

**When Forgers of Steel Become Creators of Art: The  
National Festival “Song to Romania”, 1976-1989**

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## **Abstract**

The focus of this research is The National Festival “Song to Romania”, which comprised seven editions between 1976 and 1989. The festival integrated artistic competitions at a mass level and it was designed and used by the communist regime led by Nicolae Ceaușescu as a propaganda tool, in order to provide political legitimacy for the regime and to create a mass identity for ordinary people, for the purpose of conferring total control to the Party and to its leader. Furthermore, “Song to Romania” aimed at incorporating all forms of artistic and scientific activity at a mass level, integrating folklore as a primary means of appealing to the social unity of the Romanian people under the communist regime.

This thesis analyzes “Song to Romania” from the perspective of political festivals. It aims at including it into a theoretical framework of political rituals and festivities, used for creating mass identity and for constructing Nicolae Ceaușescu’s personality cult. Moreover, apart from construing the structure and the functions of “Song to Romania”, as mirrored by official sources, the thesis explores with the aid of oral history interviews the ways in which ordinary people reported themselves to the festival, as well as their subjective reconstruction of past memories, influenced by collective memory and by the historical memory rupture of 1989.

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## Introduction

In 1981, after the Socialist victory in France, François Mitterrand consulted specialists in the history of festivals during the French Revolution, requesting their help for the choreography of his inauguration ceremony.<sup>1</sup> This event might (ironically, of course) be considered as a case study of truly applied historical research, but at the same time it is highly indicative of the power that festivals, as performative, or celebrative assemblies, have. Festivals are the product of tradition and at the same time they create and consolidate tradition. Although this particular function of festivals is common knowledge, the term “festival” can prove itself difficult to grasp.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the noun *festival* means “a time of festive celebration, a festal day” or “a musical performance or series of performances at recurring periods”.<sup>2</sup> The two senses encapsulate the dual essence of a festival, shaped by public and cultural aspects. One could therefore deduce that a festival refers to public cultural performances, organized over certain periods of time. What the definitions in the dictionary do not take into account however is the ideological dimension that festivals can have. This becomes even more obvious, if one takes a look at the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century political regimes, and at the development of mass politics within fascism, National Socialism, or communism. Regarding the latter, the Soviet Union is the most well-known case, the Bolshevik

<sup>1</sup> Sean Wilentz, “Introduction. Teufelsdröckh’s Dilemma: On Symbolism, Politics, and History” in Idem (ed.), *Rites of Power. Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics Since the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1999, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. <http://dictionary.oed.com>. Last entry: May 15, 2007.

regime using traditional celebrations and public festivities and inventing new ones, in order to legitimize its authority. Similar processes took place in the countries of Eastern Europe, after World War II, as the newly-installed communist regimes needed to build themselves an identity which could appeal to the masses.

In the case of communist Romania, the most illustrious example of officially created mass festivals is that of “Festivalul Național al Educației și Culturii Socialiste *Cîntarea României*”, translated as “The National Festival of Socialist Education and Culture *Song to Romania*”.<sup>3</sup> This festival appeared in the immediate aftermath of the Romanian communist regime’s inclusion of nationalistic elements into its official socialist ideology, more exactly after the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, (1974) and the first Congress of Political Education and Socialist Culture (1976). It was established in 1976 and lasted until 1989, comprising seven editions held every two years. Each edition lasted from autumn until the summer of the following year.

Structurally, the festival primarily consisted of a politically set system of national artistic competitions, between all types of social, professional and age categories. It included several phases, starting at a lower mass level, going through county and regional phases, and ending with the republican level of competition, in which – as it was officially claimed – only the selected best of the other levels could

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<sup>3</sup> The original Romanian title is “Cîntarea României”. The name of the festival was inspired by a famous poem, with the same title, written by Alecu Russo, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The original poem emphasized the love of the author toward his country, as well as the beauty of Romanian lands. In choosing this name for the festival, the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu intended to resort to national ideology as means of gaining legitimacy.

English translations of the name have varied, but without essential differences. The translation encountered mostly is that of “Song to Romania”. Other alternatives are “Singing of Romania” (as the name of the festival is translated in the Subject Files of the Romanian Unit, at the Open Society Archives: <http://www.archivum.ws/db/fa/300-60-1-1.htm>). This is due to the fact that “Cîntarea României” is an ambiguous term, allowing both translations. However, I consider that the most accurate translation of the name of the festival is that of “Song to Romania”, and not “Singing of Romania”. This is best explained by the fact that the festival was also known as “Cântare României”, which can only be translated as “Song to Romania”, acknowledging the existence of the dative case, and not the genitive case, as it happens with “Singing of Romania”.

participate. Although, the means of competing in the artistic field were various, the art topics for the festival resumed only to praises of the official regime, of the new socialist Romania and last but not least, of Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965-1989).<sup>4</sup> The focus of the festival was especially on amateurs, on workers, peasants, pupils, who were supposed to create new works of art in their free time, to “sing” the achievements of the communist regime.

The festival had multiple functions. Officially, its primary aim was to “contribute to the education of the entire society, of the youth, in the spirit of endless labor for the growth of socialism in Romania”.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, this self-entitled festival of culture and education was intended to achieve more than the mere cultural education of workers, peasants or pupils. Its aims, as its origins, were primarily political.

“Song to Romania” served as a propaganda instrument for Nicolae Ceaușescu’s personality cult and for the official socialist ideology, which incorporated nationalistic elements. It relied on various means, such as mass-media, popular and folk music, as well as a newly created type of folklore, for which scholars have coined the term “folklorism”.<sup>6</sup>

Although the festival focused on amateur artists, the latter also included professional artists, but their function was reduced to that of supervising the activity of amateurs. Thus, “Song to Romania” served as a means for depriving professional

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<sup>4</sup> For a program article, dealing with the main features of the “Song to Romania” festival, see the article “The National Festival of Education and Socialist Culture “Song to Romania”, a brilliant display of the love of work, of the creative virtues of our people, an expression of the democratic cultural politics of the Romanian Communist Party” [“Festivalul Național al educației și culturii socialiste “Cântarea României”, strălucită manifestare a dragostei de muncă, a virtuților creatoare ale poporului nostru, expresie a democratismului politicii culturale a Partidului Comunist Român”] in *Scinteia*, November 28, 1976, 1 and 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem.*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Anca Giurchescu, “The Power of Dance and Its Social and Political Uses”, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 33. (2001), 117.



artists and intellectuals of their traditional status of creators of culture. At an institutional level, this translated in state control over professional artists' unions.

Propaganda actually meant providing legitimacy for the communist regime, and illustrating the social unity of the Romanian people, regardless of ethnicity or social origin. The ultimate function of the festival was that of creating a mass identity for the people, in order to integrate it as a structure subjected to the Party and its Leader.

The overall structure of the festival and the wide range of its function make "Song to Romania" a subject worth investigating, for adding to or reinterpreting the existing corpus of knowledge on festivals, on the one hand, and communist regimes in Eastern Europe, on the other. However, few researches have been conducted on this topic, despite its importance and spectacular character. This means that the history of the festival "Song to Romania" is still under-researched.

Anca Giurchescu was among the first to focus on this festival, and the first to construct a theoretical analysis of the latter.<sup>7</sup> Her 1987 article on "Song to Romania" puts forth a typology of functions of the festival and its main features, focusing especially on the political uses of folklore by the communist regime.<sup>8</sup> However, the article lacks primary sources and represents mainly a 1980s perspective on "Song to Romania", while the festival was still underway. In another article by the same author, focusing on the political and social uses of dance, "Song to Romania" appears

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<sup>7</sup> Anca Giurchescu, "The National Festival "Song of România", Symbols in Political Discourse", in Claes Arvidson, Lars Erik, Blomqvist, *Symbols of Power: The Esthetics of Political Legislation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiskill International, 1987, 163–171. Apart from Giurchescu, there were other articles on the festival, by dissidents who had left Romania. But these were written in a journalistic style, as their purpose was not to construct a scholarly research, but to inform the general public through mass media means such as Radio Free Europe. Such articles can be found at the Open Society Archives, Hungary, Budapest. One example is Gelu Ionescu, *Puțină artă, multă propagandă în festivalul artistic „Cîntarea României”* [A Low level of Art, A High Level of Propaganda in the Artistic Festival "Song to Romania"]. HU OSA. 300-60-1. Romanian Unit. Subject Files. Box 109. Folder 804. "Cîntarea Romaniei" ["Singing of Romania"], 1981-1989.

<sup>8</sup> Anca Giurchescu, "The National Festival "Song to Romania". Symbols in Political Discourse", in Claes Arvidsson, Erik Blomqvist, *op. cit.*, 169.

as a first hand example and is defined as a network of institutions, designed to disseminate symbols of national unity, or historical continuity.<sup>9</sup> Dragoș Petrescu takes a more descriptive approach to the matter, succeeding, nonetheless, to make interesting points with regard to how propaganda approached different social, professional and age categories, such as peasants or youth.<sup>10</sup> Still, his sources extend as far as the first edition of the festival, but his article can be seen as the starting point for a more thorough analysis. Apart from the works mentioned above, there is little to be found concerning the festival “Song to Romania”, except for brief accounts of it, in works dealing generally with Romanian communism, or with the Ceaușescu cult.

It can be argued that secondary literature on “Song to Romania” has either taken a descriptive approach on the topic, neglecting any construction of a theoretical framework of analysis, or has dealt extensively with theoretical interpretation, without relying on primary sources. For the latter case, which is singularly represented by Giurchescu, one also has to take into account the fact that the research did not include the entire history of the festival, nor its aftermath, thus becoming chronologically restrained.

I approach this festival from a different perspective, defining it not as a pseudo-cultural phenomenon, or as simple propaganda, but as a political festival. I argue that the role of “Song to Romania” was not just to exert institutional and mass control, or to provide legitimacy for the communist regime, but to actually create mass identity through the network of political rituals and political symbols which were supposed to be disseminated at a mass level. In doing this, “Song to Romania”

<sup>9</sup> Idem, “The Power of Dance and Its Social and Political Uses” in *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 33, 2001, 109-121.

<sup>10</sup> Dragoș Petrescu, 400000 de spirite creatoare: “Cântarea României” sau stalinismul național în festival” [400,000 Creative Spirits: Song to Romania” or National Stalinism in Celebration] in Lucian Boia (ed.), *Miturile comunismului românesc* [The Myths of Romanian Communism], Bucharest: Nemira, 1998, 239-251.

also created ideology, but from below, by integrating official political ideas into the identity of the participants.

This perspective rises numerous theoretical and research questions. The first relate to concepts like political festivals and political rituals, to their interrelationship, as well as to issues of collective and historical memory, which influence the effects of the festival on ordinary people. The second refer to the approach which needs to be taken on “Song to Romania”. I intend to provide a double-sided analysis of the festival. Firstly, I will rely on a structural analysis at a general level, identifying the main features, concepts and mechanisms of the festival, and integrating them in a conceptual framework, relying on general secondary literature and primary, propaganda sources. Secondly, I will also construct a case study analysis of the festival, based on oral history interviews, in order to identify the internal and informal mechanisms which lay behind the official propaganda as well as the subjective perception of ordinary people on this festival. For this case study I will also construe the mechanisms of memory and how the radical political changes of 1989 affected the latter. Thus, a comparison between these two different perspectives will put forth a more complete and less subjective image of the festival, also providing a solid background for further research concerning the memory of the festival for present-day generations, as well as its effects regarding artistic education of ordinary people, the creation of a new type of artificial, urban folklore, or nationalistic residues in present Romanian collective and historical memory.

Thus, my research objectives for this research are firstly, to construct working definitions of concepts such as political ritual and political festival, and to apply them to the case study of “Song to Romania”; secondly, to identify the main propagandistic components of “Song to Romania” and to observe their interrelationship as well as the

ultimate purpose of this interrelationship; Thirdly, to construe how ordinary people responded to this festival, and in what ways they relate to it in the present.

I have employed various types of sources for this research. For the general structural approach I have relied on official press, on newspapers such as *Scînteia*, *Scînteia tineretului*, *România Liberă*, *Cîntarea Romîniei*, on annual magazines, such as *Almanahul Scînteia*. Radio Free Europe transcripts of radio and TV broadcasts, at the Open Society Archives, in Budapest, Hungary, have also proved useful in gathering information about how the festival was brought into the public opinion's attention. I have also used propaganda books about the „Song to Romania” festival and collections of poems, presented during the competitions of the festival. For the oral history case study, I have relied mostly on oral history interviews with persons who participated in the festival, or who were organisers of different stages of the competition. I have also made use of already published accounts, by former members of juries operating within the “Song to Romania”.<sup>11</sup>

The nature of the subject requires an interdisciplinary approach, combining methods and approaches from various disciplines. Written sources, like newspapers or magazines can provide information about both the history of the festival and its propaganda image and how it was constructed. Oral history interviews can provide in this case a most useful insight not just to the meaning of the festival for ordinary people, but first of all, to the procedures adopted by authorities at the deeper levels. Each of the approaches, taken individually, has its own biases: a general description can constitute a history of the festival, but it leaves many questions unsolved, whereas

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<sup>11</sup> The starting point for an investigation at a case-study level was an article by ethnomusicologist Speranța Rădulescu, in which she describes how juries were assigned the task of selecting at least half of the candidates for the superior level, in order to show the mass-appeal of the festival. See Speranța Rădulescu, “Traditional Musics and Ethnomusicology: Under Political Pressure: The Romanian Case” in *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 13, No. 6. (Dec., 1997), 8-12.

a case-study approach is too limited to allow itself general conclusions, despite the fact it can provide an insight that would have remained undiscovered in the case of the general chronology. The most interesting findings can be obtained by comparing the conclusions drawn from the general chronology and from the case study. However, this final approach has its limitations as well. Leaving aside the matter of integrating the case study into the general framework, its first and foremost limitation is that it offers little information on the cultural aspect of the festival and of its legacy, not just at a cultural level, but first of all, at a social one. But this research does not aim at offering a totally-comprehensive image of what “Song to Romania” was and what remained of it, but at setting set out specific purposes, depending first of all on a time limitation.

It is hoped that the thesis will offer a more accurate image not just on the anatomy of the festival, but also on its physiology. Understanding its nature can offer a very advantageous point of view on its effects on contemporary Romanian society. It can also constitute a case-study, adding to the already existing others, broadening the general images of festivals and their use for propaganda purposes.

The thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical and methodological framework, focusing on the issue of festivals, rituals and political festivals. It firstly discusses certain methodological challenges which occur when dealing with a topic of research that has been the focus of interdisciplinary approaches, and that, despite its generally-existing structure and functions, presents different features according to the historical contexts in which it evolves. It also attempts to construct a working definition of political festivals, as well as a taxonomy of their main functions. The second chapter provides a general conceptual analysis of the “Song to Romania” festival, concentrating on aspects such as the structure of the

festival, its official social, cultural and political aims. It also analyzes the festival as a structure made up of two components: the masses and the Leader. By this, it focuses on issues such as state control of everyday aspects of life, the festival as means of propaganda for Ceaușescu's personality cult, and as means of self-representation of a regime which combined nationalism with Marxism-Leninism, in order to legitimize itself in front of the public opinion, and in order to create a distinct image in the eyes of the international opinion. The third chapter constructs a case study, based on oral history interviews. It focuses mainly on the mass-level of the festival in the province town of Câmpina, in the Prahova County, and in Bucharest, the capital of Romania. This last chapter deals with theoretical issues of collective and historical memory and applies them to the interviewees, in an attempt to draw out discrepancies between the official and the unofficial images of the festival, and to observe how subjectivity is constructed by the interviewees and influenced by the memory rupture of 1989.

The main purpose of this research is neither to add another case study to the already immense literature on political festivals, nor to pass moral judgment on the festival, or on its effects. At least, not until the mechanism of "Song to Romania" and its legacy in the minds of those who witnessed it is thoroughly revealed.

# Chapter 1: Approaching Political Festivals. Interpreting the Concept

## 1.1 Preliminaries

Shedding light on the issue of political festivals and rituals proves to be a complex and difficult task. The historicity of the concepts, the different anthropological, historical, political and sociological approaches on these subjects have led to the existence of an impressive bibliography, extended in its focus of research both geographically and diachronically. At the same time, political festivals are directly linked to political ideologies, as the former provide “the tools of cultural management” for disseminating symbols and inculcating ideology, through a system of officially created, laic rituals.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, there are many questions which need to be answered, regarding both the theoretical approaches to political festivals and the latter’s anatomy and physiology: what are the origins of political festivals in modern society? What is the interrelationship between festivals and ideologies? How are festivals created and developed by ideologies and how do they help project the image of these ideologies to the masses? What are the functions of festivals in mass politics? Why are political festivals among the main means of propaganda within National-Socialist, Fascist and

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<sup>12</sup> See Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society – The Soviet Case*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. Christel Lane is a Professor in Economic Sociology at the Faculty of Political Sciences, and fellow at St. John’s College, University of Cambridge. (See profile at: <http://www.sps.cam.ac.uk/stafflist/clane.html>. Last retrieved on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2007). Her book on rites in the Soviet Union proved to be extremely influential, as it covered a gap in the historiography of political rituals, by adding a case-study on Soviet Russia, and as it put forth the thesis according to which public ideology in Soviet Union was a “political religion”, seeking to transform the Soviet system in the absolute measure of all things within the Soviet society. See especially Part I, subchapter 3, “The beliefs and ritual of Soviet Marxism-Leninism as political religion”, pp. 35-45, in *Ibidem*. See also S. Frederick Starr’s review of the book in *Slavic Review*, Vol. 41, No. 3. (Autumn, 1982), 558-559.

Communist regimes of the twentieth century? What is the relation between National-Socialist rallies during the 1930s and other forms of political festivals?

This chapter mainly aims at constructing a working definition of political festivals, at providing a taxonomy of their main functions, as well as identifying a set of methods, useful for analyzing communist festivals in Eastern Europe in general, and in Romania, in particular. I will first discuss the main methodological challenges that one can encounter when dealing with the topic of political festivals in modern society. Starting from a rather broader, but summative, analysis on “festival” and “ritual”, as concepts used in various research fields, such as sociology and history of religions, I will then focus on the issue of political festivals, discussing the already existing definitions, pointing out their strong as well as their weak points. Finally, I will shed light on the main functions of political festivals, focusing especially on historical case-studies, such as the French Revolution, Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia.<sup>13</sup>

## **1.2 Methodological Challenges**

Before discussing the problems of defining festivals, ritual and political festivals, one should point out a series of methodological problems which can occur and which make this attempt at defining and categorization a very subjectively-selective and relatively-incomplete one.

A first problem is that the topic of festivals has been dealt with from different perspectives, using different methodologies.

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<sup>13</sup> This selection includes the major influence on political festivals in the modern society that is the French Revolution, as well as the three most “famous” case-studies of “totalitarian” regimes of the twentieth century. I have used the term *totalitarian* in inverted comas to point out the debate on the respective term, as well as on its historicity.



History of religions and anthropology have focused on festivals and rituals in traditional or so-called “primitive” societies, in order to analyze social relations within those societies, or aspects related to their culture.<sup>14</sup> The findings of such researches have been more than purely informative. Not only have they added to the existing corpus of knowledge on traditional cultures and societies, but they have also raised conceptual and methodological questions on the idea of “culture” itself. Clifford Geertz dealt with the issue of ritual and its uses within a system of social relationships, later on focusing on the epistemological relation of the anthropologist with the network of cultural meanings that surround him.<sup>15</sup> Geertz’s research led him to argue that “culture” is “historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols – a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms”.<sup>16</sup>

Historians have also been influenced by such new concepts and theories and have started using anthropological research methods and concepts, especially in fields related to political culture and political regimes.<sup>17</sup> One such example is William F. Miles, who focused on the relation between the performative function of spectacles and festivals in the historical context of Nigeria during the 1976 election campaign.<sup>18</sup> Miles uses Abner Cohen’s thesis on the “two dimensional man”, which is both a symbolist animal and a political one.<sup>19</sup> He also makes use of Geertz’ method of “thick

<sup>14</sup> For an analysis of the two disciplines and their mutual focus on ritual, see Hans H. Penner, “Myth and Ritual: A Wasteland or a Forest of Symbols”, *History and Theory*, Vol. 8, Beiheft 8: On Method in the History of Religions. (1968), 46-57.

<sup>15</sup> Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” in M. Banton (ed.) *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, London: Tavistock, 1966, pp. 1-46. See also, “Symbol” in William H. Swatos, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, Hartford Institute for Religion Research. Source: <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/ency/Symbols.htm>. Retrieved on May 2nd, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Clifford Geertz, *op. cit.*, 3.

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, political anthropological studies, such as those of John Middleton, “Power, Authority and Personal Success in Islam and Bornu” in Marc Swartz, Victor Turner and Arthur Tuden (eds.), *Political Anthropology*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1966; Ted Lewelen, *Political Anthropology: An Introduction*. South Hadley: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1983.

<sup>18</sup> William F. S. Miles, “The Rally as Ritual: Dramaturgical Politics in Nigerian Hausaland”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 21, No. 3. (Aprl., 1989), 323-338.

<sup>19</sup> See Abner Cohen, *The Politics of Elite Culture: Explorations in the Dramaturgy of Power in a Modern African Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.

description”, providing the reader with highly-detailed accounts of mass-rallies, which occurred during the elections campaign.<sup>20</sup> Miles’ conclusion is that cultural variables, such as dress, music, song, myth, speech behavior were used by a political elite in order to project itself at “the pinnacle of society in an attempt to maintain social and political hegemony.”<sup>21</sup> It can be deducted from his’ article that the purpose of political rallies was to develop a set of stereotypes, in order to dominate the entire chain of events in a certain historical context, as well as to develop a unitary code of interpretation, by setting certain symbols, which could be used in the advantage of the regime.

This would be only one case of a historical research on political regimes, which is influenced by anthropology. In a more general and summative manner, Sean Wilentz argues that “anthropology, unlike *Annales* materialism, functionalist sociology, and orthodox Marxism, has given historians ways of seeing politics as a form of cultural interaction, a relationship (or a set of relationships) tied to broader moral and social systems. Political symbols and acts of persuasion in this view carry with them complex networks of social customs, aspirations and fears. Whereas previous historians interpreted politics either as a narrative with a logic of its own, or as the conjunctural outcome of economic and demographic indicators, those influenced by the anthropologists interpret political ceremonies and insignias as minidramas or as metaphors, upon which are inscribed the tacit assumptions that either legitimize a political order or hasten its disintegration.”<sup>22</sup> As Wilentz argued, the interdisciplinary research based on anthropology and political history led to a

<sup>20</sup> For instance: “Ideological differences aside, the form and trappings of the political rallies were remarkably similar for all the parties. Noisy vehicles, blaring bullhorns, party, tee-shirts, and bumper stickers could always be expected. Music and dance predictably announced political events. The campaign rally represented excitement and entertainment.” William F. Morris, *op. cit.*, 328.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, 334.

<sup>22</sup> Sean Wilentz, “Introduction. Teufelsdröckh’s Dilemma: On Symbolism, Politics, and History” in Sean Wilentz (ed.), *Rites of Power. Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics Since the Middle Ages*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, 3.

unification in the field of research topics, revealing similar patterns in political regimes spanning both geographically and historically: “certain fictions – the divine right of kings, the ceremonial charisma of Geertz’ Indic Negara, the Nazi Aryan cult – may seem like sheer fantasy to later generations and alien cultures. [...] In all cases, they operate as the unchallenged first principles of a political order, making any given hierarchy appear natural and just to rulers and ruled.”<sup>23</sup>

The second problem related with the analysis of festivals, and especially with that of political festivals has to do with the regimes which made use of celebrations as means of disseminating ideology. Political festivals may not have first occurred during the French Revolution, but it was the French Revolution which marked their development and acknowledgement as important means of political legitimation for a regime. Or, as George L. Mosse points out, the most important influence of political festivals, as they emerged during the French Revolution, is that they created the idea of mass politics and legitimized the use of symbols, rituals, processions, songs, in order to create a civic religion, that of the nation.<sup>24</sup> Later on, festivals were an important tool during the French Third Republic, for creating a national identity in the historical context of a defeated and humiliated France, after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871.<sup>25</sup> During the twentieth century, political festivals were one of the most important propaganda and control instruments used by fascist, Nazi, or communist regimes. The problem faced by a historian in such a case has to do with the ways in which he can interpret and analyze a variety of celebrations, mass assemblies, officially and artificially created, formally artistic competitions, which bear the same

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> See George L. Mosse, “Fascism and the French Revolution”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 24, No. 1. (Jan., 1989), 5-26. George Mosse (1918 – 1999) was a historian of Fascism and Nazi Germany. Among his works are: *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964; *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism*, New York: H. Fertig, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Rearick, “Festivals in Modern France: The Experience of the Third Republic”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 12, No. 3. (Jul., 1977), 435.

generic name of *political festivals*, but which have the purpose of disseminating symbols of different ideologies, which in their turn originate from different cultural and historical backgrounds. Literature on political festivals is vast, focusing on different case studies. Among these, Italian fascism, German National Socialism and Soviet Communism have been the most privileged ones, Eastern Europe still remaining an under researched field.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Each of the historical cases mentioned so far, starting from the French Revolution and ending with festivals in Eastern Europe during the second half of the twentieth century has constituted the focus of extensive bibliography, more or less. Here is only a selective bibliography, centered around major historical cases, based on political regimes.

For the French case, Mona Ozouf is arguably the most famous and insightful researcher, her focus being primarily that of festivals during the French Revolution. Mona Ozouf has been a member of *Centre de Reserches Politiques Raymond Aron* at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, as well as Director of Research at the *Centre National de la Reserche Scientifique*. See Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988; Idem,

“Space and Time in the Festivals of the French Revolution”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 17, No.3, (Jul., 1975), 372-384; Joseph F. Byrnes, “Celebration of the Revolutionary Festivals under the Directory: A Failure of Sacrality” in *Church History*, Vol. 63, No.2. (Jun., 1994), 201-220. One should include in this section also the already mentioned Charles Rearick, *op. cit.*

Fascist Italy has also been the focus of studies centered on celebrations and mass politics, although in this case the main topic was Mussolini’s concept of blending aesthetics and politics, with respect to mass politics. See, for instance, Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle. The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini’s Italy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000; Also, Cinzia Sartini Blum, “Fascist Temples and Theaters of the Masses”, *South Central Review*, Vol. 14, No. 3-4, Fascism & Culture: Continuing the Debate. (Autumn-Winter, 1997), 45-58.

The case of Nazi Germany benefited from a wide range of studies, either books or articles, which focused on general, theoretical problems related with the nature of the National-Socialist ideology, and its means of propaganda, or on more particular issues, such as traditional, or newly-conceived forms of artistic performance, which were used by the Nazi regime, in order to construct its legitimacy at a mass level. See: Michael Meyer, “The Nazi Musicologist as Myth Maker in the Third Reich”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 10, No. 4. (Oct., 1975), 649-665; Anson G. Rabinbach, “The Aesthetics of Production in the Third Reich”, *The Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Special Issue: Theories of Fascism. (Oct., 1976), 43-74; Henning Eichner, Robert A. Jones, “The Nazi Thingspiel: Theater for the Masses in Fascism and Proletarian Culture”, *New German Critique*, No. 11. (Spring, 1977), 133-150; Rainer Stollmann, Ronald L. Smith, “Fascist Politics as a Total Work of Art: Tendencies of the Aesthetization of Political Life in National Socialism”, *New German Critique*, No. 14. (Spring., 1978), 41-60; Simon Taylor, “Symbol and Ritual under National Socialism”, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 32, No. 4. (Dec., 1981), 504-520; Susan Manning, “Ideology and Performance between Weimar and the Third Reich: The Case of “Totenmal”, *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Power Plays. (May, 1989), 211-223; Richard Grunberger, *A Social History of the Third Reich*, London: Penguin Books, 1991; Carole Kew, “From Weimar Movement Choir to Nazi Community Dance: The Rise and Fall of Rudolf Laban’s “Festkultur”, *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2. (Winter, 1999), 73-96.

