance against Ceaușescu's public adulation. They include discussions and comments on political themes, individual or collective actions against images depicting the Romanian communist leader, editing and distributing of 'writings with hateful content' and political jokes. Their analysis will serve two purposes: it justifies their labelling as everyday forms of resistance to the cult of personality and also show how their content validates such a categorization.

The visibility of the *everyday resistance* raises several critical issues worthy of exploration. According to James C. Scott, all forms of resistance create what he calls *hidden transcripts*, i.e. acts, behaviours and attitudes the subordinated groups use to express their criticism of power or its holders. But this criticism was meant to remain hidden from the official representatives as it involved an interpretation of formal rules, whose significance and existence was known only to the subordinates. This helped them to avoid a direct hostile reaction from those affected by the hidden criticism.¹² Some forms of everyday resistance (such as the creation and distribution of leaflets, the vandalizing of Ceaușescu's portraits) underline the intention of their initiators to force the Romanian authorities listen to their protest. Also, as I will show below, the

¹¹ Jocelyn A. Hollander, Rachel L. Einwohner, 'Conceptualizing Resistance', pp. 538-544.

¹² James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. XI-XII, 2-26.

Securitate knew about and took measures against those involved in everyday resistance.

In this context, a new issue is raised that does not exclusively concern the visibility of the everyday resistance. It also considers the identity of those involved in labelling certain actions as hostile to Ceaușescu's cult of personality, namely the former Romanian secret police, the Securitate, or persons who participated in such actions. The fact that my identification of the main acts of everyday resistance is based on information provided by the Securitate's documents may raise doubts about the veracity of such labelling. In this respect, one might invoke the argument that the Securitate had arbitrarily created this everyday resistance or that it had vested interests in identifying opponents of the regime and its leader.

As Lynne Viola mentions, popular resistance depends on the state for its existence. That is because its institutions (in my case the Securitate) classified certain events, acts, practices or categories of actions as hostile to its own interests. In addition, the resistance grows within and against the political, social and cultural parameters set out by the state.¹³ Even though the everyday or popular resistance owns its existence to the state, assessing its oppositional character is a more complex issue. It goes beyond the 'ideological imprimatur'¹⁴ and its categorization of popular moods according to 'the Marxist laws of social order' to consider the general context in which resistance occurs and also its source or target. Accordingly, if the specific manifestations of the everyday resistance matched the regime's fears of instability in connection with the above mentioned issues, this dictated whether a particular action was ignored or classified as an opposition.¹⁵ As I will show below, the Securitate's documents specifically recorded the 'hostile' content of people's everyday resistance in relation with two particular developments that would contribute to the final demise of the Romanian communist regime in December: the failure of the economic policy and the mass blaming on Nicolae Ceaușescu for the generalized shortage of food and consumer goods the population had to deal with during the 1980s.

Besides the Securitate, the everyday resistance had the same meaning for those who, in a way or another, came into contact with the

¹³ Lynne Viola, 'Popular resistance in the Stalinist 1930s. Soliloquy of a Devil's Advocate', pp. 17-43.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 25, 32-33.

secret police. Depending on the case, they were either the Securitate's informers who gave details about the persons and their everyday acts of resistance or those who took precautions before performing any 'hostile' actions directed against the Romanian regime and its leader.

The last element that must be taken into consideration when defining the everyday resistance is the intention behind these acts of resistance. As I will show below, the forms of everyday of resistance resumed the arguments provided by the party propaganda about Ceaușescu's political activity and ascribed them a new meaning that was contrary to the one provided through official channels. This involved an intellectual effort from those who chose to express in such a manner their disagreement to Ceaușescu's cult of personality, and implicitly a recognition of the 'hostile, hateful' character of their actions.

Just as Sheila Fitzpatrick¹⁶ and James C. Scott¹⁷ I consider the everyday forms of resistance as the only genuine political acts through which citizens could express their opinion in matters of home and foreign policy. In my case, the subject on which they pronounced themselves was the results of the leadership of Nicolae Ceaușescu, as the Romanian socialist democracy offered no opportunity of expressing different views from the official ones.

The forms of everyday resistance against Ceaușescu's cult of personality are also a manifestation of what Kerry Kathleen Riley identified as *everyday subversion*.¹⁸ They helped to the gradual delegitimization of his regime and they could also explain its unanimous public contestation in December 1989. In this sense, they stressed the discrepancy between what official propaganda declared about the exceptional achievements of Ceaușescu's leadership and the grim reality of his activity.

Why Nicolae Ceaușescu's Cult of Personality?

Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality represents a very good subject for my analysis of everyday resistance not only because of its centrality to the Romanian regime, but also because it links Ceaușescu to certain

¹⁶ Sheila Fitzpatrick, 'Popular Sedition in the Post-Stalin Soviet Union', pp. 1-24, 9.

¹⁷ For James C. Scott, the forms of everyday resistance represent the main form of political participation of the subordinated ones or what he calls *infrapolitics*. See James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp. XIII, 200-201.

¹⁸ Kerry Kathleen Riley, *Everyday Subversion*.

unfavourable political developments that favoured the emergence of oppositional actions against him.

The cult of personality became the main feature of Nicolae Ceaușescu's regime especially during the last decade of its existence. Marry Ellen Fischer relates this development to a change in the economic policy that prioritized for the first time directly the surviving of the heavy industry at the expense of the population's consumption and welfare. In this context, the cult of personality aimed at creating the image of an 'idol' for the Romanian leader 'an image that could mobilize the popular support that the goals of the regime and the personality of Ceaușescu could not produce'.¹⁹

Given the party control over the entire Romanian mass media, the laudatory comments about Nicolae Ceaușescu's activity and political biography were the only pieces of information that reached Romanians through the official channels. Thus, they informed the Romanians about Ceaușescu's leadership and also legitimized the gap between what people read, saw and heard about this subject and the realities of their everyday life in communist Romania. Moreover, any references people made about Nicolae Ceaușescu resumed or contested the official laudatory pronouncements about him that overflowed the entire Romanian mass media.

The development of the cult of personality also identified Nicolae Ceaușescu as the only decision-maker on matters concerning both the internal and external policy of the country. Thus, for most Romanians, he became the only responsible for the bad economic decisions that not only ruined the national economy but also worsened the living standards at unprecedented level.

The examination of everyday resistance will identify and analyze the main types of oppositional actions employed by the Romanians against the overwhelming presence in their life of Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality. These are the discussions or comments on political issues, individual or collective actions directed against the images of Nicolae Ceaușescu, the editing and the distribution of 'hostile' writings and last but not least, the political jokes. In each case, I will highlight the reasons for considering them as means of everyday resistance and

¹⁹ Marry Ellen Fischer, 'Idol or Leader? The Origins and Future of the Ceausescu Cult', in Daniel N. Nelson (ed.), *Romania in the 1980s*, (Boulder: 1981), pp. 117-141, 118-119, 126- 127.

exemplify their content in different contexts using the examples provided by the Securitate documents and other sources (such as Radio Free Europe's documentary papers or interviews).

As I will show below, people engaged in various forms of everyday resistance to Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality mainly due to hardships and generalized poverty that resulted from the radical change in the Romanian economic policy. Ceaușescu's decision to pay the country's external debt by prohibiting any imports and exporting any type of sellable goods, especially food, and his willingness to support the functioning of the 'energophagic' industry at all costs affected the Romanians' quality of life throughout the 1980s. Thus, people not only faced a shortage of basic foods, but also a severe rationalization of domestic consumption of electricity and heat which was felt more acutely during winter. Moreover, the intensification of Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality in the 1980s and the Romanian mass media insistence on presenting his leadership as a 'Golden Age' of prosperity and economic advancement linked up him and his work to the economic collapse of the Romanian communist regime and thus encouraged people's everyday resistance against him and his cult of personality.

Everyday forms of resistance against Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality

Discussions and comments on political issues

Discussions and comments on political issues came to the attention of the Securitate due to their 'hostile' or 'hateful' content against the Romanian communist regime and its leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu. My analysis is based on the weekly or monthly activity reports submitted by local offices of the Securitate that recorded the unusual events taking place within a county. They did not actually provide details on the content of the expressions that the Securitate considered being 'hostile' or 'hateful', and references to Nicolae Ceaușescu were disguised under general designations such as 'the superior leadership of the party and the state' or 'high political figures of the party and the state'.²⁰

²⁰ CNSAS (The National Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives), Documentary Fund, file 12639 vol. 3, folio 7; file 394, folio 41.

Consequently, the Securitate's documents identified people who 'expressed scurrilous and slanderous' remarks, who professed 'slander and serious injury', 'made biased statements' and 'depreciative' assertions, who 'offensively' addressed 'to high political figures of the party and the state' or to 'our party's and state's leadership'. In this respect, I would like to mention the case of a young man from the city of Blaj, Alba County, who 'amid complaints of a personal nature' 'addressed scurrilous and slanderous remarks towards the high political figures of the party and the state'.²¹

Although they did not elaborate on the content of 'hateful' or defamatory speech directed at Nicolae Ceaușescu, the Securitate's documents pointed out that the shortcomings in domestic supply in the 1980s prompted such a reaction on a part of the Romanian population. Moreover, given his undisputable position as both the leader of the party and state, many people directly blamed Ceaușescu for the shortages they had to deal with in their everyday life. As an example, a professor of chemistry from Bacău, who 'under the influence of reactionary radio broadcasts made denigrating comments about the socio-economic realities in Romania, against a person who had an important function in the line of the state whom he blamed for the country's economic situation'.²²

Exasperated by the prospect of extended food and consumer good shortages, some people believed that the overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu from his position of Secretary General at the XIVth Congress of the RCP in November 1989 would be the only solution to solve the internal economic crisis. Thus, a citizen thought that 'some persons in the party's and state's leadership even if they were re-elected should retire and not bother the world',²³ while a chemical engineer from Baia de Arieș, a party member, stated that public supply might improve 'if the workers would openly express their dissatisfaction through street actions. He also said that he would have participated in such actions even if he would have lost his life, knowing that he left a better life to those who remained after him'.²⁴

²¹ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 330 vol. 1, folio 37 v.

²² CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 8833 vol. 23, folio 315 v.

²³ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 8833 vol. 24, folio 191 f.

²⁴ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 394, folio 180 v.

The people's comments also emphasized the gap between the reality marked by shortages of supply of the internal market and narratives about the abundance and prosperity that overflowed the official media and the party leader's speeches. They underlined that the political education could not compensate or alleviate the difficulties caused by the low level of welfare. Thus, Ceaușescu's speech at the Congress of the Socialist Culture and Education at the end of the 1970s had been received and interpreted in the context of scarce food supply. A citizen of Iași stated that '... the words spoken by the head of state were only partly true, the words are somewhat nice, but only the words get to us, because in practice we get nothing. There it says that heaven will descend on earth, but in reality one cannot find a piece of meat. One wastes his spare time only by looking for some food, so the education that they want to offer us does not correspond to our needs, as they ask each one of us to be conscious, but he does not take into account that consciousness passes through the stomach'.²⁵ Much more bluntly, another citizen made some injurious comments about Nicolae Ceaușescu 'saying that he is not capable to run a country, that he was a shoemaker...that he issues all sorts of laws that are not good and are not being applied, that he indebted the country...and that there is nothing to be found on the market'.²⁶ The comment referred to the previous profession of the Romanian communist leader – a shoemaker. Because such a profession was not considered as proper for a leader of a workers' party, this detail was omitted from his official biographies but it could not be erased from the Romanians' memory as I will also show below.

The overflow of laudatory comments on the media about Nicolae Ceaușescu sparked negative comments, too. In the context of the celebrations dedicated to the last Congress of the RCP, a teacher from Sălaj County stated the following: 'There was too much propaganda made for re-electing the former leadership at the XIVth Congress. On the radio and the television they should broadcast something else because people got sick and it makes them comment negatively the social order in our country. The workers and other working people need to relax and not only see the face of the president painted in warm colours'.²⁷

²⁵ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13314 vol. 19, folios 221 f, 223.

²⁶ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, File 13787 vol. 13, folio 101 f-v.

²⁷ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, File 8833 vol. 24, folio 219 f.

The fact that such discussions were the only real political exercise of the Romanian citizens and that they involved a series of personal risks is confirmed by the following testimony: 'In those days, if someone did politics, it was only done silently, so you wouldn't have had the courage to say what you thought, because you did not know to whom you said it. So if you did not know well the individual you were talking to, you would have not had the courage to speak (...) Because you did not know if he would turn you in or who would listen to you. Or, if you were talking to someone on the street, you looked to the left and to the right, you looked forwards and backwards'.²⁸

The understanding of discussions and comments on political issues as means of people's everyday resistance considers not only the Securitate's interpretation in this regard but also their meanings. The examples mentioned in the documents show that at least some Romanians had and expressed a different point of view that contradicted the laudatory arguments provided by the party propaganda about Ceaușescu's leadership.

Individual and collective actions against images depicting Nicolae Ceaușescu

The Securitate's documents mentioned individual and collective actions directed against pictures and portraits of the Romanian leader. Similar to the case of the discussions or comments about political topics, the destruction or mishandling of Ceaușescu's images testified some profound dissatisfaction against his leadership. The main reason behind the popular discontentment was again related to Ceaușescu's bad economic decisions and their negative effects on the Romanians' living standard. Moreover, his pictures became the target of people's frustrations not only due to their omnipresence in the public spaces (especially official buildings) but also because of their massive use in promoting his cult of personality.