Numerous studies have been published on the case of Soviet Union, covering issues such as festivals during the first years of the Bolshevik regime, celebrations during the regime of Stalin, every-day rites, etc.: Dinko Tomasik, *The Impact of Russian Culture on Soviet Communism*, Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1953; John J. Von Szeliski, “Lunacharsky and the Rescue of Soviet Theatre”, *Educational Theatre Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4, Special International Theatre Issue. (Dec., 1966), 412-420; Mark Zaitsev, “Soviet Theater Censorship”, *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 19, No.2, Political Theatre Issue. (Jun., 1975), 119-128; Christel Lane, *op. cit.*; Christopher A.P Binns, “The Changing Face of Power:

George L. Mosse attempts an insightful comparison between the French Revolution (namely, the Jacobin dictatorship) and Fascism.<sup>27</sup> Still, he fails to take into account the fact that he is dealing with elements which are not contiguous in space and time. He also takes only the Italian fascist case into consideration when discussing about fascism in general. Still, he develops a set of criteria to point out the differences or similarities between the two ideologies, also making extensive

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Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System: Part I", *Man*, New Series, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Dec., 1979), 585-606; Idem. "The Changing Face of Power: Revolution and Accommodation in the Development of the Soviet Ceremonial System: Part II", *Man*, New Series, Vol. 15, No. 1. (Mar., 1980), 170-187; Gabriel A. Almond, "Communism and Political Culture Theory", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 2. (Jan., 1983), 127-138; Christopher Read, *Culture and Power in Revolutionary Russia. The Intelligentsia and the Transition from Tsarism to Communism*, Houndmills, London: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1990; James von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; James von Geldern, Richard Stites, *Mass Culture in Soviet Russia: Tales, Poems, Songs, Movies, Plays, and Folklore, 1917-1953*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995; Karen Petrone, *Life Has Become More Joyous, Comrades. Celebrations in the Time of Stalin*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000. Some bibliographical references mentioned above hold only historiographical value, as they provide the reader with out-of-date information, or conceptualization. Nevertheless, most references provide useful information on celebrations and mass culture, or officially-constructed mass culture, despite the fact that the sheer majority of them are focused on what might be called the "early period" of Soviet communism, mainly the 1920s and 1930s.

Eastern Europe has been rather an under researched area, despite the fact that both fascist and communist regimes have been in power in most countries of the region, during the twentieth century. Leaving aside the literature on folklore, or singing societies, one of the indispensable works on politically-influenced celebrations in communist regimes is Claes Arvidson, Lars Erik Blomqvist, *Symbols of Power. The Esthetics of Political Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiskell International, 1987.

Paradoxically, another region which has been relatively poorly researched, despite its great potential of revealing insightful information on communist regimes, is that of Asia. Communist China under Mao Tze Dong, North Korea, communist Vietnam, all these countries have used festivals and celebrations, more or less, to create and disseminate their ideology. Most of the bibliography written on these countries either is out of date, or is focused on key-figures, such as Kim Ir Sen, or Mao. Nevertheless, relatively recent articles have started to shed light on the issue of political culture, regimes and ideology also. See, for instance, Zhou Qun et al., "Mao Worship, Past and Present" in *Twenty First Century*, No. 20, (1993), 37-43; Thomas Scharping. "The Man, The Myth, The Message: New Trends in Mao-Literature from China", *China Quarterly*, No. 137, (1994), 168-179.

And last but not least, one should take into consideration articles on celebrations and artistic competitions developed as means of creating an ideology, by communist Parties in non-communist states. For instance, John E. Bonn, Nataniel Buchwald, Brooks McNamara, Mady Schuman, "Spartakiade", *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 17, No. 4, International Festival Issue. (Dec., 1973), 99-112.

<sup>27</sup> George L. Mosse, "Fascism and the French Revolution". For instance, he discusses the influence of Christian religion on both fascism and the French Revolution, without clarifying whether fascism borrowed Christian elements directly, or through the influence of the French Revolution. Mosse states that this influence manifested itself both at the level of symbols (a symbol like "the holy flame", for instance) and at the level of terminology. *Ibidem*, 9. The same question of Christian religion influence is put forth by Simon Taylor, *op. cit.*, 514-515 and Klaus Vondung, "National Socialism as a Political Religion: Potentials and Limits of an Analytical Concept", *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (June 2005), 88. Taylor refers to a "Holy History of Nazi movement" as an equivalent of the Christian apocalypse (Taylor, *op. cit.*, 514) and at Hitler as "Christ of the Second Coming" (*Ibidem*, 515).

reference to National Socialism, and occasionally to Bolshevism. He refers to elements such as “unity of people”<sup>28</sup>, “worship of a Supreme Being”<sup>29</sup>, “sense of participation” and “worship of a nation”<sup>30</sup>, the utopia of “a new man for a new nation”<sup>31</sup>, as well as “fascination with death”, “cult of the dead”<sup>32</sup>, and “preoccupation with youth, beauty, war”.<sup>33</sup> Mosse finds similarities between the French Revolution and fascism, concerning most of these aspects.<sup>34</sup> He also develops a set of criteria by which he distinguishes between the National Socialist and Fascist ideologies: leadership and the construction of utopias. According to the first criterion, Nazi leadership appears – at the official level – to be more collective than individual, despite Hitler’s prominence as unchallenged leader, whereas the fascist regime in Italy is centered on the figure of Mussolini.<sup>35</sup> According to Mosse, the Nazi case, as well as that of the French Revolution, are similar in that they both put forth a symbolic leadership.<sup>36</sup> According to the second criterion, the difference between Nazi Germany and fascist Italy lies in the fact that, whereas the former was able to create a concept of utopia, the latter – at least officially – seemed reluctant to such a concept, preferring a more realistic approach at the ideological level.<sup>37</sup>

This would be only one case-study of comparison between different political regimes, which make use of mass festivals and political rituals, in order to create an idealistic ideology and to disseminate it at a mass level. But it is an incomplete case-

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, 17.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 7, 16.

<sup>34</sup> For the last case, of “preoccupation with youth, beauty, war”, he argues that similarities can be found only at a theoretical level, whereas in practice, the two historical contexts would differ from each other. See *Ibidem*, 19.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, 14-15. Hans Meier also argues that Hitler was not suited to political symbolization. Hans Meier, *op. cit.*, 270.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, 15.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 21. According to Hans Meier, “Italian Fascism, in contrast to Bolshevism and national Socialism, signified more a programme for a voluntaristic renewal of the state than a vision of an unprecedented ‘new time’ and ‘new human being’ “. Hans Meier, *op. cit.*, 269.

study, as it focuses mainly on only two regimes, dealing scarcely with other comparisons between temporally synchronic ideologies, such as National Socialism and fascism.

One aspect of a multiple comparison is the way in which the Jacobin dictatorship, Italian Fascism, German National Socialism and Bolshevism dealt with their past: either their own, or their predecessors' past. For the first historical case-study, Mosse is very strict in arguing that it meant a total break with the past, and that it sought to create and disseminate new symbols and to create a new culture.<sup>38</sup> Fascism presented a continuation of Italy's past, recycling old cultural elements of the latter's.<sup>39</sup> Meier argues that Italian Fascism used European classicism, along with "ancient Roman, Augustian features", resonating in the images and statues of Mussolini.<sup>40</sup> The case of Nazi Germany seems more ambiguous at first sight. Mosse argues that it did not mark a break with the past<sup>41</sup>, whereas Meier claims that National Socialism "shoved aside historical precedents in order to bring forth entirely new emblems".<sup>42</sup> As for the Bolshevik regime, Mosse argues in favor of a break with the past, finding a similarity between the latter and the Jacobin dictatorship<sup>43</sup>, which is the contrary of what Meier and James von Geldern state. Meier mentions that in the early phases of Russian communism there were remnants of the immediate past, "Old Russian and Slavic reminiscences" and "religio-eschatological moods"<sup>44</sup>, but he seems to contradict himself, when arguing that communism meant a total break with the past.<sup>45</sup> Von Geldern offers an explanation to this confused situation, by showing the discrepancy which lay between the official level and that of everyday practices. If

<sup>38</sup> George L. Mosse, *op. cit.*, 11.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem.* Hans Meier, *op. cit.*, 269.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem.*, 269. Also, *Ibidem.*, 274, with a similar statement.

<sup>41</sup> George L. Mosse, *op. cit.*, 10.

<sup>42</sup> Hans Meier, *op. cit.*, 274.

<sup>43</sup> George L. Mosse, *op. cit.*, 11.

<sup>44</sup> Hans Meier, *op. cit.*, 272.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem.*, 274.

at an official level the Bolshevik regime sought to create a totally new culture and symbolic network, in practice, it also used festivals and mass celebrations in order to integrate past culture into its ideology.<sup>46</sup> Or, as Gabriel A. Almond states, Lenin believed only in the possibility to change political elites, but not masses, affirming that “the revolutionary elite would have to adapt their revolutionary tactics to the cultures of the masses.”<sup>47</sup>

This is only a scarce attempt at pointing out similarities and differences between different historical regimes, characterized by use of mass politics, and mass festivals, in order to disseminate their ideology. This attempt, however, has pointed out not only the difficulty of finding criteria for comparison, but also that there are multiple levels at which this comparison can be made. Such comparisons may not be absolutely crucial when dealing with the issue of festivals, because, as George Mosse pointed out, several regimes may differ in content, but are similar in the ideological instruments they use.<sup>48</sup> But they are essential in order to understand that festivals, or political festivals, are historical concepts, which differ in space and time, because they are differently perceived and used by various political regimes, in order to serve different purposes, and to disseminate different symbols.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> James von Geldern, *op. cit.*, 72-75 and 86-88. See also Karen Petrone, who focuses on the celebration of New Year’s Day, in order to prove that the latter “offered Soviet citizens the possibility of celebrating in private, and those who had enough material resources to afford trees, decorations and special food created New Year’s festivities at home. These private practices meant that some families could defiantly celebrate Christmas, while others marked out their status as part of the Soviet elite by displaying their prosperity. The holiday sanctioned the participating of citizens in traditional New Year’s practices such as drinking, fortune-telling, and masquerading. While cultural cadres sought to regulate these practices, they could not always do so. The reintroduction of the holiday thus enabled a multiplicity of private practices with private meanings.” Karen Petrone, *op. cit.*, 108.

<sup>47</sup> Gabriel A. Almond, *op. cit.*, 130.

<sup>48</sup> George L. Mosse, *op. cit.*, 10.

<sup>49</sup> For the idea of concepts in history, see W. H. Walsh, “Colligatory Concepts in History” in Patrick Gardiner (ed.), *The Philosophy of History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974, 127-144; Reinhart Koselleck, “Begriffsgeschichte and Social History” in Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 73-91; M. Fairburn, “The Problem of Absent Categories” in Miles Fairburn (ed.), *Social History. Problems, Strategies and Methods*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1999, 13-38.



Thus, in order to analyze a certain political festival within a certain political regime, one must take into consideration the different theoretical approaches on festivals in general, as well as the consequences of such different approaches, which can reveal the political origins of the festival, but also its functions at the level of society, and the interrelationship between mass popular culture and the network of symbols, which are put forth by the festival. At the same time, one should also take into consideration the similarities which exist between festivals, regarding their structure and their forms of organization and functioning, bearing in mind the interplay between the festival itself and the political regime which created it, as well as the interplay between political regimes in general.

### ***1.3 Rituals and Political Rituals***

Leaving aside the methodological questions which need to be taken into consideration when dealing with mass celebrations, one should still ask about the nature of these celebrations. So far, several terms have come into discussion: festivals, political festivals, rituals, symbols. My aim is to provide a definition of rituals and festivals as concepts, but also to shed light on the relation between these concepts. At the same time I intend to observe how these concepts can be applied to a political framework of interpretation, and why would a political regime make appeal to such instruments and for what purposes.

Ritual has been the focus of many and various researches, and thus has been often defined in different ways. For instance, according to one definition, ritual means “any formal action that is set apart from profane action and expresses sacred and religious meaning” or “any everyday practice that is characterized by its routine

nature and by its significance to mundane social interaction”.<sup>50</sup> Other definitions identify ritual with “an often-repeated pattern of behavior which is performed at appropriate times, and which may involve the use of symbols”.<sup>51</sup> It can be easily noticed that both dictionaries emphasize the routine aspect of ritual, its pattern, as well as the fact that rituals can occur not only in the field of religion, but also in that of everyday practices. For the latter approach, most important are Durkheim’s studies, which operate with a strong distinction between the sacred and the profane, placing rituals mainly in the former field.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, of great interest for the functions of ritual in everyday life are Erving Goffman’s studies. Goffman refers to “interaction rituals”, arguing that the latter comprise a code of everyday behavior, which is shared by humans in acknowledging a shared reality.<sup>53</sup> He also refers to rituals as mainly “interpersonal rituals” which attest for a “relationship”.<sup>54</sup> Goffman considers the usual everyday acts as interpersonal, social relations. Christel Lane analyzed official rituals, whose frequency was established not by interpersonal relations, but by a political regime. Influenced by Durkheim<sup>55</sup>, she defines ritual as “a stylized, repetitive social activity which, through the use of symbolism, expresses and defines social relations. Ritual activity occurs in a social context where there is ambiguity or conflict about social relations, and it is performed to resolve or disguise

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<sup>50</sup> “Ritual” in David Jary, Julia Jary, *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1991, 420.

<sup>51</sup> “Ritual” in Gordon Marshall (ed.), *A Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, 569.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>53</sup> Irving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, New York: Doubleday, 1967, 11-15.

<sup>54</sup> Idem, *Relations in Public. Microstudies of the Public Order*, New York, Evanston, San Francisco, London: Harper Colophon Books, 1972, 199. Goffman discusses the existence and functions of so-called “tie-signs”, which he defines as “all such evidence about relationships, that is, about ties between persons, whether involving objects, acts, expressions, and only excluding the literal aspects of explicit documentary statements”. *Ibidem*, 194. He then goes on to identify three sub-classes of “tie-signs”: rituals, markers and change signals. Among these, rituals refer to everyday acts, events, which, by their undergoing, express the state of relationship between two or more persons. *Ibidem*, 199-202.

<sup>55</sup> Gordon Marshall, (ed.), *op. cit.*, 569-570.

them. Ritual can be religious or secular.”<sup>56</sup> But she does not refer to ritual in general, applying this preliminary definition to the context of Soviet Union. This leads her to state that “Ritual in Soviet society [...] is regarded by political elites as one means to gain acceptance for their definitions of crucial social relations and must therefore be viewed as an instrument of cultural, or, to indicate less spectacular cultural changes, of cultural management”.<sup>57</sup> She thus opens the way for a new concept, that of “political ritual”, by referring to state-planned rites regarding family, or events such as birth<sup>58</sup>, wedding<sup>59</sup>, or funeral<sup>60</sup>, as well as rituals of social initiation, such as acceptance into youth organizations.<sup>61</sup> Political rituals might be defined, as Steven Lukes argues, as “rule-governed activity of symbolic character which draws attention of its participants to the objects of thought and feeling which they hold to be of special significance.”<sup>62</sup>

Political rituals occur in the events described by Lane, as well as in mass political assemblies, such as the Nazi rallies.<sup>63</sup> Applying Lukes’ definition of political rituals, one can refer to Nazi rallies as mass assemblies, subjected to a political ritual, by which symbols of the past are reunited into an eschatological narrative supposed to offer legitimation for the Nazi regime and to provide a sense of total cohesion for the participants.<sup>64</sup>

### **1.4 Festivals and Political Festivals**

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<sup>56</sup> Christel Lane, *op. cit.*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*, 27.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, 68.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*, 74.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibidem*, 82.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibidem*, 89.

<sup>62</sup> Steven Lukes, “Political Ritual and Social Integration” in *Sociology*, Vol. 9, 1975, 301.

<sup>63</sup> See Simon Taylor, *op. cit.*, 504-511.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, 515.

Researches on festivals have focused more on case-studies, neglecting a theoretical approach, which would lead to a summative, general definition.<sup>65</sup> Still, despite the fact that festivals vary from culture to culture, they present several basic patterns: they presume the existence of assemblies of people, they have performative and celebrative functions, either in religious or profane, everyday practices.

If festivals, as a general concept, might group several traits, the same thing cannot be stated about political festivals, at least with respect to secondary literature. As it has already been mentioned, researches undergone on political festivals have emphasized the specificity of their own historical contexts, leaving aside the construction of a theoretical framework, in which to include the findings of their own case-studies.

M. Karabaev is one of the few who attempted at defining political festivals.<sup>66</sup> Constructing a general taxonomy of festivals, Karabaev distinguishes between six groups of festivals: “festivals of nature”, “labor festivals”, “festivals of culture”, “political festivals”, “personal family festivals” and “religious festivals”.<sup>67</sup> He then moves on to identify each group, stating the following with regard to political festivals: “Political festivals which developed under the influence of historical processes. Each political festival has important significance for one historical period.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> See, for instance, A. W. Sadler, “The Form and Meaning of the Festival”, *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (1969), 1-16. The title of the article might be misleading, as it apparently sets as aim to discuss the issue of form and meaning in festivals, at a general level. Nonetheless, the author refers to a more specific case study of Japanese traditional shrine festivals (*Ibidem*, 8). Nevertheless, he draws certain conclusions which can apply not just to his case-study, but to general features of festivals.

<sup>66</sup> M. Karabaev, “Festival-Ritual Culture as a Factor of Social Progress” in Said Shermukhamedov, Victoriya Levinskaya, *Spiritual Values and Social Progress*. Retrieved from: <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series03/IHC-1/contents.htm> Last entry: May 10, 2007.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*.

There are several problems related to Karabaev's definition.<sup>69</sup> First of all, the author does not mention the criteria according to which he operates with the above-mentioned classification, leaving the floor opened for guesses. Apparently, it seems that the object of celebration is the main criterion which led to the six group taxonomy. Furthermore, he fails to take into consideration that so-called "festivals of labor", or "festivals of culture" might be easily developed or incorporated into the means of propaganda by a political regime.<sup>70</sup> Thus, several festivals, although officially dedicated to non-political objects of celebrations, can serve political purposes, and depend almost entirely on support from the state, in order to exist at all, entering Karabaev's category of political festivals. Karabaev fails to acknowledge the network of cultural and political relations which appear between different types of festivals.

Secondly, Karabaev's definition of political festivals fails to conceptualize its object of definition, remaining vague and imprecise. Although he is right to point out the interdependence which is created between a political festival and its historical context, he fails to explain the manner in which a political festival develops "under the influence of historical process", as well as to provide the two main parts of any definition: a common corpus of elements in which political festivals can be included and the specific features which make political festivals distinct from other festivals.

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<sup>69</sup> It should be mentioned that the author is not necessarily – at least to my knowledge – acknowledged as a reference with respect to political festivals, or festivals in general. The main reason, for which I have chosen this particular article by this particular author, is that it discusses political festivals at a more general level. My aim was to use Karabaev's definition as a point of departure for constructing a more elaborate definition for political festivals.

<sup>70</sup> See for instance, examples provided by Christel Lane, *op. cit.*, 68, 74 and 82. James von Geldern, *op. cit.*, 72-75. Karen Petrone, *op. cit.*, 53-55 and 108. These authors put forth examples of festivals which were either entirely created by the Soviet regime, during the 1920s and 1930s, or were recycled, reshaped in order to fit in with the new ideology. For the latter case, see Karen Petrone, *op. cit.*, 108, presenting the case of New Year's day' celebration.

## 1.5 Political Rituals and Political Festivals

In order to construct a more reliable definition of political festivals, one needs to look firstly at the relation between rituals and festivals. It is easy to notice that rituals and festivals can be dedicated to the same events, acts, or objects. But at the same time one should also observe that rituals, as cultural practices which mark a certain event or act, occur most often during festive celebrations, in order to transform the respective cultural practice into a socially-accepted one.<sup>71</sup>

Secondly, one also needs to investigate the manner in which such a relation between rituals and festivals becomes active in a political context. This becomes more obvious if we consider that each political regime must provide legitimacy for itself, by constructing a network of commonly accepted ideas and meanings. By “legitimacy/legitimation” one does not understand only an institutionalized form of power, but also a moral acknowledgement on behalf of the members of that political regime, which is achieved through a set of mutually accepted symbols<sup>72</sup>. These provide – at least at an official level<sup>73</sup> – a commonly shared meaning for a certain set

<sup>71</sup> J. Ndukaku Amankulor, “The Condition of Ritual in Theatre: An Intercultural Perspective”, *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 3, The Interculturalism Issue. (1989), 45.

<sup>72</sup> By “symbol” I define “any act or thing which represents something else. More particularly, the smallest meaning-unit in the semantic fields of ritual, dream or myth”. (See “Symbol” in Gordon Marshall (ed.), *op. cit.*, 657.) Also, “a sign in which the connection between the meaning and the sign is conventional rather than natural”(See “Symbol” in David Jary, Julia Jary, *op. cit.*, 508.)

<sup>73</sup> When discussing the nature of symbols, one has to take into account the fact that symbols present a multiple set of meanings. Mircea Eliade constructed a set of six features which characterized symbols, as conceptual instruments for the history of religion. Although this classification might not find direct application to the present case-study (because of both the nature of the research topic and the fact that Eliade’s interpretation might be considered as out-of-date, for present-day interdisciplinary research), it is worth mentioning as it points out the dual nature of symbols, which can be diversely interpreted not just in the field of history of religions, but also in that of history of fascist and communist political regimes during the twentieth century. Eliade considers that the functions and features of symbols are: 1. the capacity of opening modalities of the real or structures of the world that are not manifest in immediate experience. 2. a symbol points to something real. 3. the multivalence of a religious system. 4. capacity of religious symbolism to manifest a coherent unity of the world. 5. the capacity of a symbol to express paradoxical situations. 6. a religious symbol always aims at a reality or structure in which human existence is engaged. See Mircea Eliade, “Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religion” in Mircea Eliade, Joseph Kitagawa (ed.), *The History of Religions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959, 86-107.

of acts, events, behaviors, etc.<sup>74</sup> Remembering Clifford Geertz's definition of culture as "historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols"<sup>75</sup>, it results that a political regime must construct a political culture<sup>76</sup>, disseminated at a mass level, through mass rituals and festivals, which lead to a set of common social and cultural practices.<sup>77</sup>

Political festivals would therefore be defined as politically-organized performative and celebrative events, comprising mass assemblies, artistic competitions, having the purpose of disseminating a variety of political and cultural symbols, in order to provide political legitimacy, by shaping a newly-created set of social relations, as well as a new cultural background.

### **1.6 Functions of Political Festivals**

Political festivals are used in order to create an institutional framework, comprised of mass assemblies which are subjected to a network of symbols that form political culture. Political festivals have two main functions. Firstly, they are ideological instruments of propaganda, used to diffuse and shape ideology. Secondly, they operate in the sense of creating social and civic unity, and of providing legitimacy and authority to the regime.

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<sup>74</sup> See also the definition for the concepts of "legitimacy" in Gordon Marshall (ed.), *op. cit.*, 363.

<sup>75</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System", 3.

<sup>76</sup> For the concept of political culture, I have relied on Robert C. Tucker, "Culture, Political Culture, and Communist Society" in *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 2. (Jun., 1973), 173-190 and Gabriel A. Almond, "Communism and Political Culture Theory", *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 15, No. 2. (Jan., 1983), 127-138. Tucker discussed the concept of political culture, and how it emerged under the influence of anthropological studies at the end of the 1960s. Robert C. Tucker, *op. cit.*, 175.

<sup>77</sup> In this respect, one can also argue with Irving Goffman's emphasis on ritual as performing a mainly social function (See Goffman, *Relations in Public*, 199) by adding the cultural aspect to the research on rituals.

The first function appears especially when a regime is at the beginning of its existence and intends to consolidate its authority. This can be well observed in the case of the French Third Republic, as Rearick points out.<sup>78</sup> The regime of the Third Republic resorted to a wide range of artistic and celebrative means, such as historical and patriotic celebrations, popular plays, concerts, art exhibitions, exhibitions of industry, or displays of archaeological monuments.<sup>79</sup> Their purpose was to include all symbols and elements of artistic, historic or traditional culture, which could have had a symbolic potential for conferring legitimacy to the regime.

In the case of the French Third Republic, one deals with a formal framework for political festivals. The latter however could appear as means of providing an alternative ideology to the official one, as in the case of *Spartakiads* in the United States of America, during the 1930s.<sup>80</sup> In this case, however, political festivals proved to be useless, as long as the symbols of communist political culture could not appeal to American spectators.<sup>81</sup>

The second main function of political festival is well explored by Serhy Yekelchik in his study of Soviet politics in the Ukraine, during 1943-1953.<sup>82</sup> In this case, the Soviet state intended to shape the personal identity of ordinary citizens, by setting a set of politically-originated, socially-accepted values and norms, whose observing meant the immediate integration of the individuals into the general collective.<sup>83</sup> Stephen Kotkin made the same observation, previously to Yekelchik, and

<sup>78</sup> Charles Rearick, *op. cit.*, 439-440.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, 440.

<sup>80</sup> John E. Bonn, Nataniel Buchwald, Brooks McNamara, Mady Schuman, *op. cit.*, 99-100.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibidem*, 111-112.

<sup>82</sup> Serhy Yekelchik, "The Civic Duty to Hate. Stalinist Citizenship as Political Practice and Civic Emotion (Kiev, 1943-53)", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 7 (2006) 3, 529-556.

<sup>83</sup> Jochen Hellbeck is one the authors who have conducted research on personal journals and autobiographies, in an attempt to grasp the ordinary man's attitude toward the practices of the regime. See Jochen Hellbeck, "Fashioning the Stalinist Soul: The Diary of Stepan Podlubnyi (1931-1939)", in Sheila Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Stalinism. New Directions*, London: Routledge, 2000, 77-116; Idem,



he extended it to the entire Soviet regime, not just to official politics in a certain geographical area.<sup>84</sup>

### **1.7. Conclusions**

Political festivals incorporate a vast and complex network of historical case-studies and have been the focus of several theoretical approaches. Anthropology and history of culture have proved extremely useful in constructing a working definition for political festivals. At the same time, they have enabled the construction of a theoretical network of interrelations between concepts such political festivals and political rituals.

In order to gain mass legitimacy, political regimes have resorted to festivals and rituals as traditional means of forming mass culture and ascribing identity within the collective, giving them a secular and pragmatic purpose. Political regimes have formed their own structure of political symbols, which in their turn have influenced the means used to disseminate them.

Although, studies on political festivals have abounded with respect to fascism, National Socialism, or Soviet communism, the region of Eastern Europe, as shown before, is yet to be explored. Romania presents an important case study, especially for the 20<sup>th</sup> century, if one takes into consideration the fact that it has witnessed the use of political festivals from the 1930s up until 1980s, by various regimes and ideologies. Nevertheless, before construing political festivals in 20<sup>th</sup> century Romania, one needs to be aware not just of the difficulties imposed by actual research itself, but by the complexity of the phenomenon which is studied.

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“Working, Struggling, Becoming: Stalin-Era Autobiographical Texts”, *Russian Review*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (2001), 340-359.

<sup>84</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, 220.

## **Chapter 2: The National “Song to Romania” Festival: Structure and Functions in Official Sources**

### **2.1 Preliminaries**

Politically oriented, or politically organized festivals were a common feature of various regimes in Romania, starting with festivals and rallies in honor of King Charles II, in the 1930s, continuing with youth and work festivals in the 1950s<sup>85</sup> and culminating with the “Song to Romania” festival, in the 1970s and 1980s. The latter went the furthest with regard to official purpose, scale of development, as it aimed at incorporating all forms of artistic, cultural, as well as technical and science activities into a politically marked framework, attributing them only propagandistic and educational features.

This chapter aims at providing a historical overview of the “Song to Romania” festival, in order to construe an analytical framework based on the general definition of political festivals and their main functions. I will first integrate the “Song to Romania” into the historical context of the Romanian communist regime of the 1970s and 1980s, identifying the main ideological marks which shaped the characteristics of the festival. I will also provide a critical overview of official sources on which I construct my analysis of the festival. After having pointed out the chronological framework and official main functions of the festival, I will focus on its two main components: masses, as performers – represented foremostly by amateur artists, who were backed up and also legitimized by professional artists – and Nicolae Ceaușescu, as the supreme spectator. Analyzing the first component, I will deal with the issues of mass artistic activity, as a means to delegitimize professional artists and prevent any

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<sup>85</sup> For instance, one of the most important festivals of this type was the Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship, organized at Bucharest, between August 2 and August 16, 1953.

manifestation of artistic resistance to the regime, and “folklorism”, as means of using traditional folk art for the purpose of shaping national ideology.<sup>86</sup> For the second component, I will only tangentially deal with issue of the “cult of personality”, concentrating instead on how political ritual is integrated within the festival, in order to construct the image of the leader, for the masses to follow. The final aim is to analyze “Song to Romania” as an official framework for the interrelations between Ceaușescu’s personality cult and the symbols disseminated at a mass national level, which dealt with socially-accepted issues such as the nation, or progress. Thus, I argue that “Song to Romania” becomes more than a mere instrument of providing legitimacy. It becomes an instrument which itself creates ideology, by shaping it.

## **2.2 Historical Context**

After the Stalinist period of Romanian communism of the 1950s, led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and the relative liberalization which started with the end of Dej’s regime and continued with the first part of the regime led by Nicolae Ceaușescu until the end of the 1960s, the 1970s marked a shift in the history of communist Romania, from a period of relative and limited liberalization, to one marked by what Vlad Georgescu calls simply “a new political regime”<sup>87</sup>, which resorted to nationalism

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<sup>86</sup> I am using “folklorism”, as a concept coined and firstly used by Anca Giurchescu. The author develops a dual taxonomy, of “folklorism” and “folklore”, arguing that the former is a product of “strictly guided selection and transformation of folklore, the latter thus being “a non-controllable process”. Anca Giurchescu, “The Power of Dance and Its Social and Political Uses”, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 33, (2001), 117.