One way of mishandling the Romanian leader's official images was to scribble them. The Securitate noticed that on the cover of the *Cinema* magazine in January 1989, two young men wrote on the faces of the Romanian presidential couple 'ox and cow' as an expression of their

²⁸ LXXX. *Mărturii orale. Anii' 80 și bucureștenii*, (Bucharest: 2003), p. 170-Mariana Chiriță.

personal discontent towards the political and economic situation in Romania.²⁹

Also Radio Free Europe introduced to their Romanian listeners other two cases of improper treatment of Ceaușescu's image. One of its correspondents reported a photograph of Nicolae Ceaușescu on the shame panels of the militia from Sibiu and Brașov accompanied by the following evocative statement: 'He stole our bread'.³⁰ Another case reported not only by the Radio Free Europe but also by the international press was the one of Ion Bugar. In 1983 he received a ten-year sentence for driving in the centre of Bucharest on a car with the portrait of the Romanian communist leader with the title: 'We do not want you, executioner!'.³¹

Setting fire to the Romanian communist leader's images also expressed the population's feelings of hatred towards him. For example, the Alba county's office of the Securitate discovered a painting of Nicolae Ceaușescu partially destroyed by fire among other propaganda means stored in a school yard at the end of a demonstration organized on the occasion of 23rd August 1989 in Alba Iulia.³² Two peasants from the Mălăești village, Prahova County were arrested and jailed for allegedly burning several volumes of Ceaușescu's speeches (invariably having his portrait on the cover or after the cover page) which were displayed in the centre of Ploiesti, Prahova county.³³

Moreover, mistreatment of Ceaușescu's portraits also happened in the more intimate space of the household. Because in the 1980s the newspapers invariably reproduced on the front page a photographic

²⁹ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 533, folio 32.

³⁰ Radio Free Europe, Romanian Broadcasting Department, Vlad Georgescu, Radio Free Europe Listeners' Mail no. 27, 8 August 1982, OSA Archivum, HU OSA 300-6-3 Box 13, Letters and Appeals from Romania 1982-1983.

³¹ Vladimir Socor, 'Known Prisoners of Conscience in Romania: An Annotated Checklist', Radio Free Europe Research, RAD Background Report (Romania), 7 august 1987, OSA Archivum, HU OSA 300-60-3 Box 18, Opposition, 1988-1989; Herma Kennel, *Radu Filipescu: jogging cu Securitatea*, (Iași: Polirom, 2009), p. 115.

³² CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 394, folio 85.

³³ Vladimir Socor, 'Known Prisoners of Conscience in Romania: An Annotated Checklist', Radio Free Europe Research, RAD Background Report (Romania), 7 august 1987, OSA Archivum, HU OSA 300-60-3 Box 18, Opposition, 1988-1989; Radio Free Europe, Romanian Broadcasting Department, Vlad Georgescu, Radio Free Europe Editorial no. 190, 30 August 1986, OSA Archivum, HU OSA 300-60-1 Box 431 Police and Security 1973-1987.

material of Nicolae Ceaușescu, they became the target of people's feelings of hatred and frustration towards him. The following testimony is an revelatory example of such a behaviour: 'She did very well the other day, my aunt Graziela, when she came into the yard to take the newspaper from the mailman, she smiled, went into house, locked the door, pulled the blinds, made the newspaper small pieces, trampled it and then she took an Extraveral'.³⁴

Creating and distributing 'writings with hateful content'

Another form of everyday resistance to Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality identified in the documents of the former Securitate is the category of 'writings with hateful content'. It included three main types of documents: letters, scraps of paper or leaflets and inscriptions. As in the other cases of everyday resistance, the dominant theme in relation to Ceaușescu is focused on uttering invectives, especially in the context of the severe lack of basic products for consumption. Furthermore, the analysis of the Securitate's documents and private indicated that people considered Ceaușescu's political decisions as the main cause of the general and unprecedented deterioration of their living standards.

The largest number of such 'hostile writings' were the *letters*. This is because their writing and sending decreased, at least in theory, the risk that their authors were to be identified or be surprised in the act by the state authorities.

The Securitate's documents mentioned the case of a retired man from Dâmbovița County. He was identified because he drafted and sent in 1982 'two anonymous letters with content that insults and slanders the policy of the state and personalities from the leadership of the party'.³⁵ Another case was that of a worker from Gorj County who mailed to the Romanian National Radiotelevision an anonymous letter 'in which he denigrated the home and foreign policy of our state, using defamatory expressions when referring to the higher leaders of the party and state'.³⁶

³⁴ LXXX. *Mărturii orale. Anii' 80 și bucureștenii*, pp. 169-170-Speranța Rădulescu, ethnomusicologist. Extraveral is a Romanian drug used to calm nervousness and anxiety.

³⁵ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13765 vol. 16, folio 93 v.

³⁶ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13807 vol. 17, folio 200.

Fragments extracted from the private correspondence of individuals complete the picture of the scarcity in the ordinary people's everyday life. They mainly stressed the discrepancy between the images of abundance and prosperity of the 'Golden Age', as the leadership period of Nicolae Ceaușescu was characterized by the Romanian propaganda, and the reality of the everyday life of the simple man marked by a permanent crisis of food and other goods. Here, a woman from Sebeș, Alba County, wrote to an acquaintance in 1989 about how the electricity interruption affected her mood, therefore justifying the use of invectives against the leader of the RCP: 'From 16:30 he cuts off the electricity until 19:00, permanently, excluding Sundays. We sit for hours in the dark because they are no candles in stores or oil lamps ... Should you only listen how we cursed and bless you know who'.³⁷ A citizen of Zlatna, in the same County of Alba, in turn, described in a letter 'in an ironic tone-wag' the daily hardships which he had to face: 'I must confess with deep patriotism that I write to you at candlelight. We are being visited on a daily basis by the Power Outage, and with every breath I breathe out poetic steams. For some time those in charge of electricity have been upset with us and they create an hibernation ambiance ... Anyway, the Golden Age imposes its mark...'.³⁸

A second category of 'writings with hateful content' was the one of the so-called *scraps* or leaflets. These were disseminated by the authors in various ways. In this case as well, the documents issued by the Securitate did not provide details on the content of the text found on the scraps of paper, resuming only to assessing it as 'biased' and 'denigrative'.

On the occasion of the election of deputies in the Olt County, a retired man came to the attention of the Securitate for placing in the ballot box one scrap 'with hostile content with insults and slanders against the state's leadership'.³⁹ Again, a student from the 9th grade of an evening school in Bacău managed to distribute in the mailboxes of some citizens a number of 33 scraps 'having a threatening and injurious content, aimed at people who held important functions in the line of state...'. Consequently, she was investigated for her conduct by the Securitate.⁴⁰

³⁷ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 394, folio 146 f.

³⁸ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13765 vol. 16, folio 145 v.

³⁹ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13765 vol. 16, folio 122.

⁴⁰ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13807 vol. 17, folio 172 f-v.

The only case that I have identified in which the content of the scraps was reproduced entirely in the documents of the Securitate's investigative bodies was reported in late November 1989, in Alba Iulia. On an electric pole on a main street of the town, at a height of 1.80 m, someone glued a 17 x 12 cm poster made of a paper sheet from a notebook with squares. It contained 6 rows of writing, catalogued by those involved in the investigation of the events as having an 'inappropriate content'. The text on the scrap was reproduced in capitals and consisted of a series of slogans against the Romanian communist leader and his regime:

'Down with Ceaușescu! Down with the regime!
We want justice not Congresses
We want freedom! Down *the bosses*
That's enough! No more re-election!
We want food!
Down with the thieves!'⁴¹

This succession of slogans expressed the author's protest against the re-election of Nicolae Ceaușescu at the last party forum in November 1989. By mentioning the lack of freedom, social justice and, last but not least, food, the anonymous protester demanded the removal of the Romanian communist leader as well as of other smaller party 'leaders'. Labelling them as 'thieves' was the reaction to the material benefits they enjoyed constantly while most people had to endure strict rationalization of food consumption, electricity and heat.

Although the documents of the Securitate mentioned the emergence of *inscriptions* with 'hateful content'⁴² due to the scarce information about their content one can't confirm that they refer to Nicolae Ceaușescu and his cult of personality. However, the secondary literature records the case of a group of three young men from the village of Băleni, Dâmbovița County (Florian Vlăsceanu, George Paul, Victor Totu). On the night of 22 August 1983, they have changed the text of the slogan, painted in white on the asphalt of one of the main arteries from Târgoviște, from *Long live Ceaușescu!* to *Down with Ceaușescu!*. For their deed, the three young men were sentenced to six, seven and eight years of imprisonment.⁴³

⁴¹ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 530 vol. 2, folio 52-53 f-v.

⁴² CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13314, vol. 22, f. 46-49; file 13314, vol. 24, f. 57-58 f-v; file 17444, f. 188-190.

⁴³ Herma Kennel, *Radu Filipescu: jogging cu Securitatea*, p. 141; Vladimir Socor, 'Known Prisoners of Conscience in Romania: An Annotated Checklist', Radio Free

Political Jokes

The study of everyday life in the countries of the former Eastern bloc underlined the existence of numerous anti-regime jokes. Although most of the analyses acknowledge the role of jokes in informing a specific relation between the people and the political power, they differ in their understanding about the nature of this relation. Some authors denied the oppositional character of the jokes by pointing out that the communist regimes allowed their existence as a relief panacea for the frustrations or negative feelings of the population. In this case, the jokes showed how people accommodated to the regime and used them to deal with 'the paradoxes and discontinuities' characterizing their daily existence.⁴⁴

On the other hand, some scholars see political jokes as *rhetorical antidotes* (Kerry Kathleen Rilley), as form of *alternative popular culture* (Dana Niculescu-Grosso) or as a *thermometer* of the society (Christie Davies). Thus, they essentially interpret political jokes as an alternative way of expressing criticism towards the political power taking place between two moments of overt and active opposition to it. Although humour was not the most courageous anti-regime activity, it engaged people in a sort of moral protest against it. In the course of time, this daily and largely anonymous protest gradually alienated people from the political power and thus eased the transition to an open popular resistance movement.⁴⁵

My understanding of political jokes places them among the means of the Romanians' everyday resistance to Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult of personality. In addition to numerous references in the Securitate's documents about individuals or groups of individuals who engaged themselves in disseminating jokes on political issues, there are also other arguments that emphasized their oppositional character. Thus, a thematic analysis points out that political jokes provided a critical approach to Nicolae Ceaușescu's leadership in an unsophisticated

Europe Research, RAD Background Report (Romania), 7 august 1987, OSA Archivum, HU OSA 300-60-3 Box 18, Opposition, 1988-1989.

⁴⁴ Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More. The Last Soviet Generation*, (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 277-281.

⁴⁵ Kerry Kathleen Rilley, *Everyday Subversion*, pp. 22, 58, 65; Dana Niculescu-Grosso, *Bancurile politice în țările socialismului real. Studiu demologic*, Editura Fundației Culturale Române, București, 1999, pp. 11-90. Christie Davies, „Humour and Protest: Jokes under Communism” în *IRSH* 52 (2007) DOI: 10.1017/S00208590070003252.

manner, accessible to a large audience in a way that side-stepped the official censorship. Moreover, the political jokes stressed the discrepancy between the results of Ceaușescu's work popularized by the party propaganda and hardships of his regime to which people were subject. Also, it shall be recalled that telling jokes implied the risk of being reported to the Securitate and being consequently punished.

In spite of this probable threat, in 1980s Romania political jokes have become a 'national sport' involving representatives from all the walks of life (intellectuals, workers, peasants, students, soldiers, policemen, Securitate officers) and of all ages. The subversive potential of the jokes, as well as their omnipresence in the everyday life of the simple citizens is stated in the following testimony: 'The only forms of rebellion were the jokes. The jokes were incredible (...) there were countless jokes. That was the ultimate form [of revolt, n.a.]'.⁴⁶

According to a former Securitate Colonel, the communist authorities 'were genuinely interested in jokes which touched upon issues such as the unavailability of basic products and the censorship of television programmes because this kind of jokes functioned as indicators for the spirit of the people'.⁴⁷ The archival documents also confirmed the concern of this institution for the dissemination of jokes in general and of those cracked at the expense of the Romanian leader in particular. Thus, a group of people have been reported in official documents of the Alba County's Inspectorate for Security for 'telling slanderous jokes with defamatory content against some leading figures from the leadership of our state',⁴⁸ while a young man from Vrancea County, brought to the attention of the Securitate because in his circle of friends, insisted to complete the insults against the 'leader of the country' with 'a joke with political nuance affecting the leading figure of the state'.⁴⁹ Also, some people were recorded not only because of their contribution to the dissemination of jokes, but also to their creation. In

⁴⁶ Interview with Felicia Colda, librarian, 46 years old, Alba Iulia, 25th October 2012. The personal archive of the author.

⁴⁷ Ben Lewis, *Hammer and Tickle – The Film*, Alegria Productions, Bergman Pictures, MPI, RWA, 2006 apud. Dumitru-Alin Savu, 'Humour and Politics in Communist Romania, Graduate College Thesis', University of Bucharest, 2012, p. 40.

⁴⁸ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 336, folio 150 f

⁴⁹ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13314 vol. 20, folio 257.

this respect, I mention here the case of a IMGB⁵⁰ foreman, whom the Securitate's papers described as having a very friendly nature, and whom 'easily engages in conversation and creates all sorts of jokes of bad taste addressing inclusively the high leaders of the party with insults and serious injurious comments'.⁵¹

A recurring theme of political jokes about Nicolae Ceaușescu identifies his leadership as the main cause of all kinds of deprivations and restrictions the Romanian citizens had to deal with in the everyday life of Communist Romania. Thus, a joke from the fall of 1985 stated that 'Ceaușescu had turned Romania into a country of believers because *we fast seven days a week; we light the candles every evening and go on Sundays to the service*'.⁵² This humorous composition identifies the most relevant negative consequences of Nicolae Ceaușescu's decisions in the field of economics, namely the lack of food, electricity and extending the weekly working schedule in some key sectors of the Romanian economy. Nonsense owns the scene here as the first part of the joke refers to the transformation of Romania into a nation of believers which is paradoxical given the atheistic orientation of the communist regime. The following subordinated statements bring additional explanations concerning the ways in which faith manifested and which in the context of the 1980s Romania thus summarizing the main problems that people had to face. Then, the allusion to the permanent fast refers to the lack of basic food products (meat, milk, eggs) and lighting the candles as part of the Christian ritual, is indicated as an important source for illuminating the houses in the conditions of the rationalization of domestic electricity consumption. However, this joke stresses the double meaning of the word *service*, which in Romanian has a double meaning: both *job* and *religious service*. Thus, the Sunday service is turned into the work which the individual had to be permanently committed to while accomplishing the tasks that were assigned to him in the national effort to build the Romanian socialism.