<sup>87</sup> Vlad Georgescu put forth the following chronological classification regarding to the history of the Romanian communist regime: “In Romania, the period beginning December 1947 could be roughly divided into three distinct stages: first Stalinism, covering the 1950s, then the years of limited internal liberalism in the early 1960s and, finally, the successful assertion of Romanian autonomy in 1964. This latter period ended in 1974 with the victory of a new political regime, which is in some respects sui generis. As with many other autonomous socialist regimes, the personality cult is a striking characteristic.” Vlad Georgescu, “Introduction” in Vlad Georgescu (ed.), *Romania: 40 Years (1944-1984)*, Washington DC: Praeger, 1985, 2. Although controversy on the periodization of the communist regime in Romania still exists, especially with regard to the actual extent of liberalization during the 1960s, Georgescu’s classification can be accepted in general terms.

as means of gaining mass legitimization, thus paving the way for what Katherine Verdery considered to be “socialist nation”.<sup>88</sup> Nationalism, national ideology and personality cult<sup>89</sup> become the key-issues of the Romanian communist regime during the 1970s and 1980s.

Vladimir Tismăneanu explains this ideological twist in view of the Romanian Communist Party’s need for political legitimacy, as Marxism-Leninism alone had failed to provide the latter.<sup>90</sup> This official blending of nationalism and socialism required a new set of symbols, as well as a reinterpretation of the history of the Party itself.<sup>91</sup> Officially, the nation would form a positive element in the construction of socialism, acquiring the role of main instrument for providing unity and cohesion.<sup>92</sup> This fact can be easily explained by the main function of the nation, as defined by Verdery: “‘Nation’ is a name for a relationship that links a state (actual or potential) with its subjects”.<sup>93</sup> The focus in this definition is on the relationship, which actually presupposes an increased control over the masses, on the one hand, and the gradual identification of the state with the person of Nicolae Ceaușescu.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, 118.

<sup>89</sup> Daniel N. Nelson defines personality cult as “the system of adulation and fear of the ruler sought by autocratic populists [...] it is a leadership strategy in which highly charismatic and highly coercive components exist simultaneously, with coercion applied to enforce the ‘acceptance’ of the ruler’s persona”. Daniel N. Nelson, “Charisma, Control, and Coercion: The Dilemma of Communist Leadership”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 1. (Oct., 1984), 8.

<sup>90</sup> Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism pentru eternitate. O istorie politică a comunismului românesc*, Iași: Polirom, 2005, 225-226. The book appeared originally as Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, 220-240.

<sup>91</sup> Verdery, *op. cit.*, 118.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>93</sup> Idem, “Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-Socialist Romania”, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2. (Summer, 1993), 180.

<sup>94</sup> Daniel N. Nelson constructed a taxonomy with respect to state control, based on two concepts: “horizontal integration”, specific to regimes in which the focus is on decentralization, and in which local authority benefits from a higher level of autonomy; “vertical integration”, specific to countries in which the central power is the main source of authority and the local level is only given the role of executing the decisions from the center. Nelson applied the latter concept to the case-study of communist Romania, arguing that the Romanian communist regime used such a type of integration in order to assume total control over local sources of power. See Daniel N. Nelson, “Vertical Integration

Daniel N. Nelson coined the term “autocratic populism” in order to include the elements of control, coercion – on the one hand – and that of charisma – on the other, which were present in the array of propaganda means of personality cult.<sup>95</sup> The contrastive appearance of the term is indicative of the entire atmosphere which resided over Ceaușescu during his regime, as well as of the present memory of those past events.

Most authors identify the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, in 1974, as the official starting for this period of nationalistic socialism, marked by the personality cult of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Vlad Georgescu argues that the Congress paved the way for a presidential regime, based on dynastic socialism.<sup>96</sup> Tismăneanu agrees in this respect, and adds that the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress started the process of rewriting of national and Party history, in order to adapt the latter to the new requirements of building the Ceaușescu myth.<sup>97</sup> The most important decision of the Congress was “The RCP Program of Building the Multilaterally-Developed Socialist Society and Marching Forward toward Communism”, which combined Marxist-Leninist ideology with arguments drawn from national history. The program was officially based on dialectic materialism, but it integrated the national history into its discourse, with a main focus on the unity of the Romanian people.<sup>98</sup> It started with a historical overview of the “Romanian People’s Fight [...] For the Accomplishment of the National Armed Antifascist and Anti-Imperialist Insurrection” and it dealt with an all-

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and Political Control in Eastern Europe: The Polish and Romanian Cases”, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (Summer, 1981), 211-212.

<sup>95</sup> Daniel N. Nelson, *Romanian Politics in the Ceausescu Era*, New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1988, 158. Nelson also resorts to the concepts of charisma, control and coercion in order to explain the bases of leadership of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Idem, “Charisma, Control, and Coercion: The Dilemma of Communist Leadership”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 17, No. 1, (Oct., 1984), 1-15.

<sup>96</sup> Georgescu, *op. cit.*, 7.

<sup>97</sup> Tismăneanu, *op. cit.*, 227 and 242.

<sup>98</sup> See “Programul PCR de făurire a societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate și înaintare a României spre comunism” in *Mică enciclopedie de politologie* [Abbreviated Encyclopedia of Political Science], Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1977, 363. Also, Tismăneanu, *op. cit.*, 242.

encompassing variety of topics, such as industrial and agrarian politics, urban and rural strategies of development, financial politics, social classes, etc.<sup>99</sup> It also focused heavily on the role of the state, arguing in favor of “Democratic Centralism”.<sup>100</sup> The Program would become the leading official document for the communist regime, and for any official historical writing, until 1989.<sup>101</sup>

Following the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress was the “Congress of Political Education and Socialist Culture”, held between June 2 and June 4, 1976. This congress, although developed in the shadow of the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of RCP, is most important for the emergence of “Song to Romania”, as it officially stated the importance for developing a network of mass artistic activities, in order to broaden and increase the level of education for the masses. Nicolae Ceaușescu, without making any reference to a possible festival, officially stressed the importance of “developing in enterprises and institutions unitary councils of education and culture, which would organize, under the leadership of Party organizations, the entire activity of spreading science, of political education, as well as the cultural-artistic work and the pleasant and educative organization of free time.”<sup>102</sup>

This mentioning already set the stage for what was to become the basic structure of “Song to Romania”. In an age marked by a nationalistic socialist ideology

<sup>99</sup> \*\*\*, *Programul Partidului Comunist Român de făurire a societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate și înaintare a României spre socialism* [The Romanian Communist Party’s Program of Building the Multilaterally-Developed Socialist Society and Marching Forward Toward Communism], Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1975, 217-218.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*, 219.

<sup>101</sup> Tismăneanu, *op. cit.*, 242.

<sup>102</sup> Original version in Romanian: “să constituim în întreprinderi și instituții consilii unitare de educație și cultură, care să organizeze, sub conducerea organizațiilor de partid, întreaga activitate de răspîndire a științei, de educare politică, munca cultural-artistică, precum și organizarea plăcută și educativă a timpului liber.” Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Expunere cu privire la activitatea politico-educativă de formare a omului nou, constructor conștient și devotat al societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate și al comunismului în România” [Presentation Regarding the Political Educative Activity of Forming the New Man, Conscious and Devoted Constructor of the Socialist Multilaterally-Developed Society and of Communism in Romania] in *Congresul educației politice și al culturii socialiste. 2-4 iunie 1976* [The Congress of Political Education and Socialist Culture. June 2-4, 1976], Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1976, 51. See also Annex No. 1, for the whole fragment regarding the artistic and educative activity in city-towns and communes.

and by an ever increasing cult of personality, based only partially on Ceaușescu's popularity after the events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, but more and more on coercion and total control of the state, "Song to Romania" had the task of integrating all this elements in order to provide legitimacy for the regime.

### 2.3 Official Sources

Official sources on "Song to Romania" are vast and multiple, as the festival was one of the main propaganda targets of official newspapers, official radio and T.V. broadcasts.<sup>103</sup> The Romanian Television had a special program dedicated to amateur participants at the festival, entitled *Antena „Cîntării României”*.<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, television and radio programs also covered the festival extensively, inserting brief reports on rehearsals for various performances within the festival, or on participants and their achievements.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>103</sup> *Scînteia*, *România Liberă*, *Scînteia tinerețului* were the main Romanian communist newspapers. Each of these newspapers had its own columns, dedicated to the "Song to Romania" festival. For instance, *Scînteia* had the column of "National Festival "Song to Romania", usually on page 4.

<sup>104</sup> Anca Giurchescu states, in article from 1987, referring to the festival at that time that: "Romanian TV programs, now reduced to two hours per day, include, at least three times a week, fragments of the ongoing Festival, especially in periods marked by important political events." Anca Giurchescu, "The National Festival "Song to Romania": Manipulation of Symbols in the Political Discourse" in Claes Arvidsson, Lars Erik Blomqvist, *op. cit.*, 166. For an analysis of Romanian TV programs during the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu, see Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx. O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc* [Standing on Marx's Shoulders. An Introduction to the History of Romanian Communism], Bucharest: Curtea veche, 2005, 443-466.

<sup>105</sup> The TV and radio coverage of the festival can be well and accurately observed in the Radio Free Europe Monitoring files, available at the Open Society Archives in Budapest, Hungary. For instance, for the period of November 28 – December 31, 1976, at the beginning of the first edition of the festival, there are 28 mentionings of the festival in the Radio Free Europe monitoring files. See HU OSA 300-60-4, Romanian Monitoring, Archival Box 8. For November 28, 1976, File 815. For November 29, 1976 – File 850. For November 30, 1976 – Files 882 and 883. For December 2, 1976 – File 44. For December 3, 1976 – File 65. For December 5, 1976 – Files 122, 123 and 126. For December 7, 1976 – File 180. For December 8, 1976 – Files 188 and 189.

For December 9, 1976 – File 231. For December 11, 1976 – Files 279, 286 and 296. For December 14, 1976 – File 366. For December 15, 1976 – File 381. For December 16, 1976 – File 414. For December 17, 1976 – File 485. For December 19, 1976 – File 494. For December 22, 1976 – Files 569 and 578. For December 24, 1976 – Files 625 and 631. For December 25, 1976 – File 660. For December 26, 1976 – File 678. For December 28, 1976 – File 702. For December 29, 1976 – Files 723, 742 and 743. For December 30, 1976 – File 762. For December 31, 1976 – File 806. The number of files available is indicative of the importance given by the regime to this festival, especially in its incipient period.

Apart from official media at the central level, dealing with information on general issues, the festival was also the focus of specialized magazines, such as *Cîntarea României* [Song to Romania]<sup>106</sup>, which reported on the festival in much greater detail, focusing on case-studies, all around the country, as well as presenting interviews with both organizers and participants at the festival.

The festival was also intensively popularized through collections of books and publications.<sup>107</sup> These included literary anthologies of poetry written by participants at the festival, as well as volumes of reports regarding “Song to Romania” at local levels.<sup>108</sup> To this added numerous other publications, or books, which had tangential connection to the festival, but which were forced to mention it, as they tackled with issues related to culture or science.<sup>109</sup> Articles in newspapers or magazines were of different types. A first type was made of program-articles, without any mentioned author, which set the structure and functions of the festival<sup>110</sup>. Such articles also included reports on mass assemblies within “Song to Romania”, dedicated to Ceaușescu.<sup>111</sup> The absence of the author might be interpreted as an indicator for the fact that the opinions and ideas present in the respective articles were not of any person in particular, but of everyone, in general.

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<sup>106</sup> The first issue of “Song to Romania” magazine appeared in October 1980. The magazine was by no means a new one, as it simply replaced the old *Îndrumătorul cultural* [The Cultural Guide], which appeared until September 1980. Apart from the title, there was no difference between the two magazines, as they dealt with the same issues, and had the same staff of editors and journalists. “Song to Romania” was chosen as the new name for the “Cultural Guide”, in order to relate it to the all-cultural-activity-encompassing festival. The magazine appeared until 1989. After the events of 1989, it changed its title to *Timpul liber* [Free time].

<sup>107</sup> See, for instance, an article in *Scînteia*, January 5, 1978, 4, dealing with editorial plans for publishing houses.

<sup>108</sup> One such example of an anthology is: Ecaterina Mucenic, Paula Braga, *Excelsior '87. Ediția a XVI-a*, Bucharest, 1987.

<sup>109</sup> For instance, Pierre Verone, *Inventica*, Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1983. On page xxxvii, in the introduction to the book, the author makes reference to “Song to Romania”, as the setting in which mass scientific activity could be undertaken.

<sup>110</sup> See, for instance, *Scînteia*, November 28, 1976, 1 and 4.

<sup>111</sup> For instance, *România liberă*, June 13, 1977, 1 and 3. Also, *România liberă*, July 6, 1989, 1 and 3.



A second type included editorials, written by well known artists, or writers, dealing with theoretical problems and coined in a literary style<sup>112</sup> A third type comprised general articles on culture, which made reference to “Song to Romania”, stressing its importance for stimulating mass culture and forming the new, multilaterally-developed man, who was capable of both producing material goods, in the factory, as a worker, or in the field as a peasant, and of creating works of art.<sup>113</sup> A fourth and last type included reports specifically dedicated to various performances and competition levels within “Song to Romania”, as well as reports pointing out to the negative sides of the festival.<sup>114</sup> Surely, the critics did not deal with the nature of the festival and did not advance any real critique to the regime. They worked instead with a pseudo-type of critique, directed against artistic organizers who could not cope with the official directives, or with what the authors of the articles considered to be a “low level of artistic socialist conscience”.<sup>115</sup>

These sources create the official image of the festival. They are indicative of how the regime perceived the festival and of the purposes for which it used the festival. Among the “wooden-language” style of articles, reports, editorials lay the

<sup>112</sup> See, for instance, *Scînteia*, January 10, 1978, 1 and 2: Pop Simion, *Muncă și cultură* [Work and Culture]; *Scînteia*, January 20, 1978, 4: Ion Ionoși, *Democratismul culturii noastre socialiste* [The Democracy of our Socialist Culture]; *Scînteia*, January 11, 1976, 1 and 3: Paul Erdos (vicepresident of the Union of Plastician Artists), *Izvoarele limpezi ale muncii și creației* [The Clear Springs of Work and Creation].

<sup>113</sup> See *Scînteia*, January 11, 1978, 4: Natalia Stancu, *Avanpremieră 1978: Filmul* [Perspective on 1978: Films]; *Scînteia*, May 13, 1978, 4: Silviu Achim, *Săptămîna Muzeului Național – act de cultură și educație patriotică* [National Museum Week – an Act of Patriotic Culture and Education]; *Scînteia*, January 13, 1978, 4: N. Popescu-Bogdănești, *Note stridente în melosul popular* [Atonal Musical Notes in Folklore].

<sup>114</sup> See *Scînteia*, January 14, 1978, 4. *Scînteia*, January 18, 1978, 4: N. Popescu-Bogdănești, *Din pasiune și îndrumare calificată s-a născut o manifestare viu aplaudată (Adunații-Copăcenii)* [Out of Passion and Qualified Guidance A Lively Celebrated Manifestation Was Born (Village of Adunații-Copăcenii)].

<sup>115</sup> See C. Stănescu, “Potențialul artistic și educativ al formațiilor tineretului” [The Artistic and Educational Potential of Youth Formations] in *Scînteia*, October 27, 1976, 1 and 2. The author criticizes the cultural activists for not being able to integrate more and more teenagers – workers, pupils – into the festival.

political symbols and ideas which the communist regime was disseminating at a mass level.<sup>116</sup>

## 2.4 “Song to Romania”: Chronological Framework and Structure

Song to Romania emerged as mass artistic festival aiming at encompassing all official artistic manifestations, as well as a network of competitions, held every two years. It lasted from 1976 to 1989, numbering seven editions. Officially, the festival witnessed a formal increase in number of participants, ranging from 2,000,000 members for its first edition of 1976-1977, to 5,084,000 “performers and creators of various ages and professions”.<sup>117</sup> To these data, one should also add the number of passive participants, such as spectators, or persons in charge of organizing the performances.

As Anca Giurchescu points out, Song to Romania did not bring anything innovative concerning the type of artistic performances, continuing, in fact, a line of artistic festivals, which had been set up, with the proclamation of the communist republic (1948).<sup>118</sup> For instance, *Festivalul filmului la sate* [The Film Festival for Villages] existed before “Song to Romania”.<sup>119</sup> However, after the emergence of

<sup>116</sup> Language analysis of communist discourse has been the focus of several studies and researches. One of the most important researches is that of Francoise Thom, *Newspeak. The Language of Soviet Communism*, London: Claridge Press, 1989. (Original version, in French: Francoise Thom, *La langue de bois*, Paris: Julliard, 1987). Also, for a semiotic approach, see Rachel Walker, “Marxism-Leninism as Discourse: The Politics of the Empty Signifier and the Double Bind”, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 19, No. 2. (Aprl., 1989), 161-189.

<sup>117</sup> HU OSA 300-60-1. Romanian Unit. Subject Files. Box 109. Folder 804. Bucharest Agerpres, September 8, 1989.

<sup>118</sup> Anca Giurchescu, “The National Festival “Song to Romania”: Manipulation of Symbols in the Political Discourse”, in Claes Arvidsson, Lars Erik Blomqvist, *op. cit.*, 164.

<sup>119</sup> This particular festival is mentioned, for instance, in *Scînteia*, January 11, 1975, 4. “Song to Romania” only started in 1976. Furthermore, the main ideas on which the festival was based had been previously to its emergence. See Annex no. 2 for articles from *Scînteia*, year 1975.

“Song to Romania”, this festival was incorporated in it, along with other already existing festivals at local or regional level.<sup>120</sup>

Not just particular festivals existed well before “Song to Romania”, but also the entire structure on which the festival was based for its 13 years duration. The “Decree No. 703/1974 for Establishing Unitary Norms of Structure for Cultural-Educative Institutions” had already set out a national structure of cultural institutions, made up of *cămine culturale* [houses of culture for rural areas], *case de cultură* [houses of culture for urban areas], clubs, libraries, museums, theaters, centers for guiding folk creation and mass artistic movement and people’s schools of art.<sup>121</sup> Several such cultural and artistic institutions existed long before Decree No. 703, which serves in this case only as an argument that the festival did not presuppose a structural innovation. The decree also emphasized the quantitative development of cultural activity and it stressed the importance of educative role that culture was supposed to assume within the socialist society. Apart from this, official propaganda was already emphasizing the necessity of increasing the cultural activity at the mass level, in order to create the socialist conscience of the new man.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> See the mentioning of the Film Festival for Villages, 1976-1977 Edition, in *Scînteia*, December 2, 1976, 4. The Festival is officially organized under the auspices of the “Song to Romania” festival.

<sup>121</sup> See “Decret pentru stabilirea normelor unitare de structură pentru instituțiile cultural-educative 703/1973” [Decree 703/1973 for Establishing Unitary Norms of Structure for Cultural-Educative Institutions] in *Culegere de legi, decrete și hotărîri. În ajutorul activului sindical*, Vol. VII [Collection of Laws, Decrees and Decisions. For the Use of Syndicate Activists], Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1974, 512-513. *Cămin cultural* is defined as an institution which can be organized in every commune, as a state-financed institution, without any juridical representation, with the sole purpose of organizing permanent cultural-artistic activity. The precondition for the existence of a *cămin cultural* is that the building housing it should have at least one hall for cultural and educational manifestations (Decree 703/1974, Chapter II, Article 4, in *Ibidem*.) *Casa de cultură* is defined as a state financed institution, in the subordination of the People’s Council in every city, town, working center, etc, and without any juridical representation. The preconditions for the existence of a *casa de cultură* were that it should organize a permanent cultural-educative activity and have at least a people’s university, with three courses, a choir, a theater brigade, a dance group and a propagandistic artistic brigade. It should also have had there or four artistic and technical-practical circles (Decree 703/1973, Chapter II, Article 5, in *Ibidem*, 513).

<sup>122</sup> For instance, “Universitatea populară. Atribuții și răspunderi sporite în sistemul răspîndirii cunoștințelor științifice” [People’s University. Increased Functions and Responsibilities in the System of Spreading Scientific Knowledge] in *Scînteia*, January 19, 1975, 1 and 3. Also, Vasile Tomescu,

There was one aspect, however, in which “Song to Romania” outpaced every other artistic structure created previously by the regime: the scale and the aim to encompass all forms of artistic activity at all levels – local, regional, national – and to subject them to the guidance of the Party.

The festival was only briefly mentioned for the first time in *Scînteia*, in October 1976<sup>123</sup>, but the first program article in the media was on November 28, the same year.<sup>124</sup> I consider this article to be, from the official perspective of the regime, a source of primary importance, as it covers both the structure and the functions of the festival as well as its meaning within the official ideological system.

“Song to Romania” was presented as the materialization of the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress of the RCP, in the domain of political, ideological and cultural-educational activity.<sup>125</sup> The above mentioned article relies heavily on quotations from Nicolae Ceausescu’s speech, at the Plenary Meeting of The Central Committee of the RCP, from November 2-3, 1976, indicating him as the originator of the festival.

The main objectives of “Song to Romania” were: the creation of new works of art, - “inspired by present-day realities, by the history of our people, by the glorious historical past of our Party and of the working class” – the quantitative increase of spectacles and concerts and, finally, the qualitative increase of artistic performances, regarding the ideological content and artistic quality.<sup>126</sup>

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“Obiective educative în viața muzicală din județe” [Educational Objectives in Musical Activity from Counties] in *Scînteia*, April 29, 1975, 4.

<sup>123</sup> Nicolae Nistor, “Cîntare României. Un festival al muncii avîntate pentru înflorirea patriei socialiste” [Song to Romania. A Festival of Forward-Looking Work for the Blossoming of our Socialist Motherland] in *Scînteia*, October 23, 1976, 4.

<sup>124</sup> “Festivalul național al educației și al culturii socialiste „Cîntarea României” “[The National Festival of Socialist Education and Culture “Song to Romania”] in *Scînteia*, November 28, 1976, 1 and 4. Before that, the festival had been mentioned at the Plenary Meeting of The Central Committee of the RCP, from November 2-3, 1976. *Ibidem*, 1.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 1. The article also appeared in *Almanahul Scînteia*, 1977, 69-72.

<sup>126</sup> *Scînteia*, November 28, 1976, 1.

Held every two years, the festival's framework was supposed to include various artistic competitions, starting with the mass level – held between October of the first year of the respective edition and February of the following year – the county level, also including the sectors of Bucharest – held between March and April – , the regional level – held in May in the cities of Bucharest, Constanța, Pitești, Craiova, Timișoara, Cluj-Napoca, Baia-Mare, Tîrgu-Mureș, Iași, Galați – and the republican level – in the last decade of May.<sup>127</sup> An edition of the festival would end with the Exhibits of the Amateur and Professional Artists, awarded within the competition.<sup>128</sup>

Despite its broad social appeal, the festival also imposed certain criteria on the persons who were allowed to participate. The preconditions were related to the activity of the participant, in mass production, as well as his/her “social and ethical exemplary behavior”.<sup>129</sup> Apart from these there were also artistic criteria: participants were supposed to “promote a revolutionary and efficiently-educative art”, and to conduct a recurring artistic and educational activity among their colleagues.<sup>130</sup>

Two more aspects, presented in the program-article need to be put forth and then further explored. The first one regards the obligations of artistic formations:

- each formation must present for the public at least one spectacle per month;
- theater brigades will present, annually, one or two plays in one act, for the first time;
- coral and orchestral formations will take on six to eight new songs, annually;
- dancing formations will enrich their repertoire annually, with three up to four folk dances, respectively with one, two new thematic dances;

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>128</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>129</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibidem.*

- artistic brigades will present, annually, two or three performances, for the first time;
- literary montage formations will annually prepare one or two new programs<sup>131</sup>

The second issue regards one of the last mentionings of the article, regarding the fact that the festival would not be a mere spectacle, but that it would be accompanied by a “vast program of political and educational manifestations”.<sup>132</sup>

And last but not least, the article underlines the relationship which was supposed to be developed between professional artists and amateur ones: “professional artistic institutions grant qualified support to amateur artists, collaborating with them in order to increase the qualitative level of the performance.”<sup>133</sup>

The ideas of this article were the essence of what the regime intended to achieve with “Song to Romania”, but they are also indicative of the apparent ambiguity surrounding the festival, in particular, and the communist ideology, in general. The article deals with issues related to mass culture, political education, and quantitative increase of artistic activity. Nicolae Ceaușescu is apparently left in the background. In fact, he is not in the background of the topic, he is simply above. The Party is present as the primary source of authority and Ceaușescu as his only person representing it. This shows the interrelationship between Party and Leader: The Party is the immaterial source of power, granting authority to Ceaușescu, while the latter embodies the Party and its directives. This is evident, when observing that all the highly detailed and precise directives, rules, classifications emanate from Ceaușescu’s speeches.

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibidem*.

The objectives of the festival emphasize quantity and newness, but not *innovation*. They also illustrate the hidden objectives which the regime wanted to achieve through “Song to Romania”. The newness of a present-oriented art, dealing with topics of national and party history, indicates the desire to replace traditional forms of art, which were – more or less – considered to carry potential symbolism of subversive ideologies, but at the same time it indicates the desire to create a uniform art, closed to all influences but those of the Party. Thus, the focus is on the role of art as propagandistic tool, as a means to inoculate mass political education, through artistic performances. This explains the accent on the quantity, which should manifest itself both in the number of works of art, but also in the number of people performing and attending spectacles and performances.

The precise naming of different types of artistic formations and the quantitative repertoire for each of them illustrate perfectly the characteristics of the festival, as identified by Giurchescu: “diversity”, “continuity”, “highly formalized”.<sup>134</sup> But they also illustrate the apparatus which lay behind them and the state-operated control, as “vertical integration”, in Nelson’s term. The diversity of artistic performances is indicative of the state control in every area of activity, while the continuity of artistic performances – presupposed by the annual artistic quota which had to be fulfilled – indicates time control on behalf of the Party. The highly formalized structure of the festival is obvious, as this was the only framework in which the rigid political control could manifest itself.

Despite the fact that these directives act as a mirror for the nature of the political regime, and for its objectives of total control, one should not forget that all of them are directed toward the masses and toward the masses, personified by amateur

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<sup>134</sup> Anca Giurchescu, “The National Festival “Song to Romania”: Manipulation of Symbols in the Political Discourse”, in Claes Arvidsson. Lars Erik Blomqvist, *op. cit.*, 165-167.

artists, from urban and rural areas. This served as a means of depriving professional artists of their basic identity, that of sole creators of art, thus undermining their capacity of eventually contesting the measures of the regime.

## **2.5 The Masses within “Song to Romania”**

The masses were the primary actor of “Song to Romania. The purpose was not only to deprive professional artists of their basic identity, but also to build ideology upon the symbolic and actual value of amateurs for the regime: they not only represented, they actually were the people: a mass of individuals which needed to be kept under control, and from which the regime gained its legitimacy.

Giurchescu identified several symbols, which were disseminated through the “Song to Romania” festival: “moral-political unity of the people”, “socialist democracy”, “multilaterally developed socialist society” and “New Man, builder of the most righteous system in the world”.<sup>135</sup> These symbols were designed to appeal to masses, as they put forth ideas, such as mass unity, mass progress in the name of forming the “New Man”, in the all-encompassing framework of national ideology and socialist politics.

Masses were best represented in the “Song to Romania” discourse by references to amateur artists, as well as by exploring and using traditional folklore as means of creating unity. Amateur artists were considered as the primary point of departure for the formation of the multilaterally-developed new man. “Multilaterally-developed” meant multiple specializations in totally different fields of activity. The focus was on workers, peasants, pupils who, beside their basic activities, were supposed to manifest themselves in the artistic domain as well, thus reaching the

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibidem*, 166.



status of *new man*. The issue was a central one in official mass media, numerous articles dealing with the importance of amateur artists for the process of “advancing toward communism”.<sup>136</sup> “Song to Romania” was supposed to perform several functions for mass amateur artists. Firstly, official ideology stated that modernization through industrial and agrarian development could only be achieved by a high level of political conscience, and this, in its turn, was attainable for the masses by education. Education meant acquiring a political and artistic culture, as the two components were seen as interdependent of each other.

Secondly, the festival was designed to provide workers and peasants with means of communication of their accomplishments in the production field. Thus, officially, amateurs were supposed to provide the regime with an alternative, formally-artistic report on their ideas, feelings, state of activity, etc. “Song to Romania” was the way in which they could bring their contribution to the cultural heritage of the country.