Another theme exploited by the political jokes about Nicolae Ceaușescu was his lack of education. This was the side effect of the official 'polishing' of his biography by omitting all the references to his

⁵⁰ IMGB was an important factory of heavy machinery located in the Romanian capital, Bucharest.

⁵¹ CNSAS Archive, Documentary Fund, file 13807 vol. 17, folio 82.

⁵² Călin-Bogdan Ștefănescu, *Din bancurile politice ale românilor. 10 ani de umor negru românesc*, (Bucharest: 1991), p. 97.

initial profession, that of a cobbler. In addition, Ceaușescu's willingness to collect different academic titles might also have favoured the emergence of jokes about his low level of education.

In this context, the jokes either make reference to the former job of the Romanian Communist Party's leader or they build imaginary stories confirming his limited education. Thus, a political joke, which has seen different versions, has Ceaușescu or his wife as its main characters: Ceaușescu looks upset for not finding a particular pair of shoes, while Elena Ceaușescu during a visit boasts herself with a unique pair of shoes. The reason is that the shoes represented the MB thesis of the Romanian communist leader.⁵³

Other political jokes which also emphasized the low level of education of Nicolae Ceaușescu put him in the hypothetical situation of thinking whether he was the one who promulgated the law of gravity, of shopping for a swimsuit for honouring the invitation to the 'Swan Lake' and last but not least, of demonstrating not only his poor pronunciation of the Romanian language but also the massacre of its grammar.⁵⁴

The omnipresence of laudatory events dedicated to Nicolae Ceaușescu in the Romanian media and through these in the lives of the common people is beautifully captured in the following joke which has Bulă⁵⁵ as its main character:

'Bulă stays with a tin can in front of him and cannot decide whether to open it. Annoyed, his father snaps at him:

-Come on, Bula! I'm hungry! Are you waiting any longer to admire that can?!

-I'm not admiring it! I'm afraid to open it!

-Right! You are afraid to open it?

-Well, I'm afraid ... Don't you see how it is now: you turn on the radio, you encounter Ceaușescu, turn on the TV, you encounter Ceaușescu, open the newspaper, you encounter Ceaușescu ... God knows what we might find in this can! What if we'd be in trouble ..? ... '⁵⁶

⁵³ Călin-Bogdan Ștefănescu, *10 ani de umor negru românesc*, pp. 23, 65.

⁵⁴ Călin-Bogdan Ștefănescu, *10 ani de umor negru românesc*, pp. 28, 17, 56-57, 84.

⁵⁵ Bulă was the main character of the Romanian political jokes during the communist period. Sometimes naïve and stupid, sometimes intelligent and sly, he ridiculed directly and in a nonconformist way the communist system and its leader.

⁵⁶ Călin-Bogdan Ștefănescu, *10 ani de umor negru românesc*, p. 73.

Collected shortly after the birthday celebrations of Nicolae Ceaușescu in January 1983, the joke emphasizes the population's degree of saturation concerning everything involving the presence of the Romanian Communist leader in their daily life. The comic effect is caused by the behaviour of the main character who, recalling his former 'encounters' with Ceaușescu on the radio, TV or newspaper, was afraid of the punitive consequences that a new meeting could result in the paradoxical context of the opening of an ordinary can.

Moreover, another series of jokes stressed in a humorous manner the transformation of the national television into an instrument for promoting the RCP leader's cult of personality during the 1980s. For example, a joke mentioned that the main news program, 'telejurnalul', was to receive the name of 'ceaușeschiada'⁵⁷ referring to the fact that it focused only on the exhaustive presentation of recent internal and external activities of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Conclusion

By analyzing the reactions of a part of the population against Ceaușescu's cult of personality, my article aimed at providing a more detailed picture of its relations with the Romanian communist regime, subordination being only one of them. Using James C. Scott's perspective of *everyday resistance*, I have identified the existence of some opposition actions against the Romanian leader's cult of personality, such as the discussions or the comments on political issues, individual or collective actions directed against the images of Nicolae Ceaușescu, the editing and the distribution of hostile writings and last but not least, the political jokes.

The analysis of the examples concerning the main forms of everyday resistance towards the Romanian communist leader's cult of personality pointed out the existence of critical opinions of a part of the population against the content of the laudatory materials prepared by the party propaganda. Thus, the overall picture of Nicolae Ceaușescu resulting from content analysis of everyday forms of resistance to his cult of personality is that of an unpopular leader, illiterate, who due to his modest intellectual education drove Romania and its population towards a generalized economic crisis and impoverishment. In addition, the generalization of the celebratory message focused on highlighting

⁵⁷ Călin-Bogdan Ștefănescu, *10 ani de umor negru românesc*, p. 51.

the so-called exceptional results of the leadership of Nicolae Ceaușescu, in total disregard for the reality or the ability of people to understand the situation they found themselves in, contributed to the gradual erosion of its political legitimacy and to the virulence of the public opposition that ended his regime in 1989.

Battle for hegemony in the contemporary world: Civilizational Dispute in Historiography¹

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Abstract: *The issue of cultures or civilizations interacting has always obsessed historians and political analysts alike as most scholars believe it can help better understand international relations. The rise of global terrorism on the lines of religious fundamentalism has only served to strengthen the belief in the idea of a clash of civilizations. Yet as the historiographical analysis proposed here shall strive to demonstrate, defining such interactions is somewhat more difficult as it is necessary we take into consideration other elements as well, such as economic interests, commerce, and of course local and regional social developments. The paper will look at some of the most influential works written on the subject in an attempt to compare several theories regarding the rise of the West, a possible resurgence of the East/Rest, how this has influenced civilizational interactions, and to propose new possible interpretations.*

Key words: *civilization, competition, historiography, inventions, hegemony, West vs. East*

Introduction:

On 9/11 the United States of America were the target of an unprecedented terrorist attack which brought back to the forefront of academic debate Samuel Huntington's theory of "the clash of civilizations". It is tempting to believe that the conflict between the West and the Rest is one based solely on religious differences², civilizational characteristics are far more complex. Huntington's definition of civilization is incomplete, and the tensions he analyses are not based just on religion, they have several underlining causes, such as: economics,

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² Culture, religion and in some cases even language.

politics, or culture (other characteristics, which are not encompassed by religion).

Looking over the research of scholars such as Niall Ferguson, Ian Morris, Anthony Pagden, Paul Kennedy, Kenneth Pomeranz, Bernard Lewis, Jonathan Fox, David Landes, Jeremy Black or Joseph S. Nye Jr., this study aims at proving that the interactions between civilizations are not clashes, but rather a highly complex form of competition. Throughout history, at one point, two or more civilizations have been competing for world supremacy, and on more than one occasion this has led to military confrontation. This was not merely a battle of religions or identities³, but an economical one as well, a struggle for resources, which indeed can lead to a clash of cultures. Who manages to impose themselves as the dominant force will also influence what we call culture, and this is where Huntington's clashes might occur. Traditionalists and conservatives will either have a skeptical attitude toward, or even oppose foreign influences, which can lead to some form or degree of violence. Still, this does not always generate ample enough conflicts so as to call them civilizational clashes.

A new angle for understanding civilizational interaction is essential and represents the main motivation behind the paper. Such an analysis requires more complex research, but here we shall try to demonstrate that between civilizations there always exists a competition for power, and not a clash, as Huntington had theorized. In order to achieve this, several questions must be answered. First of all, what do clash and competition mean? Answering this is very important, because it influences how we see the problem. A clash involves a more violent interaction, while a competition does not necessarily lead to violence. Secondly, what we must look at is the number of civilizations, and which parts of the globe they encompass. Huntington divided the world using religion, while other authors have relied on economic factors or archaeology and came up with formulations such as the "West and the East" or the "West and the Rest". This topic is a highly complex one, and requires care. Thirdly, is the proposed competition's nature economic, political or religious? All these three elements are linked in a chain of mutuality. They do not exclude each other; on the contrary they involve

³ National identity is a relatively new concept, a creation of the Modern World, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, (London & New York: Verso, 2006), *passim*.

one another, with a certain level of relevance. In our present time, economics and politics seem to have taken a front seat, while religion (at least in some parts of the world) has taken a backseat.

From an epistemological point of view, it is difficult to establish the exact tools which need to be used. This is because the nature of referred historiography offers explanations coming from a variety of fields of humanities. This makes it more of an interdisciplinary analysis, encompassing varying components. Etymology and cultural studies will be used to explain how we perceive the concept of *civilization*, but also the differences of meaning and intensity between *clash* and *competition*. Sociology brings elements linked with or to a society's ability to renew itself and how this comes into play in a race towards *development* and *hegemony*. Finally, economic history illustrates one of the most important aspects, the manner in which access and use of resources (human and material) influence the relationship between civilizations and their rotation as holders of *world hegemony*. Because of the proposed subject this paper will have a strong comparative approach, both in terms of referred historiography, and the geopolitical explanations it seeks.

Historiography:

Huntington brought a new way of thinking about civilizations, although he was not the first one to do so. Long before the publishing of his article, famed scholar, Edward Said wrote a ground breaking book, entitled *Orientalism*, in which he tried to explain how the term itself had come to be characterized by a series of false assumptions in Western thought relating to the Middle East.⁴ This represented one of the first criticisms of Westcentrism. Although his aim had not been the creation of a comparative field of study, his work generated a debate with Bernard Lewis, thus opening the discussion on civilizations. Following in these footsteps, other scholars furthered such research, turning it into a field of its own, being part history and part theory of international relations. Even before this, Arnold Toynbee, in his *A Study of History*⁵ put an emphasis on the study of civilization, not only as a concept but also its essence as a real-life structure. The potential and interest had always been there.

⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Third Edition, (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p.1.

⁵ Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, (London: Oxford University Press & Thames and Hudson, 1972).

Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*⁶ most certainly served to influence and develop Huntington's own later view on civilizational interaction. Kennedy attempted to explain how, throughout history, certain states have ascended to power, then dominated their respective civilizations and sometimes even the world, and then fall from grace. Unfortunately, as good as his research was, the mostly Eurocentric view left many questions unanswered. Jeremy Black argues that Kennedy was eluded by the particularity of each case, as not all imperial ascensions and declines have been the same.⁷ Despite these flaws, it did offer scholars a new cyclical manner of thinking about world domination and the dynamics of international relations.

The historical context in which Huntington wrote his article and book is relevant. Only two years earlier, Francis Fukuyama had decreed that the end of the Cold War and the fall of communism and its Soviet bastion marked liberal-capitalism's victory ending the ideological battle, beginning a new age of peace⁸. It was not long that this dream was shattered, when the dissolution of Yugoslavia ended in a series of bloody ethnic wars. Not only did history not end, but it would be just as violent as before.⁹ Huntington was determined to come up with a new answer, which took on the form of *The Clash of Civilizations*.¹⁰ In his view, history had not come to an end; it would no longer be characterized by a battle of ideologies, but by a literal battle between the main religious groups of the world.

Even though Huntington was not a pioneer of civilizational studies, he did generate a new trend in historical and political studies. Those interested in the study of civilizations increased and soon enough the subject's historiography grew. Authors such as Bernard Lewis have tried to explain how Western Civilization has come to prominence, by

⁶ Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea și Decăderea Marilor Puteri. Transformări Economice și Conflicte Militare din 1500 până în 2000*, (Iași: Polirom, 2011), *passim*.

⁷ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony: The world order since 1500*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2008), p.ix.

⁸ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man*, (New York: The Free Press, 1992), *passim*.

⁹ Steven Pinker's thesis is that since the end of the Second World War violence has steadily decreased, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*, (Viking Books, 2011).

¹⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor și Refacerea Ordinii Mondiale*, (Bucharest: Editura Litera, 2010), *passim*.

looking at the failure of Islam to maintain its supremacy. In *What Went Wrong?* Lewis argues that the Muslim World had failed to modernize itself, and thus got left behind.¹¹ A similar theory was brought up recently by Niall Ferguson. Unlike his predecessors, the tone is not as condescending, rather he considers that the West's domination is part of the cyclical pattern suggested by Paul Kennedy, only at a larger scale.¹² In fact, his mentor David Landes had developed a very similar approach in his *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*.¹³ Ian Morris, in *Why the West Rules*, takes this position a step forward and paints a picture of this alternation throughout mankind's history, from the Palaeolithic to the present day.¹⁴

Jeremy Black, in *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, comes with an interesting critique of all previous historiography. He goes on to argue that although these authors made competent statements, they had been somewhat subjective. Their arguments were mainly focused on naval capabilities, ignoring land power. He also criticizes their tendency toward an over-emphasis of the virtues of liberal economics and trade, thus marginalizing the importance of culture.¹⁵ In this sense, one could argue he bares similarities with Alexander Wendt¹⁶. In respects to his take on power, to some degree, he resembles Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s belief that power is not always materialistic, it does not necessarily manifest military, it can be cultural, thus similar to the concept of soft power.¹⁷ Culture might also involve religion, thus putting a different spin on the analysis, serving to legitimize at least some of Huntington's thesis.

In short, despite the fact that Huntington's theory has a fair amount of deficiencies, his ideas have led to a popularization of Civilizational studies which do not emphasise Western superiority, but rather focus on the dynamics of inter-civilizational interactions. In this

¹¹ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle East Response*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), *passim*.

¹² Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The Six Killer Apps of Western Power*, (London: Penguin Books, 2012), *passim*.

¹³ David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor. De ce unele țări sunt atât de bogate, iar altele atât de sărace*, Trad. Lucia Dos, (Iași: Polirom, 2013).

¹⁴ Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now: The Patterns of History and what they reveal about the Future*, (London: Profile Books, 2010), *passim*.