Folklore was the other main tool which the regime sought to use and modify, in order to achieve its goals. Folklore was perceived as the center of Romanian cultural identity and, thus, it constituted a perfect means of gaining legitimacy. “Song

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<sup>136</sup> See for instance: Vasile Donose, “Festivalul național „Cântarea României”. Echilibrul, armonia și frumusețea sufletească a poporului nostru în spectacolele artistice create de oamenii muncii.” [The National Festival “Song to Romania”. The Peace, Harmony and Spiritual Beauty of Our People in the Artistic Performances Created by the Working Class] in *Scînteia*, May 15, 1977, 4;\*\*\*, “Etapa republicană a artiștilor amatori” [The Republican Phase of Amateur Artists] in *Scînteia*, May 28, 1977, 5; Simion Pop, “Muncă și cultură” [Work and Culture] in *Scînteia*, January 10, 1978, 1; N. Popescu-Bogdănești, “Din pasiune și îndrumare calificată s-a născut o manifestare viu apludată. (Adunații-Copăcenii)” [Out of Passion and Qualified Guidance A Lively Applauded Manifestation Was Born] in *Scînteia*, January 18, 1978, 4; Ion Ianoși, “Democratismul culturii noastre” [The Democracy of Our Culture], in *Scînteia*, January 20, 1978, 4; Constanța Lăzărescu, “Festivalul Național „Cântarea României”. Generos cadru democratic de stimulare a creației, de formare a omului nou” [The National Festival “Song to Romania”. Generous Framework of Stimulation of Creation and of Forming the New Man] in *Scînteia*, January 5, 1984, 4; Gheorghe Pîrja, “Ecoul spiritului combativ și surdina criticii” [The Echo of Fighting Spirit and The Mute of the Critique] in *Scînteia*, May 14, 1989, 4; Sava Bejenariu, “Argumentele performanței artistice” [The Arguments of Artistic Performance] in *Scînteia*, May 20, 1989, 4; Gheorghe Giurgiu, “Formarea conștiinței socialiste – în centrul activității cultural-artistice” [The Formation of Socialist Conscience – The Center of Cultural-Artistic Activity] in *Scînteia*, September 21, 1989, 4; Șerban Rădulescu, “Afirmarea largă a talentelor din popor” [The Large Affirmation of Talents Among Our People] in *Scînteia*, September 26, 1989, 4.

to Romania” was supposed to discover, maintain and provide a framework for the evolution of folklore.<sup>137</sup> Folklore was associated with national identity, at a mass level, expressed in artistic forms. It could be changed in order to disseminate symbols of national ideology, such as cultural unity of the Romanian people, as well as ideas of present-day prosperity and belief in socialist progress.

It can be argued that one of the most important elements which gave folklore its central status within “Song to Romania” was its traditional authenticity regarding national cultural heritage. This authenticity was interpreted by the regime, on a higher and more abstract level, as the main argument for its claim of legitimacy. On a lower level, folklore was used because of its traditional popularity among ordinary people, which made it a better channel for disseminating rigid, abstract political symbols and ideas to which people could not, by other means, relate to.

Nevertheless, “Song to Romania” had a higher purpose than just simply educating amateurs artists, or revitalizing folklore. Although official sources never mentioned this directly, it can be deducted that the festival was used as mass means of creating a complex type of identity, tangentially including artistic or cultural education, but primarily relying on political indoctrination regarding the status of the masses in report to national values within the socialist society and in report to their leader.

This particular type of identity is thus a mass identity, within which the individual is left aside. The only way in which individuals could act was through mass activity. At the level of “Song to Romania” this was best expressed in the artistic forms of choirs, artistic brigades, with fixed repertoires, which increased in numbers, but were drastically restrained in esthetical variety. The identity of an individual was

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<sup>137</sup> N. Popescu-Bogdănești, “Note stridente în melosul popular” [Atonal Musical Notes in Folklore], in *Scînteia*, January 13, 1978, 4.

supposed to be shaped by mass collectives, through which he could later on report to the Party or to the Leader. If intellectuals – as Katherine Verdery argues<sup>138</sup> – helped create the nationalistic socialist ideology, “Song to Romania” was intended to provide the mass cultural tools for disseminating the symbols of this ideology.

## **2.6 The Leader: Within or Above “Song to Romania”? Ritual, Festival and Personality Cult**

The question could be interpreted as being rather a rhetorical one. But as it will be seen in this subchapter, the Leader was literally within “Song to Romania”, only to rise above it symbolically.

In order to point out the cult of personality and the leader’s role within the framework of “Song to Romania”, I have chosen a highly detailed propagandistic article, describing the closing ceremony of the first edition of the festival.<sup>139</sup> Although the article is at times written in a highly personal style, the author of the article is once again anonymous, in order to show once more that the latter’s personally-conceived ideas belong in fact to everybody.

The article deals with several moments which can be situated in the following chronological order: important spectators at the ceremony, arrival of Ceaușescu and high officials, the setting of the ceremony, the ceremony itself and, lastly, the popular celebration following the ceremony, in which Ceaușescu interacts with the masses. I will focus on two moments: the setting of the ceremony and its proceedings.

<sup>138</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*.

<sup>139</sup> \*\*\*, “Spectacolul de gală al laureaților festivalului național „Cântarea României” [The Closing Ceremony of the Laureates of the National Festival “Song to Romania”] in *România Liberă*, June 13, 1977, 1 and 3.

### 2.6.1 Setting and Proceedings of the Political Ritual

By its scale, and design the setting is highly symbolic of what the political regime intended to mirror itself like in front of its citizens:

The stadium “August the 23<sup>rd</sup>”, which hosts the closing ceremony of the festival – this manifestation of unique scale in the history of our culture – is brightly illuminated, and decorated as for a celebration. On the forefront of one of the tribunes, is the portrait of comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, with red and national flags to the left and right of it.

Words of praise can be read on immense panels, dedicated to the Party and its secretary general, to our socialist motherland, to our wonderful people.

Thousands of young people form with their bodies the name of the beloved and suggestive name of the festival – “Song to Romania”.

The vast scene, arranged on the field of the stadium, is guarded by a torch, lit at the beginning of the show, symbolizing the brightness, the permanence of Romanian spirituality, and on both sides of it, are written the names of all the counties, signifying their presence to this holiday of work and creation of the entire country.

The stage is guarded by workers, peasants, *pionieri*, pupils, students and soldiers, who, surrounded by laurels, symbolize all who have engaged in this grandiose competition.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>140</sup> *Ibidem*, 3. “Stadionul „23 August”, care găzduiește gala laureaților festivalului – această manifestare de amploare unică în istoria culturii noastre – este luminat feeric, împodobit sărbătorește. Pe frontispiciul uneia din tribune se află portretul tovarășului Nicolae Ceaușescu, încadrat de drapele roșii și tricolore.

Pe imense panouri se pot citi cuvinte de slavă închinare partidului și secretarului său general, patriei socialiste, minunatului nostru popor.

Mii de tineri înscriu, cu trupurile lor, numele îndrăgit, sugestiv, al festivalului – „Cântarea României”

Vasta scenă, amenajată pe gazonul arenei, este străjuită de o flacără, aprinsă la începutul spectacolului, simbolizând strălucirea, perenitatea spiritualității românești, iar de o parte și de alta se înscriu stemele tuturor județelor, semnificând prezența la această sărbătoare a muncii și creației a întregii țări.

Scena este străjuită de muncitori, țărani, pionieri, elevi, studenți și ostași, care, înconjurați de lauri, simbolizează pe toți cei care s-au aflat angajați în această grandioasă întrecere.”

The setting provides a symbolic topography for the ceremony, incorporating a wide variety of symbols and also attributing them more or less importance, by their position within the setting. Two main symbols guard the stage: Nicolae Ceaușescu and the torch. Whereas, Ceaușescu is the symbolic supreme spectator of the whole ceremony, the torch abstractly symbolizes continuity and brightness, features which are directly transmitted to the Leader also.

The entire country is represented at the ceremony both in geographical terms – with the symbols of all the counties – and in terms of social and professional groups – by the workers, peasants, pupils and soldiers guarding the scene.

One observes two types of symbols, which hold significance for similar ideas or objects: human and abstract. On the one hand, Ceaușescu and the representatives of the ordinary people, on the other, torches and symbols of geographical, administrative units

Different types of music mark the beginning of the proceedings:

The band performs the solemn notes of the National Hymn. In sound of trumpets, the master of ceremony announces the beginning of the closing festivity. After a prolonged set of the band playing, one can hear the organ-like vibration of tens of alphorns, coming from the depths of the past, and calling people to this great celebration of Romanian culture, as they once used to call them to battle.<sup>141</sup>

The musical overture paves the way for a parade of participants – the winner and laurels of the first edition of “Song to Romania” – simultaneously with a mass performance comprising folk songs, light music, choirs, folk dance, poetry

<sup>141</sup> Ibidem. “Fanfara intonează acordurile solemne ale Imnului de stat. În semnalele trompetelor, crainicul anunță începerea spectacolului de gală. După o repriză susținută de fanfară, se face auzită, parcă venind din adâncul vremurilor, vibrația de orgă a zeci de tulpice, care, așa cum chemau cândva la luptă, cheamă astăzi la această mare sărbătoare a culturii românești.”

interpretation. The themes of all these genres refer either to the joy of living in socialist Romania, or to the Party and its' Leader.

The parade starts once more at a symbolic level:

In front of the official tribune pass, like a living river, the columns of participants. In an unstoppable wave of optimism, each county gives its respects to the festival, through its representatives, a significant act for the huge scale of this manifestation, for its truly national character.

With a true esthetic satisfaction, the spectators watch the passing of folk artists, whose costumes of a unique beauty are a live testimony of the genius of the Romanian people, of the harmony, ingenuousity and sense of colors, which mark its creations.<sup>142</sup>

The parade mainly consists of the festival laurels, which are divided according to provinces: Moldova, Transylvania, Muntenia and Oltenia. Oltenia is the last province to appear, as it was Ceaușescu's home land. Stating that each province is represented by its traditional costumes, the article depicting the ceremony abounds in lavish comments, on the historical past of each region, always emphasizing the ethnical unity of the Romanian socialist country, or the artistic traditional richness of its traditional provinces.<sup>143</sup>

Oltenia's parade, as well as the whole ceremony, is ended with an immense group dance – *hora*<sup>144</sup> – performed by all the participants. Nicolae Ceaușescu

<sup>142</sup> *Ibidem*. "Prin fața tribunei oficiale înaintea aidoma unui fluviu viu, coloanele participanților. Într-un șuvoi nestăvilit de optimism, rînd pe rînd dă onorul, prin reprezentanții săi la festival, fiecare județ al țării, fapt semnificativ pentru aria urîșă de desfășurare a acestei manifestări, pentru caracterul ei cu adevărat național.

Cu o reală satisfacție estetică este primită de către cei prezenți trecerea artiștilor populari, ale căror costume de o neasemuită frumusețe sunt mărturii grăitoare ale geniului artistic ale poporului român, ale armoniei, ingeniozității și simțului cromatic care-i caracterizează creațiile."

<sup>143</sup> Each artistic genre is commented, as well as each example of official poetry, which is recited at the manifestation. *Ibidem*.

<sup>144</sup> *Hora* refers to a traditional circle dance, performed in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Montenegro. Romanian *hora* (in the plural: *hore*) is a type of folk circle dance, which presupposes a number of dancers who form a circle by joining hands. The dance consists of a spinning of the circle, in clockwise direction, with three steps forward and one step back. See

descends from his tribune, together with high Party officials and Elena Ceaușescu, and enters the *hora*, dancing with the people.

If the setting was highly symbolic, the actual proceeding comes nowhere shorter, regarding its use of symbols. The whole ceremony can be interpreted as a huge theater play, characterized by massiveness and concentrated symbolic framework. Every participant plays a part, a role, which is assigned according to the general symbolic representation. At the same time the proceeding – as described in the article- intends to show cohesion, as the main feature for unity.

### 2.6.2 Political Ritual and “Song to Romania” within the Personality Cult

Political rituals are usually part of political festivals. They both resemble by their recurring character, as well as by their use of symbols. Although “Song to Romania” was primarily designed as an all-inclusive network of artistic competitions, it also presupposed the use of rituals, out of which the closing ceremony was the most grandiose and effective. Initially, the spectacle was effective for all its actual participants, who were live witnesses of the mass assembly. Through mass media, the ritual was transported into all areas of every day life.

Such rituals were not specific to “Song to Romania” only. They emerged, and were organized with every important occasion. National holidays, visits of foreign high officials, Ceaușescu’s anniversary, the closing ceremony to “Dacia” – *Song to Romania*’s counterpart in sports activity – all constituted pretexts for developing such

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<http://www.eliznik.org.uk/RomaniaDance/hora.htm> Last entry: May 20, 2007. Anca Giurchescu refers to the social uses of dance, arguing that traditional dances can be turned into ideological tools of propaganda, in order to symbolize social unity. Anca Giurchescu, “The Power of dance and Its Social and Political Uses”, *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 33. (2001), 109-121.

rituals.<sup>145</sup> This meant that rituals organized on such occasions resembled to a certain extent, as they were all supposed to disseminate the same general political symbols. Nevertheless, it can be well argued that political rituals during “Song to Romania” had their own specific features, as they were intended to disseminate symbols of a political culture, on the basis of artistic creations. They were not *rituals of initiation*, as described by Christel Lane in the case of the Soviet Union<sup>146</sup>. They fit best with Lukes’ definition, which emphasized political rituals as means of getting participants’ attention to symbols, meant to ensure social cohesion and provide political legitimacy.<sup>147</sup>

Lane also explores rituals as means of appealing to people’s common emotions and feelings.<sup>148</sup> The political ritual of the closing ceremony for “Song to Romania” was an ideal ideological tool, as it resorted to common emotions such, as pride of and safety for belonging to a collective, which was all-encompassing and all-powerful. Ceaușescu appears as the supervisor of this mass assembly, but at the same time, as shown before, he is capable of descending from his superior position and of integrating with the masses. Thus, he assumes two images: that of Leader and that of equal to his subjects. It should be noticed, however, that his condition as an equal of participants only appears within this ritual. In this respect, it can be argued that his descent is –symbolically speaking – a pseudo one. In fact, it is the masses that are given the opportunity to sit beside him, and not the other way around.

<sup>145</sup> See, for instance various articles from mass media on special dates, such as August 23 (the actual reports were published a day later), January 26, etc.