¹⁵ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, pp.3, 15, 63, 65.

¹⁶ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, *passim*.

respect, *The Clash of Civilization* has opened the road towards a better understanding of those who are different from us. But in order for it to become more efficient, Huntington's idea must be further explored so that its limits can be expanded.

1. Clash or competition?:

Samuel Huntington argued that with the end of the ideological conflict, the civilizational one would come to dominate the world scene. We cannot argue that there are no tensions between the different parts of the Earth, but what can be questioned is if they could be characterized as clashes or as a competition of sorts. The aim of this part is to try and figure which is the case.

The distinction between these two concepts can be made by looking at their level of intensity. The Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture states that a clash is an example of opposition or disagreement, in essence, a form of conflict.¹⁸ But there is no need to interpret the definition since other sources describe it directly, as being "a conflict between opposing or irreconcilable ideas"¹⁹. It even goes as far as naming it "an encounter between hostile forces; a battle or skirmish"²⁰. This implies that the tensions between civilizations are more than simple differences, and are in fact a cause of violence. When Huntington elaborated his thesis he was thinking more in the line of religious wars. This is obvious from the examples he brings in support of his arguments, one of them being the ethnic wars of Yugoslavia²¹. Indeed, one cannot deny that in the past religion has been a source of conflict, such as the crusades, and it is impossible for historians to predict the future.

In a world on the fast-track towards globalization, does religion still play such an important role in international relations and politics? It would be unwise to exclude religion as a major actor, but its place has degraded in the last century, in the face of capitalist and communist secularism. Authors, such as Fox and Sandler, argue that religion is still important, but that its role in conflicts is nothing more than an influence

¹⁸ ***, *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, Sixth Edition, (Edinburgh: Longman, 2003), p.229.

¹⁹ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/clash>, accessed on 06.05.2013.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, cap. 10 și 11.

and does not constitute the driving force behind it.²² This encourages a focus on the economic and military aspects. The idea of a clash between civilizations does not seem likely. An economic conflict would lead to protectionist policies or even embargos. So far there have been no actions or decisions which would indicate this to be the case. A military confrontation between two civilizations or even two major global players would be no less than a catastrophe for our current societies. Thus it is doubtful we can talk about a literal clash of civilizations. In this context the idea of a competition between civilizations seems more plausible. Of course terrorism driven by religious motivations, especially recent actions of ISIS/ISIL against Western Europe can constitute a serious argument for religion as a factor. Yet there is a question of magnitude, terrorists still lack the necessary resources and instruments to inflict the damage they wish.²³ In a recently published Foreign Affairs article, Kenan Malik brings a whole new interpretation for the actions of terrorists in Europe. Starting from a MI5 report he argues that the perpetrators of recent attacks are driven not so much by religious fervour, in fact these being non-practicing, highly educated individuals, but by a sense of generational rebellion. Thus he ties recent unrest of young Muslims to a phenomenon very much similar to the one that engulfed Europe during the 1960s.²⁴ Also there is the issue of representativeness, as Islamic fundamentalists do not define the beliefs of all Muslims, thus making them only a fraction of a civilization.

Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s take on international relations is also relevant as his concept of soft power changes the way we look at these interactions. A country can achieve its objectives in world politics when others admire its values, follow its example or aspire to achieve its level of prosperity and openness.²⁵ Thus it is not necessary that the battle for hegemony lead to military confrontation. Domination can be established through other means, such as culture or the economy, thus making it more of a competition than a clash.

²² Jonathan Fox, Shmuel Sandler, *Bringing Religion Into International Relation*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.133.

²³ Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), p.46.

²⁴ Kenan Malik, "Europe's Dangerous Multiculturalism", in *Foreign Affairs*, December 8th, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/western-europe/2015-12-08/europes-dangerous-multiculturalism>, accessed on 8th January 2016.

²⁵ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Puterea Blândă: Calea către succes în politica mondială*, Trad. Daniela Oana Ioana, (Iași: Institutul European, 2009), p.21.

The Longman Dictionary defines a competition as "the act of competing or the struggle between several people or groups to win something or gain an advantage".²⁶ The key word here is *advantage*. The objective is not to destroy or convert your adversary, but to dominate him, to put him in a less favourable position, which can lead to a state of conflict, and this is where Max Weber comes into play. He indeed perceived competition as form of conflict. Before it can be stated that this threatens the proposed thesis, we must understand that the German sociologist saw it more in the lines of a "peaceful conflict, consisting of attempts to gain control over scarce resources".²⁷ This means that it does not necessarily imply the use of violence, even though at times it can lead to it. Also, the fact that he emphasizes the importance of resources means that economics must be taken into account. But Joseph S. Nye Jr.'s argues that we must take into account the fact that while some resources might be useful in some scenarios, in others they might not. Also, converting them into real power and gaining the wanted results requires the proper strategies.²⁸ Thus there are more levels to the entire issue.

In this respect, I believe that the use of the term *clash* might not be the most fortunate. While there are tensions between the various civilizations of the world, this does not imply the necessity of a violent conflict. It seems more likely that they take on the form of a competition for hegemony. It should be seen as a struggle for power, economic and military supremacy.

2. The many civilizations of the world:

How many civilizations are there on Earth? Huntington came up with eight, while other authors chose to divide the world in less or more. This is linked to the type of analysis they elaborated. For example, Niall Ferguson and Ian Morris have opted for a West and East/ Rest opposition. Paul Kennedy focuses on the rise and fall of great powers, with an emphasis on Europe, even though he does not entirely ignore other parts of the globe, such as Japan or China. Jeremy Black criticizes this approach, characterizing it as a result of a navalist approach which ignores Chinese land power.²⁹ There are as many perspectives as there

²⁶ ***, *Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture*, p. 259.

²⁷ Ed. Nicholas Abercombe, Stephen Hill, Bryan S. Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, (London: Penguin Books, 2006), p.74.

²⁸ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Viitorul Puterii*, Trad. Ramona Lupu, (Iași: Politom, 2012), p.24.

²⁹ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, pp.3-4.

are authors. No one single scholar has opted for another's point of view, instead choosing to create his own.

First of all, we must define the concept of *civilization*. One way of conceiving it is as a form of organization which stands "between barbarism and a false "decadent" civilization engendered by a superabundance of money"³⁰. This is an approach which admires the purity of a society untouched by science or the commercial nature of the West (the innocent barbarian). For the thinkers of Enlightenment this notion was linked to the idea of social progress, the triumph of rationality over religion.³¹ Brett Bowden goes further and argues that "... variations on the idea of progress predate the appearance of the word and ideal of civilization by many centuries", it precedes the foundations of the Enlightenment.³² He believes that "in essence, the idea of progress holds that human experience, both individual and collective, is cumulative and future-directed, with the specific objective being the ongoing improvement of the individual, the society in which the individual lives, and the world in which the society must survive".³³ Fernand Braudel comes and explains the 18th century definition: „civilization meant broadly the opposite of barbarism"³⁴.

One important addition brought to the concept of *civilization* belongs to Norbert Elias who saw a society which had reached „an advanced stage or condition of organized social life and social development, often used in distinction to primitive societies"³⁵. This creates a double meaning of the term. „It denotes both moral and material values". Thus there is a temptation to divide them by attributing the spiritual side to *culture* and the material on to *civilization*. But Braudel thinks that this is not a viable solution, because there is no consensus in such a direction, giving it more of a speculative nature.³⁶

³⁰ Ed. Bryan S. Turner, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 72.

³¹ Ed. Nicholas Abercombe, Stephen Hill, Bryan S. Turner, *The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 55.

³² Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea*, (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p.47-48.

³³ *Ibidem.*, p.50.

³⁴ Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, Trans. Richard Mayne, Allen Lane, (New York: The Penguin Press, 1994), p. 4.

³⁵ Ed. Bryan S. Turner, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 71.

³⁶ Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, pp. 5-6.

Brett Bowden came up with a rather fascinating way of analyzing the concept. When trying to define civilization one should look closely at the term's evolution in three particular languages, French, English and German, as these nations are the main producers of intellectual culture. Firstly, the origins of *civilization* are French, and in the beginning it meant "the transformation of a criminal matter into a civil one". What Bowden points out is that it was linked to an ongoing process toward progress. He also makes one important distinction, it is not "...used to describe the collective life of just any group [...] it is reserved for collectives that demonstrate a degree of urbanization and organization".³⁷ We can clearly see that the term began to be associated to a certain set of values or a certain way of life.

Secondly, it entered the English vocabulary a few years later, in 1772, and it was increasingly associated with sociopolitical and legal organization. It is here that European type institutions of governance are considered the "...hallmark of the makings of or potential for civilization" for the first time. Obviously this was mostly an Eurocentric view of the world, as there were different structures or institutions capable of guaranteeing governance.³⁸ To some degree this will be used as a foundation for the legitimizing of late imperialism, Europeans as a civilizing force.

Thirdly, the German case was somewhat distinct from the other two, as there is a debate between the concepts of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. Bowden argues that the second term is of "second rank", as it is specific to external appearances. While the first one "... is representative of Germany's self-understanding of national pride, and sense of achievement- its sense of being". It refers to values or intellectual, artistic and religious feats. This approach is very different from the English and French variants.³⁹

When Huntington came up with his idea, this view specific to the 18th and 19th centuries did not appeal to him. Instead he chose to focus on the 20th century conception of plural signifiers.⁴⁰ He believed that culture was the way in which a people lived their lives, and civilization was still culture, but in a broader sense. He considers

³⁷ Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization*, pp.26-30.

³⁸ Ibidem, pp.31-33.

³⁹ Ibid., p.34.

⁴⁰ Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, p.7.

elements such as the shape of the skull or skin colour as being irrelevant.⁴¹ In this manner he distances himself from the dangers of Social Darwinism and eugenics, thus taking the debate away from racial theories.

One suitable interpretation would be in the lines of „any type of culture, society, etc., of a specific place, time, or group: Greek civilization”⁴². In this respect, we should view civilization not only as a state of development or evolution, but also as a society linked by certain identity aspects, a broader form of community⁴³ formed through a process of progress. Niall Ferguson, argues that civilizations can exist even if they lack the means of recording or preserving thoughts.⁴⁴ Thus the principles of defining such a unit are more flexible than those thought by the scholars of the 18th century. This allows us to make associations with greater ease, but simultaneously the lack of rigour can leave to much room for interpretation.

Huntington brought into discussion one other important aspect, he argued that civilizations have no clear borders, no clear beginning or ending.⁴⁵ Still, Braudel insists that they can be located on the map and that „an essential part of their character depends on the constraints or advantages of their geographical situation”.⁴⁶ This is relevant in the sense that natural conditions (terrain and climate) influence the development of certain parts of the world (ex.: the impact on agriculture, which is directly linked to the size of the population). Yi Lin theorizes that these are very important aspects, as they determine how unified a civilization will be, a poor one will have the tendency to be closer while a rich one will develop multiple centers.⁴⁷

The evolution of technology has played a key role in tipping the balance in favour of one or another. The extensive use of organic based

⁴¹ Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, p.51-52.

⁴² <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/civilization>, accessed on 08.05.2013.

⁴³ A community is a group of people which share a common language, history or religion. These three elements construct the imaginary borders of a community, which are its pillars. In a sense, a community is an invented concept, created through institutions, education and tradition.

⁴⁴ Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, p. xxvii.

⁴⁵ Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, p.54.

⁴⁶ Fernand Braudel, *A History of Civilizations*, p.9.

⁴⁷ Yi Lin, *The life form of civilizations*, www.emeraldinsight.com/0368-492X.htm, accessed on 12.02.2014.

fuels (oil, coal and natural gas), has turned the Arabian Peninsula into a real gold-mine, for the people living there. In this respect, Braudel's theory holds to scrutiny, and at the same time it shows, that his perspective was one focused mainly on economic aspects. In light of this, a civilization can be perceived as being a society encompassing a number of identity elements, which has developed in accordance to its natural medium.

Establishing how many civilizations exist is undoubtedly a challenge for any scholar. This is because of the necessity to consider a great number of defining characteristics such as: geography, history, language or religion. While this might be achievable, one must also take into consideration aspects relating to the economy or the military. These could be integrated in the historical type analysis of Paul Kennedy. The problem with this interpretation is that it focuses strictly on countries, while Huntington's theory requires a much broader approach. Thus, Niall Ferguson's style offers a higher degree of epistemological satisfaction. He talks about economic and military aspects, but not with an emphasis strictly on core countries, but on their civilizations thus allowing an analysis of their rise and decline.

The eight civilizations envisaged by Samuel Huntington are highly complex ones, and despite much criticism they can be used in research. The first one is the Sino-Chinese, characterized by Confucianism, but not as its only element; it does not encompass just China, but also parts of South-East Asia. Secondly, comes the Japanese, which although some consider it part of the Sino-Chinese civilization, Huntington sees it as a distinct one (certain elements, like the Japanese language are of Chinese origin). The Hindi is concentrated in India, where it co-exists with a large Muslim community. The Islamic civilization is composed by a number of cultures: Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Malaysian. This makes it one of the most complex ones. The West has three components: Europe, North America and Latin-America, which leads us to another conundrum. Although Latin-America's origins are in Europe, it has evolved in a distinct fashion, remaining persistently Catholic, while Europe had the Reformation⁴⁸. The

⁴⁸ "... the Reform changed the rules. It encouraged education, it generated divergence and heresies, promoting scepticism, and the refusal of authority which stands at the centre of scientific research. Catholic countries instead of rising up to the challenge reacted by disapproving and becoming more closed." in David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor*, p.164

Orthodox world has its centre in Russia, with a Byzantine tradition. The last civilization is African, characterized by tribalism which generates multiple identities,⁴⁹ making it unlikely to achieve any form of political unity or homogeneity.

Although in the construction of his view, Huntington mostly took into consideration aspects relating to religion, one cannot completely disregard his work. In fact, with slight adjustments, we can operate with this division. This is because other authors have focused their works not on an analysis of all eight civilizations, but only on the West, trying to explain how it has imposed itself as the dominant and most influential economic, military and cultural force on the planet. Thus the other civilizations are portrayed as a monolithic Rest, which can lead to the omission of certain aspects. Also Jeremy Black argues that we should not confound great-powers and civilizations, these are distinct structures or concepts.⁵⁰ While the first can dominate the countries in their sphere of influence and they can also come into conflict with other states from different civilizations, it is unlikely they could use their civilization to generate global hegemony.

Early on we mentioned geography. This can cause problems when attempting to draw the borders of civilizations. Not all historians agree with the lines as seen by Huntington. For example, Ian Morris has a position, which can be characterized as unusual. He divides the world into three. For him, there exists the West, the East and Africa.⁵¹ The problem is where he draws this line. If the West, for Niall Ferguson, David Landes, and Samuel Huntington meant, most of Europe and North America, for Morris, it encompasses the Middle East as well. This manner of seeing things can be linked to Eric Hobsbawm's theory that the superior technological advancement of the West widened the gap between them and the rest of the world. Thus he ends up stating that the globe was divided in two, the advanced, who dominated, and those less developed, who were dominated.⁵² Of course such a position goes against the very essence of civilizational studies.

This subject was born from the scientific or pseudo-scientific comparison between the West, the Middle East and the Far East. We

⁴⁹ Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, pp. 56-59.

⁵⁰ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.197.

⁵¹ Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now*, p.96-98.

⁵² Eric Hobsbawm, *Era Imperiului, 1875-1914*, Trad. Florin Sicoie, (Bucharest: Editura Cartier, 2002), pp.25-27.

now perceive these as being three distinct civilizations. But this is the view of the world that historians of the contemporary period have, Morris being an archaeologist, has a different perspective. He focuses on the similarities between Europe and the Middle East.⁵³ Indeed both Christianity and Islam are Abramitic religions, which mean there are strong connections between them. Also, throughout history, Ancient, Medieval, Modern or Contemporary, these two have been in close contact, be it violent or peaceful. In this respect, the struggle between the West and the Muslim world is very old and has become a common theme. This is not to say that they are antagonistic by nature. The occasional clash has been the result of the fact that they are neighbours and that for most of their existence they have been in competition for the same resources and territories. Also, as a tribute to a Huntingtonian style of thinking, both have a monotheistic faith, based on one Holy Book, and have a prophetic figure as the creator of their religion, and most importantly, they both have a proselitic attitude towards others, thus bringing them into competition. So to some degree, Ian Morris had good reasons to mould these two into the same grand civilization, since their fates seem to be related.

Matthew Melko believes that all civilizations which are growing have internal conflicts, and that these can "... spill over to neighbouring civilizations, or draw states from those civilizations into the conflicts". This turns proximity into a very important aspect of the entire issue. There is nothing mystical about this, any eventual hostility would resemble that between two different countries.⁵⁴

So far, the focus has been on the conception of Western thinkers, very few having taken into account what those from a different medium believe. For Abdullah Al-Ahsan, there are neither three, nor eight civilizations; he advance that there are no fewer than twenty eight.⁵⁵ Unfortunately he does not elaborate further on this aspect, but he does offer a different approach on the entire problem of civilizational interaction, with a focus on Islam. Al-Ahsan argues that by the dawn of the twentieth century, this part of the world was no longer seen as a

⁵³ Ian Morris, *Why the West Rules for Now*, Introduction, subchapter: Location, Location, Location.

⁵⁴ Matthew Melko, "Hostility Between Civilizations, Reconsidered", in *The Midwest Quaterly*, (Autumn 2006), 48, 1, p.51.

⁵⁵ Abdullah Al-Ahsan, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Muslims: The Search for an Alternative Paradigm", in *Islamic Studies*, 48:2 (2009), p.193.

major player on the international scene. This was about to partly change because of the Energy Crisis and the Yom Kippur War, and the adoption of European systems by Muslim countries (Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and Egypt).⁵⁶ Al-Ahsan's greatest contribution is his critique of the historiography. He argues that most Western authors have ulterior reasons behind their works. In one instance he accuses Bernard Lewis of identifying himself with America because he is Jewish. Despite this he makes a clear distinction between Europe and the United States, on the basis that they do not have the same origins. Going back to Lewis, he criticizes him for basing his definition of Islam strictly on religion and a conservative tradition.⁵⁷ Even though Al-Ahsan brings solid arguments for his assertions, the harsh critique of Bernard Lewis does not hold out entirely. In the introduction of his 2002 book, *What Went Wrong?*, the British historian says that "at the peak of Islam power, there was only one civilization that was comparable in the level, quality, and variety of achievement; that was of course China"⁵⁸. Thus one can hardly affirm that Lewis had xenophobic attitudes towards Muslim culture, in fact he seems to praise the greatness it once possessed. Also he does not consider the fall of Islam and the rise of the West as a result of a religiously fuelled conservatism, but as the result of ignoring the problems at the periphery of their empire (ex.: the defeat in the Second Siege of Vienna, or Western success in exploration).⁵⁹

Al-Ahsan's critique is not focused solely on Bernard Lewis, he also tackles Huntington's theory. For him the *Clash of Civilizations* is an attempt to portray the rise of Islam as a threat to the West.⁶⁰ Certain aspects of this assertion can be linked to the American close relation to religion, thus making it partly true. This attitude can be seen as the result of stereotypes promoted in recent times in the United States and Europe. Al-Ahsan tries to explain that "the Qur'an does not single out Christians as the enemies of Muslims", and that in fact there are several similarities between these two religions, an aspect also mentioned in the above

⁵⁶ Ibidem, pp.194-195.

⁵⁷ Ibidem, pp.196-198.

⁵⁸ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle East Response*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.6.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p.15.

⁶⁰ Abdullah Al-Ahsan, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Muslims: The Search for an Alternative Paradigm", p.200.

paragraphs.⁶¹ It can also be seen as another critique brought to Lewis, who had hinted at a possible rivalry between Islam and Christendom, linked by him through the religious similarities, which in essence were and are the cause of tension.⁶²

Despite his opposition to Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, Al-Ahsan, does have certain common points with them. All three talk of resentment as an aspect of Christian-Islamic relations. But while, Huntington sees it as more of a cultural based one, he considers it to be “no different from that of those Asians and Africans who experienced European colonization, Muslims or otherwise”⁶³. In this respect he is part of the post-colonial school. Despite his attempt at distancing himself from Lewis and Huntington's ideas, he ends up being part of the same school of thought.

Taking into consideration the previous argument Huntington's civilizations could be applied to research, of course with the adding necessary nuances. Despite the wide gaps and the exceptions it ignores, his view is narrow, yet still wide enough so as not to be too vague or exclusivist. He does not commit the sin of *Westcentrism*,⁶⁴ as he does not try to present the topic as the story of the rise of the West. This does not mean that Ferguson's or Morris' divisions are invalid. The problem is that theirs do not take into account certain civilizational differences, when talking about the Rest. One of the critics of this approach is Kenneth Pomeranz, who argues that European models of scientific advancement in early modern Europe were not a guarantee of the West's future rise to world power.⁶⁵

3. The nature of civilizational competition:

Operating under the assumption that civilizational competition is a workable concept, it is essential to see which aspect plays a more important role, economics, military or religion (as a smaller part of culture), if the competition is to have a distinct character. Obviously

⁶¹ Ibidem, p.202-203.

⁶² Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?*, p.3.

⁶³ Abdullah Al-Ahsan, "The Clash of Civilizations Thesis and Muslims: The Search for an Alternative Paradigm", p.204.

⁶⁴ Focusing one's study of civilizations on the rise of the West, and ignoring the achievements of other parts of the World.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Pomeranz, *Marea Divergență: China, Europa și nașterea economiei mondiale moderne*, (Iași: Polirom, 2012), p.21.

opinions vary from one author to the next, with there being three main currents of thought on the matter. On the one side we have Niall Ferguson, Kenneth Pomeranz and Paul Kennedy, who emphasize economic and military aspects⁶⁶. And then there is Jeremy Black who considers that the role played by culture is a much more important one. Others, such as Samuel Huntington or Jonathan Fox, and to some degree Anthony Pagden, believe that religion still plays an important role in the workings of the international system.⁶⁷ The truth is that all these three elements are interlinked, they do not act as independent factors, one influences the other. This relation is most visible when analysing economics and the military. No country can have an impressive army without the capability of backing it up with a stable and growing economy.⁶⁸ In order to dominate the world, military power is essential, if you are the strongest it is easier to impose your culture and religion⁶⁹.

In this one aspect, Huntington had a good understanding of how global politics work. But he was not the first one to suggest this, merely a couple of years before him, Paul Kennedy brought it into discussion, while he was writing about the rise and fall of great powers. He focuses on several key nations and their dominance of the world scene. Thus we arrive at one of Huntington's key concepts, that of a central power for each civilization. As he stated himself this can be problematic because these are very hard to identify, exemplifying with the Muslim world, which at the moment is lacking of such a nucleus to lead its competitive efforts against the West and the Far East.⁷⁰

At some level the issue of the central power could be seen as a form of band-wagoning, all the countries of one civilization follow the rhythm dictated by the strongest. Stephen M. Walt has theorized that "when confronted by a significant external threat, states may either balance or bandwagon". These two are specific to smaller and weaker countries, which must choose one or the other so as to ensure their survival. The issue of balancing has two sides. Firstly, you form alliances with those who individually cannot exercise hegemony, and secondly, there is a certain kind of equilibrium when it comes to influence.

⁶⁶ They mostly argue that these two are not mutually exclusive, and that in fact they are closely linked to the rise and fall of civilizations.

⁶⁷ Their interpretations are slightly different.

⁶⁸ Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea și Decăderea Marilor Puteri*, p.16.

⁶⁹ Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, p.126.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, Capitolul 7, Subchapter: Civilizații și ordine.

Bandwagoning relies on the capacity of intimidation possessed by a possible great power.⁷¹ The issue here is that it is not sufficient to generate influence so as to affirm hegemony. As Jeremy Black argues, recent small-scale conflicts have brought to light the question of leadership. Great powers have proven incapable or restricted to lead. It is difficult to generate or influence the mobilization of those who are weaker.⁷² One could see this as marking the limits of soft power, as there is a failure to obtain the wanted results by influencing the others' behaviour without the use of force. Joseph S. Nye Jr. who came up with this manner of understanding hegemony, admits that it is difficult to put into practice. Credibility and reputation are very important in our times, as information travels quickly, and it also goes through a cultural filter.⁷³ This would be true if the world would have been a simpler place, but it is not so. As David Landes argues, it is not always that the central power acts as a model for the rest of its civilization. For instance, 19th century Japan emulated its model for modernisation on Germany and Great Britain (the second holds the most similarities- it is also a small island with little to no resources).⁷⁴ Thus, resources are not an enough prerequisite for the development of a central power, a proper strategy is essential.

As we have already seen, it is difficult to establish which are the world's civilizations, because it is nearly impossible to define their limits. The perfect example is Asia, where there are no less than four civilizations competing for supremacy: India as the representative of Hinduism, Japan with its own characteristics, born from a form of modernisation reached in a state of relative isolation, China as the former and present great power with a historical legitimacy, and various countries with a Muslim majority. In such a diverse medium, no one single state can impose itself as a leader. It is highly doubtful that Japan will ever accept Chinese supremacy or the other way around. Thus the possibility of a united or coagulated Asian civilization is doubtful at best.

According to Niall Ferguson, in Europe, diversity led to technological and economical advancement, which in turn helped it gain supremacy. The constant bickering and wars that ravaged the continent eventually led to technological progress. Because of the relative

⁷¹ Stephen M. Walt, *Alliances: Balancing and Bandwagoning*, <http://www.ou.edu/uschina/texts/WaltAlliances.pdf>, accessed on 15.04.2013, pp.110-111.

⁷² Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.9.

⁷³ Joseph S. Nye, *Puterea Blândă*, pp.18, 128, 135-136.

⁷⁴ David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor*, p.318

equilibrium between the small kingdoms, free cities and medium-sized empires, created an atmosphere favourable to competition and innovation, as the only means of getting the upper-hand.⁷⁵ Jeremy Black argues, that the essence here is compromise. This was possible in Europe because "territorial states were also combinations of landed power and urban elites". These inevitably led to complex relationships which generated a need for negotiation, improving overall communication.⁷⁶ Thus changes occurred not only at a higher level, but also at a lower one. Interestingly, enough this is sort of a unique case in history. Ancient and Medieval China was almost under constant attack from various migratory peoples, from the Huns to the Mongols. Still, this did not lead to progress, but rather to a form of isolation. More than one author (Paul Kennedy, Niall Ferguson, Kenneth Pomeranz, etc.) see this as the "big mistake" in the competition for supremacy. But again, Jeremy Black contradicts this point of view by stating that we should not ignore China's expansionist tendencies, which despite all these adversities, helped it maintain its ambitions and force.⁷⁷

The fact is that China had been so far in front of Europe in exploration, had they chosen a different path, America might have become their colony and source of raw materials and goods. Paul Kennedy manages to empathise with the Chinese position and decision that led to that situation. His attitude is not one of criticism, but rather one of trying to offer scientific answers for the sudden change in Chinese policy. It seems that the decision to stop any exploratory activities did have some justification. The nomadic peoples menace was big threatening the very existence of China, thus prompting a change of focus on survival.⁷⁸ But this is not the only explanation available. Landes argues that the Chinese did not aim for a technological domination of their enemies because of their numerical superiority.⁷⁹ Thus, diversity can generate progress, while in other places it can lead to a policy of isolation.

Political or national rivalry is not enough, resources are one prerequisite, one cannot advance without having access to more resources than his adversaries. This situation is nothing short of a vicious circle. In this respect the politics of isolation promoted by a series

⁷⁵ Ferguson, *Civilization*, pp. 11-13.

⁷⁶ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.71

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p.36.

⁷⁸ Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea și Decăderea Marilor Puteri*, pp.29-30.

⁷⁹ David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor*, pp.291-292

of emperors represented the turning point in the history of civilizational competition. The discovery of the American continent by the Europeans in the 15th century solved the issue, this new, vast and unexplored land would become their economic motor for what remained of the second millennium.⁸⁰ This allowed the smaller states to develop their technology and by using it impose their supremacy over the rest of the globe. Black does not deny that exploration brought new relationships for the West, but that it has been over-estimated when applied to the Early Modern Period. The positive fiscal and economic impacts were more specific to the 19th century expansion⁸¹, in the context of colonialism and a new perception of empire, which created a better connected world through commerce and trade.⁸²

One theory which challenges this argument is brought by Niall Ferguson who asserts that the "Chinese civilization had consistently sought to master the world through technological innovation".⁸³ Still one can say that the need for isolation, mentioned above, determined an abandonment of this philosophy in favour of a more conservative outlook, which in turn led to the loss of the former advantage. David Landes believed there is some explanation in Confucianism's unhidden contempt for scientific research.⁸⁴ Thus Europe did not gain its position strictly due to the discovery of America, but also because of Chinese isolationism, which left it unchallenged in exploration. There is little doubt that if things would have stood otherwise, Chinese technological advancement would have impeded most of Europe's attempts at expansion, and it would have never gained America. In fact, an impressive part of Pomeranz's theory was based on a very similar assumption.⁸⁵

In regard to *resources*, it is not sufficient to have them, this is not a guarantee of power. Black links this mobilization to the willingness of supporting certain goals. He also sees a connection between this and compromise, as such actions require governmental cooperation.⁸⁶ While it seems plausible, and might be true to some extent, it over-plays the

⁸⁰ Kenneth Pomeranz, *Marea Divergență*, p.17.

⁸¹ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.45.

⁸² Eric Hobsbawm, *Era Imperiului, 1875-1914*, p.25.

⁸³ Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, p.27.

⁸⁴ David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor*, p.294

⁸⁵ Kenneth Pomeranz, *Marea Divergență*, *passim*.

⁸⁶ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.11.

role of objectives. A certain power might hope to achieve its goals, it might lack the necessary resources from the start. Nazi Germany aimed at conquering European Russia, but it certainly did not have enough supplies to do so. But this might not be the case. The conversion of resources into power in the sense of obtaining the wanted results supposes the need of elaborate strategies. These represent the link between means and goals, and they should include both hard and soft power.⁸⁷ Thus it is possible to attribute Germany's failure on the Eastern Front to bad management.

4. Exchanges of a commercial and technological nature:

Another important aspect which indicates towards a competition rather than a clash, not only in present times, but also in the centuries before, is the role of commerce within civilizations, and also between them. It comes in relation to the previous argument, because just like any other goods, inventions themselves also travel along the trade routes. As Jared Diamond put it in his famous *Guns, Germs and Steel*, "technology develops cumulatively rather than through heroic acts, and it finds most of its uses only after it has been invented rather than being invented for a certain purpose".⁸⁸ Landes offers the Portuguese example, for them each expedition was based on the previous, each time endeavouring further.⁸⁹ In essence a means of communication is highly important when it comes to development, no society or civilization can evolve without it being in contact with others. In this respect, one can assert that Niall Ferguson's theory is incomplete; Europe's domination was not the sole product of internal competition, but also of international communication. Also, if one stretches this idea a little bit further, it would not be so hard as to see where this could and can turn into an economic issue. Commerce facilitates not only the exchange of goods, but most importantly one of ideas. This again is linked to one of Jared Diamond's arguments. "From where do innovations really come? For all

⁸⁷ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Viitorul Puterii*, pp.24-26.

⁸⁸ Jared Diamond, *Virusi, arme și oțel: soarta societăților umane*, (Bucharest: Alfa, 2010), p. 240.

⁸⁹ David S. Landes, *Avuția și Sărăcia Națiunilor*, p.89, Landes also explores the importance of inventions difussing to various European countries during the Industrial Revolution, David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus. Technological change and industrial development in Western Europe from 1750 to the present*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

societies, with the exception of those few which have been isolated, in most part or a majority of new technologies are not invented locally, but are borrowed from other societies."⁹⁰ Thus, one can point to the importance of the economic factor as a cause of commerce, which in turn is the cause of progress, through the spreading of certain life-improving apps. On the other hand, Jeremy Black has a very different approach, he emphasizes that every piece of technology, every such development, has a cultural dimension. While a certain piece of hardware proves useful in one society, it can be of little or no use at all, where there is a lack of tradition in using and developing it.⁹¹ This changes the way in which we see the spread of technology, as it downplays the importance of commerce, but without denying it.

Most authors, Niall Ferguson, Paul Kennedy, David Landes, Kenneth Pomeranz, consider commerce to be fundamental in the West's dominance of the rest of the world. This trend of thinking, as mentioned before, can be associated to navalism, a tendency to overemphasize the importance of naval power. Jeremy Black argues that this was, and tends to still be a standard view in Europe and North America. He sees this as an exaggeration of reality. He comes with the example of Germany, which managed to dominate the continent despite a lack of oceanic trade. But Black admits to the fact that it had been "a crucial source of liquidity", obtained without any governmental intervention. Naval capabilities should not be perceived "... as the product of power, but rather as one of its determinants".⁹²

Going back to technological diffusion, Jared Diamond emphasises on the fundamental role played by proximity. "The relative importance of local inventions, of those borrowed, depend in general on two factors: the ease with which one invents a certain technology and the proximity of that society to other societies."⁹³ This can be perceived in two ways. Firstly by going back to Samuel Huntington it would be easy to see how certain civilizations might interact better than others. It was his firm belief that it would be easier for those civilization which have common elements to be able to cooperate, than with those completely different.⁹⁴ Thus Catholics and Orthodox might find grounds on which to

⁹⁰ Jared Diamond, *Virusi, arme și oțel*, p.249.

⁹¹ Jeremy Black, *Great Powers and the Quest for Hegemony*, p.22.

⁹² Ibidem, pp.5, 28, 63.

⁹³ Jared Diamond, *Virusi, arme și oțel*, p.249.

⁹⁴ Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea Civilizațiilor*, p.186

collaborate. He is not wrong, at least to some degree. Cultural similarities between the various confessions of the Christian world can bring them closer, helping them work together on common projects. But at the same time, one cannot deny the mercantile character of the present. It is highly doubtful that if there would be an economic gain, a Christian civilization would not cooperate with an Islam based one, and the best example for this is the American-Saudi Arabian relationship, which can be characterized, despite the differences, as a good one. Secondly, Diamond's theory is somewhat vague, he does not explain his perception of proximity, if it is a matter of geography or of culture, although, the first one seems to play a more important role, in his mind.⁹⁵ In this respect, we can see commerce as an efficient means of technological exchange, which can be intentional or unintentional.

The last word mentioned in the above paragraph can be seen as a niche through which Huntington's theory can still come into play. Diamond did admit to the fact that the diffusion of ideas could come as a result of espionage or war.⁹⁶ These two imply a state of conflict or a clash of civilizations. Thus within Huntington's theory the circulation of ideas and technology is not hindered by tension. Still one must take into consideration the character of this transfer. The nature of the relations will inevitably influence the type of inventions borrowed. A war will most likely support the development of new weapons, but not only, as the need for resources might trigger innovation in other areas of life⁹⁷. In this respect, war is not only a cause of destruction and misery, but can also play the role of trigger for development, at the cost of other aspects. The fluctuation of war is determined by that of the economy, which in turn is tributary to the circulation of ideas and technology, which can make it achieve a higher level of production or cause it to become unbalanced⁹⁸.

⁹⁵ Jared Diamond, *Virusi, arme și oțel*, p.251.

⁹⁶ Ibidem, p.250.

⁹⁷ Fuel, food and raw material are always at the centre of the development of a society, during peace and war time. Still a conflictual state might trigger a higher need for a certain resource. Thus focus might, and will shift towards it, making the respective society more open to innovation in that area. This would determine a more evolved sense of paying attention to certain types of ideas and inventions, which favours acceptance of "New".

⁹⁸ As mentioned before, one need might surpass the other, and this might lead to certain area being left outside the loop, with dire consequences for the economy and the population.

5. The curse of economic constraints:

In the pages above we have discussed the relation between the economy and the military. It is more than obvious that these two influence one another with dire consequences. Paul Kennedy argued that "historical evidence suggests that in the long run there exists a very clear connection between economic ascension and decline of a great power, on one side, and the rise and decline of its military might on the other hand".⁹⁹ The best example for this is the First World War. With all its advanced technology and discipline, the Central Powers, never really stood a chance at defeating the economic colossus of the Entente. On the one side, the German Empire had developed its industrial capabilities, but it lacked the colonial resources (manpower and raw material) necessary to become more than a continental power. The Austro-Hungarian Empire had grown weak in the century before the war, while also rotting from the inside as its multiple peoples developed their own national identity. On the other hand, despite the obvious structural weaknesses of the Russian system, the Tsars still possessed an impressive amount of resources, enough to inflict damage and divert troops on the Eastern Front, making a decisive German offensive in the West impossible or suicidal. At the same time, the British and French empires controlled almost half of the globe's territories, which came with the obvious advantages.¹⁰⁰ It is a known fact that attrition wars are won only through economic resilience and supremacy.

Focusing on the issue of economics, there was one fundamental difference between Europe and the rest of the world. The smaller states of Europe, lacking in other means of real income, proved themselves to be, more efficient at gathering tax revenues in comparison to Asian states, public debt being an unknown concept to the Chinese.¹⁰¹ This theory fits in perfectly with the idea that "need" generates the necessary tools to solve it. Although Jared Diamond disputed this by arguing that most inventions were the result of curiosity rather than of a certain requirement, and that the "need" appeared only after people began using the tool.¹⁰² The fact is that it is quite difficult to prove or disprove this assertion, and that probably both versions are valid, some

⁹⁹ Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea și Decăderea Marilor Puteri*, p.21.

¹⁰⁰ Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, (London: Penguin Books, 1999), *passim*.

¹⁰¹ Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, p.38.

¹⁰² Jared Diamond, *Virusi, arme și oțel*, pp.237-238.

inventions are the result of curiosity while others are the result of need. This is based on the fact that Diamond had a tendency towards generalisation, which can sometimes blur the lines of a highly complex issue.

6. Mixing religion and politics:

Religion comes into play when we try to explain why and how the West got its advantage over the Ottoman Empire, which for a long period had been its main contender in the battle for hegemony. Niall Ferguson believed that in Europe the Reformation changed the way science was viewed and used, meaning laicization. Simultaneously, the Muslim world remained tributary to religious teachings, which might have inhibited certain forms of progress.¹⁰³ This universalism, generated an acceptance which in turn increased and improved the access to human resources, which has proven throughout history to be most important in the race towards technological development. But this was not the sole reason, Paul Kennedy brings into question the political aspect, which seems to play an equally important role, the decline was caused by the defects of centralization, despotism and severe conservatism towards initiative, dissidence¹⁰⁴ and most importantly commerce.¹⁰⁵ Ferguson also takes this approach in his analysis, focusing an entire sub-chapter on explaining how the Ottoman Empire failed in its attempt at modernisation, because of the same reasons mentioned above.¹⁰⁶ Thus one can conclude that the Rise of the West was not solely the result of its own inventiveness or solely because of its liberal faith and ideology, nor solely because of its thirst and need for exploration, but rather a combination of these, corroborated with the East's failure to renew its own systems so as to pose a challenge.

As we have seen, the nature of civilizational competition is not a single-faceted one. All three, economics, military, and religion determine the nature of the relationships between civilizations. These factors do not act individually, as they do not exist as such. Thus they are the result of an interlinked chain-system of causality

¹⁰³ Niall Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp.60-62, p. 67-69.

¹⁰⁴ Seen here as a form of opposition, which generates new ideas, and forces the regime to renew itself in order to adapt to new conditions, and thus survive.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Kennedy, *Ascensiunea și Decăderea Marilor Puteri*, p.33.

¹⁰⁶ Niall Ferguson, *Civilization*, Chapter 2 Science, Sub-Chapter Tanzimat Tours.

Conclusions:

Offering an absolute answer to the proposed questions is difficult, if not impossible that there is no one true solution. As the dynamics of the international system change so do the explanations and the mechanisms which put it into motion. This article represents an attempt at doing this, of course to the extent that such a paper can hope to. It is not a matter of bibliography, but rather one of interpretation. In this respect the number of theories is equal to the number of authors.

Firstly, most dictionaries and encyclopedias make a clear distinction between a clash and a competition, with an emphasis on intensity. Thus a clash involves the use of violence and implies the existence of a conflict, while a competition seems to be more like a race for resources, technology or control. The conflictual state of competition is downsized by Max Weber's explanation that in this case it has more of a peaceful character, there being no intention of subjugation of those which are weaker.

Secondly, defining the concept of civilization can at times be somewhat subjective, depending on the author's personal views and perception of global politics. As we have seen, establishing the mere limits of a civilization poses a challenge, since it is difficult to decide if they are geographical or symbolic (as is the case of those specific to communities). The answer probably lies somewhere between these two, as geography has the tendency of limiting certain groups of peoples' expansion. At the same time, this forces them to further their knowledge and technology so as to overcome their limitation, the best example being Europe, which although not very rich in resources managed to build colonial empires, dominating and controlling the globe.

Finally, the character of this competition comes down to a series of interlinked factors or even facts about the world. Without a doubt, religion had and still has a role to play in the way international relations work, but its part has reduced considerably, in the past two hundred years. Other issues, such as, the economy and the military have come to dominate, as the world itself has gotten a more mercantile and militaristic character. This does not exclude religion; rather it makes it part of a chain of interlinked aspects of which none can exist without the other. If a society has the strongest economy, it can support the most numerous and well-equipped army, which in turn gives it hegemony over others, and allows it, or at least creates a favourable environment so

as to impose its culture (religion being one part of it). The change itself is the result of a race for supremacy, forcing nations and civilizations to further their advancement by coming up with new technology so as to surpass their challengers. As we have seen this could be the result not only of internal innovation, but it could also come from the destruction of war, as it determined certain mutations within the system itself, if you can to adapt, you survive, if not, you become someone's puppet.

In the end, it is more than obvious that this paper was not meant to discredit the theories before it, but to attempt and bring them together, taking the best from each and thus offering an explanation of the world's mechanisms. This should be seen as the introductory part of a larger thought project, which if finished could bring a new interpretation of international relations, without fully discrediting Huntington, Ferguson, Morris, Kennedy or any other, but filling the gaps left by them. In this respect, the reader should view this not as a fully grown theory, rather as the beginning of one.

Book Reviews

Dan Lungu, Amelia Gheorghită, eds., *Books, music and other forms of entertainment from communism*, Polirom, Iași, 2014

Dan Lungu (b. 1969), one of the most appreciated Romanian writers of the new generation, with works translated into French, German, Italian and Greek, brings, through this new volume, not only a new method of exploring the recent past, but also an innovative approach to these new sources. Among his most relevant works, there are *Fellow travelers. Female experience in communism* (Polirom, 2008) or *Life stories. Theory and documents* (published by the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Press, Iași, 2003), both being works in which the author critically analyzes historical sources that can be labeled as "warm memories", personal experiences, intimate approaches on the recent past.

Amelia Gheorghită (b. 1988) holds a BA in Communication and Public Relations at the "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași and she is the public relations responsible at the Romanian Literature Museum in Iași.

The volume edited by the aforementioned authors captivates not only by crafting a new method for collecting the sources, but also by the fact that the sources are allowed to tell their own stories, without suffering methodological or epistemological alterations. Even the title suggests a certain degree of detachment, easiness and a lack of constraint, thus being somehow opposed to the cold, hermetic headlines of "classic", scholastic history, allowing us to immerse into a personal universe, filled with books, music, film and theatre. Therefore, the study emerges as a collection of *ego-histoires*, of memoir and journal excerpts, a collection in which the two authors chose not to intervene, in order to allow memory to reconstitute itself. The work addresses those who prefer a more "vivid" approach on history, a history that is more personal, animate, over an academic version on the past, which is, in most cases, heavy, onerous, historicized. The result is a study very similar to those of oral history, a story which is able to transport us back in time and allow us to sketch the ways of cultural escapism during the communist regime.

From a thematic point of view, the study can be allocated to the - recent historiographical trend that aims to analyze the cultural aspects of

the Romanian communist regime. Thus, works such as Cristian Vasile's *Literature and Arts in Communist Romania, 1948-1953*, *Cultural policies during the Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej regime* or *The Intellectual and Artistic Life during the first decade of Ceaușescu's regime: 1965-1974*¹ are all attempts to understand the mechanisms of censorship and the way cultural policies were conceived and implemented. But Lungu and Gheorghiu's work has a different approach. The study does not concern itself with the official discourse. On the contrary, it aims to give voice to those who did not have one during the communist regime, by asking them to tell their story, and, more importantly, letting them talk, without intervening and trying to historicize every aspect of the narrative.

Precisely the lack of intervention in the process of remembrance offers the reader the impression of a "relaxed, touching, diverting or unusual account of personal experience about books, music, film, theatre etc.". The process used by the two authors to gather the stories, has, too, its story. *Facebook*, the well-known social network, provided the environment in which the authors "met" with the people's stories, via a web page specifically created for this purpose. The invitation to remembrance was completed with e-mail messages and direct approaches to ordinary people, thus giving birth to an atypical historical study, one that feels, and is, closer to the reader, to the everyday life from behind a block of flats or from an alley in a poor village in socialist Romania.

In terms of structure, the book is divided into four thematic levels: one concerned with books and reading, the second one focusing on film, the third, dedicated to music and dancing, the final part of the book analyzing the other types of entertainment.

Thus, the study carries its reader through the various intimacies of people who, unlike the quasi-generalized perception has it, did not stoically resist the regime, but constantly sought to escape from the oppressive present through reading or films. Books were one of the main instruments with the help of which one could confine, could isolate himself from the regime and escape into a parallel present, in which those who had the possibility or the necessary connections could get in contact with the Western world, with ideas and realities from beyond the Iron Curtain.

¹ Cristian Vasile, *Literatura și artele în România comunistă, 1948-1953*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2010); *Idem, Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011); *Idem, Viața intelectuală și artistică în primul deceniu al regimului Ceaușescu: 1965-1974*, (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2014).

The film was another form of escapism through which the West could have actually been seen, even heard. In order to do this, mainly young people used to organize "videos", meaning they would gather at one friend's house, rent a VCR and watch movies starring "beniihil" or "brucele"². If the authorities were ever to intervene to stop the activity of such illegal cinemas, the ones who wore the state's uniform were usually bribed with "original" cigarettes or threatened with serious repercussions from an uncle or an aunt who had "links" with the Party.

Music and dance evenings were other ways to ignore, even partially, the gray reality. People used to jostle and set in motion a whole system of connections, relatives, friends and acquaintances in order to "get" tickets to performances by *Cenaclul Flacăra* (The Flame Literary Circle), which, contrary to the remarks uttered by Adrian Păunescu's detractors, was not exclusively dedicated to praising socialist Romania's ruling couple. It also provided the environment and gave the opportunity to young and talented artists to perform on stage. Moreover, even though the regime was quite strict when it came to "imperialist influences", discs that contained known voices, like that of Michael Jackson or rhythms like those of the well known rock band AC/DC were a regular presence in a young man or woman's room.

In conclusion, cultural preoccupation and leisure time appear to us as a footnote of the communist regime, a place outside the official discourse, where people spent their time doing activities that were repudiated by the regime, read books that were obtained "under the table", signed by authors which could not be found on bookshop's shelves and listened to "imperialist" music. These realities emerge from the stories collected by the two authors, and the lack of analysis and interference in the text grants, in my opinion, a stronger mark of veracity to the life stories, combined with a touch of privacy.

DORIN-GABRIEL POP
Babeş-Bolyai University

² Benny Hill and Bruce Lee.

Dragoş Sdrobiş, *The Limits of Meritocracy in an Agrarian Society. Intellectual Unemployment and Political Radicalization of the Youth in Interwar Romania*, Polirom, Iaşi, 2015

Holding a Ph.D in history and currently conducting his research at the “George Bariţiu” History Institute in Cluj-Napoca, Dragoş Sdrobiş is an up-and-coming historian whose field of study includes various social aspects of interwar Romania. His work has dealt with a wide range of topics so far, such as higher education, cultural politics-promoted or enforced by the state, or the social status of intellectuals in the decades between the two World Wars, all seen through the theoretical framework of either social history or historical sociology.

The book hereby reviewed, quite significantly titled *The Limits of Meritocracy in an Agrarian Society. Intellectual Unemployment and Political Radicalization of the Youth in Interwar Romania* (Polirom, 2015), is an attempt at reconstructing, in an interdisciplinary manner, particular elements of Romania’s social and political life between 1918 and the dawn of the Second World War, more specifically the interaction between youth, intellectuals, government, the university system and society as a whole. Naturally, the approach of a theme so complex requires the use of a significant amount of sources, in this case consisting mainly of archival material, relevant books and publications that appeared throughout the studied period and a large number of carefully selected secondary works. The end result is a compelling book, owing a lot to some of the most important ideas previously enounced in the field of study it belongs to, but at the same time taking those ideas further, adding to them and applying them to proper case studies.

By following the works of and making use of the concepts and methods developed by great scientists of the last few decades, such as the renowned French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, what Sdrobiş tries in *The Limits of Meritocracy...*, as it is stated in the introduction, is to outline the impact that the cultural politics of the Romanian state in the interwar era had on the socio-professional evolution of university students around the country, from the ranks of which several important intellectual figures would later rise. Therefore, having a scientific goal of this nature, the book belongs to a larger historiographical field, that has had valuable additions along the years, one of the most notable ones being a remarkable monograph by Irina Livezeanu, concerning the process of redefining national identity in a time of profound social and

cultural crisis. In *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, Livezeanu identifies the origins and the manifestations of a "populist nationalism" that ended up dominating the political, social and cultural discourse, acting both as a product and as an agent of nation building. Her work analyzes the ways in which (higher) education was mobilized as an effective tool to the same extent, as well as the institutional transformations that took place, the focus on creating a new elite and the ideal of a completely unified Romania, ethnically homogenous and purged of its inner conflicts, which inspired both radical movements and state policies.

Following these epistemic lines, the author places the relationship between the three main actors involved in the process of higher education – state, academic staff and students, as a central mark in his analysis. The diachronic perspective projected upon their interaction unveils a complex situation: after an initial stage of collaboration, when higher education was clearly subordinated to the purpose of achieving cultural uniformity and the necessity of redefining the nation and creating a native bureaucratic elite was stronger than ever, the so-called "cultural offensive" gradually lost momentum, as tensions between the aforementioned actors was revealed in often violent forms. The book focuses on the conflicts brought on by the intensifying claims for reform, as well as the politicization of the university system, outlining the inadequate coping mechanisms of the state, which, more often than not, amplified structural and contextual deficiencies and generated new ones. Furthermore, the historian tries to identify the origins of these processes and phenomena, their causes and effects, their place in the complex ensemble of the state and their social and political impact.

As the author himself admits, the book in its entirety has a somehow "eclectic aspect", given by the thematic choices involved, yet the argumentative lines remain easy to follow. For example, when observing certain social dynamics, political transformations or even conceptual shifts regarding the matters at hand, some recurring elements are being brought into discussion, the complex role of higher education in the process of social mobility being one of the most important. Moreover, even if the interaction between the social and the political component plays a central part in the analysis, other related aspects are not forgotten, such as the impact of education on economic transformations and the way in which university graduates and young intellectuals try to find a proper place in an extremely competitive and unpredictable labour market.

These interpretations lead towards a few relevant conclusions and observations, which seem to be confirmed when applied to the case in point. For example, it is accurate to say that the state was not able to perceive the multiple uses of higher education in a balanced manner, as it excessively insisted on its role in shaping and implementing an authentic national culture, yet at the same time neglecting its consequences as far as socio-professional allocations were concerned. That is why an environment in which radicalism would thrive soon emerged, and the brutal ways in which younger generations chose to cope with social challenges they confronted found a favourable context, hence the subtitle of the book – “intellectual unemployment and political radicalization of the youth in interwar Romania”.

Structurally, the book is divided into three parts exploring the subjects mentioned above, allowing the reader to connect the dots himself, and thus gain an accurate overview of how higher education in interwar Romania looked like. The first part deals with the origins of those principles that defined Romanian culture and society between the two World Wars, and it involves thorough definitions of some essential concepts, as well as following certain intellectual threads. In the second part, the challenges that came along the re-evaluation of the university system in Greater Romania are analyzed, being linked with the generalization of intellectual unemployment, that meant both the incapacity of a proper allocation of workforce in intellectual professions (which came to play a marginal role in the labour market), as well as the inadequate distribution of university graduates in other sections than their field of study, which then became either overcrowded or underrepresented. The final part presents what the author calls “the competition for the social project” that engaged both King Carol II and the Legionary movement. At this point in the book, some of the premises that are being used in the analysis are somewhat vulnerable. For example, the idea that the Legionary view of the world was fundamentally opposed to modernism can be questioned based on valuable research conducted in Western historiography, some scholars of fascism seeing the phenomenon as a whole and each of its distinct versions as proposing different ways of understanding modernity, rather than rejecting it altogether (Emilio Gentile). Furthermore, using some valuable recent contributions regarding the Legionary movement’s social base (Michael Mann), its activism (Roland Clark) or its ideological complexity (Constantin Iordachi) would have made for a more nuanced analysis in the third chapter.

With that being said, the general quality of the book is not profoundly affected by its slight shortcomings. Its conclusions, outlining the failure of the university system as a means of social mobility in interwar Romania, which thus became a “barometer of the limits of meritocracy in an agrarian society”, are supported by significant sociological inquiries, as well as an impressive amount of statistical data collected throughout the period, which the author makes available for the reader to interpret. Therefore, his arguments are compelling enough for it to be said that the book manages to achieve its goals, as they are stated in the introduction. Dragoş Sdrobiş’s work offers a clearer picture of interwar Romania’s intellectual world, and its universities in particular, and while his analysis is not exhaustive, it brings up valid explanations concerning such complex and fundamental phenomena as social mobility or political radicalization.

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Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe (1944-1956)*, New York, Doubleday, 2012.

“The terms ‘Stalinism’ and ‘totalitarianism’ are often used interchangeably, and rightly so.”³

This quote taken from Anne Applebaum’s newest book, the *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe (1944-1956)*, best expresses her attitude toward the communist regimes imposed by the Soviets at the end of the Second World War. In her latest attempt at trying to re-tell the story of those caught behind the Iron Curtain, she tackles a series of methodological and epistemological issues, while simultaneously trying to illustrate the suppression of democracy in this part of the world.

In the past she has done a marvellous job with the 2003, Pulitzer-prize winning *Gulag: A History*⁴, making her one of the most respected

³ Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe (1944-1956)*, (New York: Doubleday, 2012), p.19

⁴ Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, (New York: Doubleday, 2003).

scholars writing about such issues. Although her background as a journalist should cast doubt on her historical abilities, this could not be further away from the truth. *Iron Curtain* proves once again that she possesses skills any history researcher should. In fact she manages to combine the two, creating one of the best true stories. The combination of hard data, obtained from archives, a rich bibliography, and an impressive number of interviews all add up to one of the most realistic re-tellings of the installation of communism in Eastern Europe. Not only does she make the reader feel the victims' fear and pain, but she also helps us empathize with the perpetrators. Still one should not be blind, at certain points, we can notice her obvious disdain for Stalinism, but this is skilfully masked, thus not hindering the text's quality. Also, absolute objectivity does constitute an unattainable ideal, in this respect we cannot condemn her for having a position or opinion.

Studying the past of East-Central Europe is not the easiest of tasks and Norman M. Naimark, Tony Judt, and Timothy Snyder are just some of the greatest minds in recent times, which have tried to do this. In fact, some might argue that Naimark and Gibianskii's volume of studies, *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*⁵ is the best book on the topic, yet we must not ignore other collective efforts such as Kevin McDermott and Matthew Stibbe, *Stalinist terror in Eastern Europe*,⁶ and Corey Ross's *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots*.⁷ Applebaum's efforts are even more impressive if we take into account that the best scholarly works on this topic have been the result of a number of authors collaborating, and never of one man's or woman's single efforts.

As Anne Applebaum has put it, this is a region that has never been defined geographically, but politically. There is no ethnic homogeneity, which means there are no less than eight very different nations living here. Each one has its own language and tradition. One single person would have to be the world's greatest linguist in order to read all the archives. And then when would he study history? The most common answer to this question has been compendiums, more authors

⁵ Ed. Norman Naimark, Leonid Gibianskii, *The Establishment of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, 1944-1949*, (Boulder & Oxford: Westview Press, 1997).

⁶ Kevin McDermott, Matthew Stibbe, *Stalinist terror in Eastern Europe: Elite and mass repression*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2010).

⁷ Corey Ross, *Constructing Socialism at the Grass-Roots. The Transformation of East Germany, 1945-65*, (London & New York: Macmillan, 2000).

banning together in an attempt to re-create the larger picture, leaving no one out in the cold.

She opts to do her own research, not bothered by the world of academics, and she does an amazing job. Indeed, this has meant she could not focus on all of Eastern Europe, choosing only Poland, Hungary and East-Germany as her main targets. Of course she did not exclude the others from her analysis, but they do not represent the focus of her book. In a sense it is better that she reduced the area of research to just these three countries, otherwise she would have risked not being able to cover them properly. Still one could argue that even those short mentions might help a young student or researcher find his own path.

The author begins with the most important part, terminology, and trying to give the reader at least some basic understanding of 'totalitarianism', and how it manifested itself in real-life. From Hannah Arendt to Seton-Watson's visions, she takes us through the whole set of definitions and perceptions of non-democratic regimes. Her emphasis on literature from all corners of the region makes this endeavour more legitimate and believable.

As I have mentioned above, what makes this book so valuable is that it manages to create a connection with the victims. Contemporary Humanities have a tendency to become more scientific, which in turn leads to a distancing from the human element, which constitutes its essence. It might be because of her journalistic background, but Anne Applebaum succeeds in bringing back this essence, and thus she brings the past closer to us. We no longer face difficulties in empathizing with victims or perpetrators, they are in front of us, brought back to life in the present-day. In fact the first chapter can be perceived as a perfect example of this. She manages to break the connection with our time and takes us back in time.

Also one cannot avoid noticing that Applebaum tackles several issues which could put her in the revisionist corner. As Antony Beaver, in his bestseller *The Fall of Berlin*, before her, she brings to light the horrors of the Red Army's invasion of Germany, without downplaying the previous Nazi crimes. This is, in fact, a show of character and courage, since those who had done this in the past have been the subject of Russian scholarly criticism. Her decision to take this issue head-on could be linked to her Polish affinities, but it does not influence her judgement in any manner.

Three chapters are dedicated to a close analysis of the perpetrators, both policemen and the political class. This helps break down the myth created around the first Communist leaders of Eastern Europe. She goes beyond the legend of freedom fighters and presents to the reader with harsh reality. This is not just a simple biographical research, as Applebaum also tries to explain the ideological motivations behind those people. This last word best defines her attempt, as they are turned from former leaders of Communist regimes into people, who are easier to understand. Most Eastern Europeans know the basics of how the secret police functioned, but the readers of *Iron Curtain*, have an advantage as they are familiar with the cadres selection mechanisms. Until reading the book it can be hard to imagine how complex and yet how simple it was. In the same note, it must be mentioned that Anne Applebaum explains the logistics of totalitarian regimes. We can better comprehend the level of state implication in all aspects of life, from industrial workers to youth organizations. The Party played an important role in each and every segment of a person's existence, by using almost any means at their disposal. One's destiny behind the Iron Curtain was designed and controlled by the state from the beginning to the very end.

The most sensitive issue touched in this book is that of ethnic cleansing. Although we have been brought up with the knowledge of the Nazis' racially motivated crimes, the Soviets were not so different themselves. Norman M. Naimark has been one of the most vocal people with regards to this problem, but he does not stand alone in his beliefs. Applebaum focuses an entire chapter of ethnic cleansing in the new post-war Communist countries. "*One of the myths that the international communist movement propagated about itself was the myth of its own indifference to national and ethnic distinctions.*"⁸ In fact what she points out is that this could be considered the culmination of Communist hypocrisy. Even before the Second World War, Stalin had deported hundred thousands of Chechens, Kazaks and other ethnic minorities living in the Soviet Union. Still it is the author's belief that ethnic cleansing in Europe should be seen as Hitler's legacy, as he had opened the flood-gates for such actions.

As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Anne Applebaum focused a consistent part of her book on societal and economical changes

⁸ Ibidem, p.156

brought on by 'Stalinism'. Not only did this regime attempt the creation of a 'new man', but it also shook the foundation of past traditions. Communism meant a rupture from historical time, and this symbolised the dawn of a new age, in which the collective need was to prevail. In fact it was the exact opposite. One example the author offers us is the widening of the generational gap. Parents and children could no longer get along, family ties were strained or broken. And they did not stop there, entire cities were thought up, and then built with no regard for human suffering. This new regime decided to reconstruct the entire world from the scratch and then place these traumatized people within it. What shocked Applebaum, most, was "the system's ability to get so many apolitical people in so many countries to play along without much protest"⁹. Indeed this was an amazing phenomenon still she manages to prove that this was only a façade, and that there was a kind of passive opposition in the form of jokes and graffiti, which she gives us examples of.

In the end, I would have to say that *Iron Curtain* is one of the best historical book of the new decade and it will probably remain so a long time from now. Anne Applebaum has done a remarkable comparative research, with an impressive array of sources. The value of the insight into the earlier parts of Eastern European Communism which it offers is hard if not impossible to express. The fact that one single person was able to write such a thorough analysis should act as an inspiration for all young researchers.

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Tiberiu Tănase, Sides of the Coin. The Legionary Movement between 1941 and 1948

The most important monographs which have approached the history of the Legionary movement from a diachronic perspective usually set their starting point in the early interwar years, during the initial organizing stages of the Romanian far right, and go no further than the short-lived government of September 1940 – January 1941. Not many historians have focused on the evolution of the movement after its political demise

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 445

(the most notable works in that regard are those of Ilarion Țiu), meaning that Tiberiu Tănase's book, titled *Sides of the Coin. The Legionary Movement between 1941 and 1948* (Tritonic, București, 2010), tackles mostly unexplored topics. The author has a Ph.D in history from the University of Bucharest and is a lecturer at the National Intelligence Academy. His wide range of scientific interests includes various fields of study, such as international relations, the history of the Romanian intelligence service as well as the Romanian far right. The book hereby reviewed successfully brings these themes together, while the author's background and expertise allows him to follow certain aspects that are usually left out by other works.

As the Romanian Academy member Dinu C. Giurescu states in the foreword, the book may be divided into three separate sections, based on the focus of the research. Its first goal is to draw a clear picture of the distinct organizational components which were part of the legionary movement, from its upper echelon to its lowest levels, while at the same time outlining its power structures and describing its chain of command, its internal control mechanisms, its recruitment practices and the function of its bodies that dealt with repression or information gathering. Secondly, the analysis provides a classification of the several factions formed within the Legion between the events of 21st-23rd of January 1941 and the final stages of the communist regime's institutionalisation around 1948, factions which emerged both inside the country and abroad and assumed either a cooperative or a hostile stance towards the authorities. The comparisons that are drawn between these various groups are meant to reveal the political and ideological motivations that generated and then amplified struggles within the Legion after its removal from power. Thirdly, the book brings up the most significant projected as well as materialized actions that the Legionary factions engaged in between 1941 and 1948, both within the country and abroad, mostly in order to destabilize and/or overthrow the governing regimes. In connection with this, the analysis is less concerned with the international transformations brought on by the end of the Second World War and the early phase of the Cold War, their impact on the state of the country or the gradual coming to power of the communist forces. However, a clear picture of the significant changes that took place is provided through a thorough description of the strategic reorientations of all Legionary groups, which had to choose whether to actively oppose or to collaborate with the communist regime. However, it is important to note that the three part structure presented

above is only related to the main themes discussed throughout the book, since each of its six chapters focuses on a separate, autonomous subjects.

One of the first arguments that can be made for the reviewed book's noteworthy contribution to its historiographical field is related to the extensive archive material which the author bases his research on. Aside from using some of the most significant monographs and studies to date, as well as adequately selecting essential primary sources, such as a number of memoirs or a wide range of interwar publications, Tiberiu Tănase heavily focuses on previously unpublished documents, mostly belonging to the Romanian Intelligence Service and the National Archives of Romania. Some of the documents that are deemed as most relevant were collected in an annex which is available at the end of the book, comprising of numerous notices which belong to the interwar Secret Intelligence Service that concern the organization and activities of the legionary movement, informative notices of regional police and gendarmerie inspectorates, as well as notices belonging to several central structures under the authority of the Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs, reports, references, orders and instructions given within those respective institutions etc. The author manages to effectively utilize all these sources in his compelling reconstruction of the legionary movement's organization after 1941, as it is seen through the proactive initiatives of the authorities. The depiction of Romania's institutional labyrinth on which the successive regimes of 1941-1948 relied, particularly that of the intelligence services, is all the more clearer given the author's expertise, allowing a comprehensive description of complex mechanisms, otherwise hard to follow.

The first two chapters of the book are meant to integrate the legionary movement, by way of a short conceptual analysis, into the larger landscape of interwar European fascism, and they involve the evaluation of the most important Romanian and foreign historiographical contributions, starting with the perspectives that were promoted by members of its ranks and ending with the research of contemporary historians. The author accurately notices the epistemic challenges associated with such labels as *fascist* or *non-fascist*, especially when dealing with the particular case of the legionary movement, a phenomenon illustrating a very specific set of characteristics and means of expression. In this first section of his book, Tiberiu Tănase makes an attempt at portraying the intellectual climate of interwar Europe by paying attention to the first coherent ideological formulations of the

Western far right, as well as by outlining the decisive influence which the thought of several major intellectual figures (such as Gustave LeBon, Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Sorel or Gaetano Mosca) had on their appearance. Although the contextualization is certainly welcome, the analysis does not follow up on any of the themes that are shortly mentioned, so that the first chapter itself becomes merely an attempt to project several components of an extensive definition, that of *eternal fascism* or *Ur-Fascism* formulated by Umberto Eco, upon the Legion itself, for the purpose of indicating its similarities with other versions of European fascism. From this theoretical model, the author selects such traits as the cult of tradition, irrationalism, nationalism, popular elitism, the cult of death and the specific language and vocabulary, which by themselves are hardly sufficient to create an ideal type of generic fascism. Furthermore, the part that refers to the historiographical evolution of the legionary movement does not equally make use of all available sources. While there is a thorough classification of all the most significant memoirs, as well as a useful presentation of both the published and unpublished documents relevant to the topic, when it comes to the monographs, studies and articles that concern the movement, only the main ones are briefly brought up, while the newer contributions are completely overlooked and there seems to be no interest shown to the impact which Western research and its spectacular paradigm shifts, may have had on how the Legion is currently seen. With that being said, the shortcomings of the conceptual and historiographical analysis are understandable given the nature of this particular research, which focuses on facts themselves rather than ideology, even though the perspective upon the latter would be in need of substantial additions.

The section of the book in which the organization of the movement is described is an innovative one, given the fact that a detailed taxonomy and an accurate description of its inner components, either analysed from a vertical (that is, from its lowest to its highest structures) or a horizontal (by noting the particularities of each hierarchic level) point of view, has not been attempted until *Sides of the Coin*. Therefore, Tiberiu Tănase's book provides a wide perspective on the proper functioning of the legionary movement both before and after 1941, although an accurate account of the way the identified nuclei within the Legion interacted with one another is missing, which makes the analysis seem rather incomplete.

In the final part of the book, focused on the factions that emerged within the Legion after its brief governing period, the approach is significantly more nuanced, as it is not only concerned with defining and characterizing the main groups that appeared in Romania and abroad, but also explains their relationships, their common points and their differences. Frequent references and footnotes that provide biographical information about key members of the Legion during these years make each of the factions easier to trace by following the actions of their most significant leaders. The particular ideological traits and political stances of each side (especially their relationship with the authorities) is necessary for a better understanding of the last two chapters of the book, which deal with the planned and executed actions of the Legionary groups between 1941 and 1948. At this point, the author depicts the movement as being clearly undermined by internal power struggles and turned into an insignificant political and social phenomenon, especially compared to the height of its power in the final interwar years. The activity of the Secret Intelligence Service (particularly the role played by Eugen Cristescu in the annihilation of the movement's remnants), the relationship between different offices and institutions of the Third Reich and the exiled leaders of the Legion, the naive expectations, which almost all factions shared, of eventually coming back in power, as well as the gradual acceptance of the new regime that came after the 23rd of August 1944, all come in to play in these last chapters. By bringing into discussion some of the decisive moments of the Legion's history throughout the above mentioned time frame (even though some of them are omitted, such as the connections between the Legionary groups and the Western Allies in the early stage of the Cold War), the author registers what was, in retrospect, one of the final stages of the movement's existence.

Seen as a whole, TiberiuTănase's book is certainly a useful contribution to the research field it belongs to. Although the ideological interpretations lack thoroughness and the historiographical analysis does not take the recent perspectives of Western academia into consideration, *Sides of the Coin* steadily addresses a set of significant issues and mostly manages to achieve its goals. Future research concerning the legionary movement's evolution after 1941 will most likely find it to be a useful and well-documented tool.

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