<sup>146</sup> Christel Lane, *op. cit.*, 74, 81-82, 89, 90-94.

<sup>147</sup> Steven Lukes, *op. cit.*, 301.

<sup>148</sup> Christel Lane, *op. cit.*, 57.



Joseph Roach observed the traditional role of performances and festivals of staging a reversed, temporary social order.<sup>149</sup> This role is employed in the political ritual of “Song to Romania” also. Masses and Leader join together in the *hora*. Differences are apparently set aside. But the traditional role of festivals as reversing-order performances is reinterpreted in this particular case. It is used as a cover-up for an effective propaganda tool: The Leader is not actually equal to the masses, and both sides know this. The Leader only manifests his physical presence, which acts as an agent for consolidating social unity and for providing political legitimacy.

## 2.7 Conclusions

“Song to Romania” can be interpreted at an analytical level as a framework of mass artistic competitions and cultural activities, in which the three general components of the communist regime interact: the Party, Ceaușescu, and the people. The political symbols disseminated at mass level originate from these three aspects, as the latter interact with each other through symbolic relation and forms of communication. The primary objective is to provide legitimacy for the Party and to confer Ceaușescu authority.

Nevertheless, in order to achieve this, the regime needs to appeal to its citizens. This is done through the political concept of masses<sup>150</sup> which requires the formation of a mass identity. Officially, masses are attributed with a great social importance, although at the practical level, they simply perform a passive role. The

<sup>149</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead. Circum-Atlantic Performance*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, 1-31.

<sup>150</sup> Masses were defined as “concept specific to Marxist, materialist-historical vision of the world, defining a group of social forces with an established structure, which is historically changeable and which has the potential of social action of primordial importance”. *Mică enciclopedie de politologie* [Abbreviated Companion of Political Science], Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1977, 282.

Party acts as the representative and the abstract leader of the masses, while Ceaușescu is both the representative of masses and the embodiment of the Party.

Officially, “Song to Romania” had the role of disseminating political symbols at a mass level, which would gain the people’s acceptance of these abstract interrelations. This determined the variety of symbols, which ranged from communist doctrine to traditional cultural symbols. By its sheer scale, the festival constitutes the most complete framework of political mass culture, as mirrored by official sources.

Having concluded this, one raises the question whether “Song to Romania” managed to do more than just simply disseminate ideology, whether it actually managed to shape a mass identity, in which national traditional symbols interacted with socialist propaganda, Ceaușescu’s personality cult and sentiments of national pride.

## Chapter 3: Recalling *Song to Romania*

### 3.1 Preliminaries

The “Song to Romania” festival was represented in official sources mainly by the idea of mass assemblies and artistic competitions. There was no place for the individual, as the latter could only be present as part of the whole, as an obeying tool of the greater system. Still, one can put forth the following research questions: How did ordinary people perceive the festival? What was their reaction to the continuous assault of mass propaganda conducted by the regime in all possible ways?

Oral history can offer possible answers to the above questions. It can also bring out new inquiries and it can shed light not just on facts and practices left outside official documents, but it can provide us with an image of the ordinary people’s subjectivity toward their participation to the “Song to Romania” festival, during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>151</sup> Oral history also raises numerous questions about its nature, methods of research, reliability of sources, as well as about the manner in which a collection of oral sources can be considered as representative for a general overview.

In this chapter I aim at constructing the image of the “Song to Romania”, as perceived and remembered by ordinary people, either as organizers, organizers-

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<sup>151</sup> It should be mentioned that oral history projects have already been conducted on everyday habits and practices in communist Romania during the 1980s. One such project was conducted by the Romanian Peasant Museum in Bucharest, the result being a collection of interviews, arranged not according to interviewees, but to a series of topics, such as “queue”, “television programs”, “mass rallies”, etc. See Șerban Anghelescu, Ioana Hodoiu et al., *LXXX Mărturii orale. Anii '80 și bucureștenii* [LXXX.Oral Testimonies. The 1980s and the Inhabitants of Bucharest], Bucharest: Paideia, 2003. There is one entry dedicated to the festival “Song to Romania”, on pages 98-99, which comprises brief excerpts from two interviews. One of them stresses how the respective interviewee managed to avoid participation, by pretending to have health problems, while the other argues in favor of the positive aspects of the festival, despite calling it “kitsch” (*Ibidem*, 99). Nevertheless, the information provided is too scarce to offer more than a subjective, general view on the festival, as seen by two subjects only.

participants, active or passive participants and simple by-standers. I will start with a methodological framework of analysis, dealing with issues such as memory – historical and collective – and memories. I will analyze the way in which memory and memories influence oral history as a research science and method, in order to apply these methodological observations and defined concepts to my collection of interviews. I will then provide a taxonomy of my interviewees, based on the role that the latter had (or did not have) within the festival.

I argue that historical memory, collective memory and personal memory intermingle with each other in the narratives of the interviewees. The latter ones construct a subjective account not of “Song to Romania”, but of the way in which the festival affected, more or less, their life experience, in order to justify their past actions and integrate them in a present-minded, socially-accepted discourse. Furthermore, I intend to construe the way in which the radical political change of 1989 influenced and determined the interviewees’ discourses, arguing that the latter perform a discourse at two levels: the publicly accepted one, and their own private recollections and impressions.

### **3.2 Memory and Memories**

Most historical researchers who deal with memory tend to compare the latter with history, to define it as being historically-conditioned and constructed, or to emphasize the difference between memory and history, the former consequently appearing as a reaction to the latter. Conceptualizing what he calls *lieux de mémoire*, Pierre Nora constructs an absolute opposition between memory and history, arguing that the “acceleration of history” has led to a “conquest and eradication” of memory

by the former.<sup>152</sup> In a very literary, and sometimes vague style, Nora considers that memory is “affective and magical”<sup>153</sup>, “it nourishes recollections”<sup>154</sup>, it “installs remembrance within the sacred”<sup>155</sup>, it is “blind to all but the group it binds”<sup>156</sup>, “it is multiple”,<sup>157</sup> “collective, plural, and yet, individual”<sup>158</sup>, “it takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects”<sup>159</sup>, finally adding that “memory is absolute”.<sup>160</sup> History, on the other hand, “belongs to everyone and to no one”; it “can only conceive the relative”<sup>161</sup>. Thus, “history is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it”.<sup>162</sup>

In most cases for this comparison, Nora expresses himself ambiguously, and instead of providing answers, he raises even more questions, which remain unanswered. One might wonder in what ways is memory absolute and how can this absoluteness be defined. Still, what needs to be taken into account is Nora division between memory as life, as subjectively perceived experience and history as a representation of the past, therefore as an intellectual construction.

Nora’s distinction is loosely based on Maurice Halbwachs’s interpretation of memory and on the latter’s distinction between two types of memory.<sup>163</sup> Halbwachs

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<sup>152</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory. (Spring, 1989), 7-8. Originally, Pierre Nora published his ideas on memory, history and *lieux de mémoire* in an opening article to a vast collection of articles and essays on how national ideology is constructed through the preservation of memory, in social practices, monuments, text books, etc. See Pierre Nora, “Entre Histoire et Mémoire. La problématique des lieux” in Idem (ed.), *Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Vol. I, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1984, XIV-XXXVI. In the following, I will quote from the English version of this article, which appeared in *Representations*.

<sup>153</sup> Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History”, 8.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibidem*, 9.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>163</sup> Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) was a French sociologist and philosopher. His most important contributions were on the concept of collective memory. In his most famous book, *The Social Framework of Memory* (original title: *Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire*, Paris: Librairie Felix Alcan,

operates with two concepts of memory: collective memory and historical memory.<sup>164</sup> He links the existence of collective memory to that of social groups, arguing that there is a living relation between groups and collective memory, and that the only way in which an individual can express any personal memories is within the framework of collective memory as shaped within a group of individuals.<sup>165</sup> He also stresses that collective memory varies according to the group in which it appears, and thus there are multiple forms of collective memory. In his definition, “collective memory... is a current of continuous thought whose continuity is not at all artificial, for it retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the group keeping the memory alive.”<sup>166</sup>

Developing Halbwachs’ ideas even further and relying on Nora also, Susan A. Crane states the theoretical differences between the two concepts of collective memory and historical memory, claiming that they reside “in the decision of what to ‘save’. History can save what has been personally lost, by preserving a collective representation of memory. Collective memory can preserve the memory of lived experience, in living experience, and sustain the loss of other memories. But morally speaking [...] collective memory cannot sustain the loss of historical memory.”<sup>167</sup>

Other scholars have not taken the same approach of classifying several theoretical types of memory as opposed to history, or distinguishing between history and memory. They have rather attempted to focus on both the similarities and the

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1925), Halbwachs argued that memory, despite its internal, biological mechanisms, could not exist outside a social context. For further information, see <http://www.kfunigraz.ac.at/Sozwww/agsoe/lexicon/klassiker/halbwachs/22bio.htm>. Retrieved on May 2, 2007. Also, Floyd N. House, “Review” in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 31, No. 3. (Nov., 1925), 390-392.

<sup>164</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, “Historical Memory and Collective Memory” in Idem. *The Collective Memory*, New York, Harper & Row, 1980, 50-87.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibidem*, 72 and 84.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem*, 80.

<sup>167</sup> Susan A. Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No. 5. (Dec., 1997), 1383. Susan A. Crane is assistant professor of modern European history at the University of Arizona.

differences between history and memory. For instance, Paul Thompson perceives the two concepts not as a “stark dichotomy”, but as aspects of “the same thing”.<sup>168</sup> Thompson argues for two different aspects of memory and of history: the personal and the collective, stating that each individual’s history is based on his own memories, and that collective memory is based upon public history.<sup>169</sup> Although he is right to point out the interrelationship between history and memory – an observation that makes Pierre Nora’s distinction to appear biased in its strive for absoluteness – Thompson fails to define concepts such as *public history*, or to indicate the means by which a personal history is constructed on personal memories only. This is caused by the fact that Thompson does not offer any clues to the interrelation between the memory of an individual and the social context in which the respective individual exists.

Despite their different taxonomies, or different ways of conceptualizing memory, all the scholars quoted above *think big* when it comes to history and memory, regarding the latter as being primarily a social construct. Some have even manifested a tendency to view memory only in terms of social context and practices. Focusing on the Watergate scandal and its marks in American memory, Michael Schudson claims that memory is located in “rules, laws, standardized procedures, and records”, thus being “essentially social”, and also expressing “moral continuity”.<sup>170</sup> Based on this statement, Kerwin Lee Klein draws the conclusion that: “Memory is not

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<sup>168</sup> Paul Thompson, *Believe It or Not: Rethinking the Historical Interpretation of Memory*, 2. Retrieved from: [http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral\\_History/Thompson.pdf](http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/Thompson.pdf) on March 18, 2007. 16.34 PM.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>170</sup> Michael Schudson, *Watergate in American Memory: How We Remember, Forget, and Reconstruct the Past*, New York: Basic Books, 1992, 51.

a property of individual minds, but a diverse and shifting collection of material artifacts and social practices”.<sup>171</sup>

Such approaches have all proven useful for historical research, as well as for developing a theoretical scheme of interpretation, but they have also proved to be only partially adequate, as they have failed to identify the exact means by which the concepts, such as historical memory, collective memory, and history interpenetrate each other, as well as the fact that, in certain cases, these concepts not only interpenetrate, but also overlap with each other. They have also failed to take into consideration the internal, individual dimension of memory.

Two types of research, from two different fields of study, prove to be revealing in this sense. The first one has been conducted by Alice M. Hoffman and Howard S. Hoffman, as a case study in order to identify and analyze various internal mechanisms of memory and of the act of remembering.<sup>172</sup> Drawing conclusions on several interviews taken to Howard S. Hoffman on the same subject of remembering events from World War II, Alice M. Hoffman notices, for instance that: “The first time things are done, the first time an experience is recounted it is recounted in much greater detail.”<sup>173</sup> Howard S. Hoffman also develops a taxonomy on several types of memories in the existence of an individual:

One kind is short-term and disappears when it no longer needs to be retained. Other kinds of memory are semantic or procedural, exemplified by

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<sup>171</sup> Kerwin Lee Klein, “On The Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse”, *Representations*, No. 69, Special Issue: Grounds for Remembering. (Winter, 2000), 130.

<sup>172</sup> Alice M. Hoffman, Howard S. Hoffman, *Reliability and Validity in Oral History: The Case of Memory*, 107-135. Retrieved from [http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral\\_History/Hoffmans.pdf](http://www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/Hoffmans.pdf) on March 18, 2007. 16.29 PM. Alice M. Hoffman is Assistant to the Deputy Secretary for Labor and Industry for the State of Pennsylvania, and former professor of labor studies at Pennsylvania State University. Howard S. Hoffman is an experimental psychologist and professor at Bryn Mawr College. He is specialized in scientific analysis of behavior, and in mechanisms of learning and retention.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibidem*, 112.



the memories of how to read, how to ride a bicycle, or how to drive a car. These ordinarily require much rehearsal or practice, but once learned they exhibit little or no loss in memory over the course of a lifetime. Some experiences seem to leave lingering records. Endel Tulving calls them *episodic memories*. How long are they retained depends in part on how much we rehearse them. We remember what we had for breakfast today, or even dinner yesterday, though we may not have thought about it until now. Not unless we actually rehearse these memories, it is doubtful we will be able to retain them for years, let alone decades, as seems to be the case with archival memories. When viewed from this perspective, archival memories are a subset of episodic memories. They consist of those special memories which, because of their relevance to our conception of ourselves, have been reviewed and pondered to the point that they have become indelible.<sup>174</sup>

Hoffman's approach thus focuses not on social contexts or social groups as frameworks for the emergence of memory, but on the biological and psychological aspects of memory, as well as the role of the individual in keeping certain memories alive, through everyday routine gestures, or habits. Although Hofmann fails in his turn to take into consideration the influence of social context for developing such routine practices and habits, looking at only one side of the story, his analysis is important for shedding light on the other side of the story, that of memory as psychological process.

The second approach is that of Alessandro Portelli, who develops an innovative view on history, memory and the construction of both concepts in his research on the death of an Italian worker during an anti-NATO protest, in the town of

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibidem*, 129.

Terni, in 1949.<sup>175</sup> Portelli shows how the steelworker colleagues of Trastulli managed to construct collectively a myth, a different memory, than the one of what had really happened, by placing Trastulli's death during the social movements of 1953.

This led Portelli to analyze the subjectivity of the steelworkers, arguing that they developed a collective memory, which acted as a history, with several functions. The first function was a symbolic one, as Trastulli's death signified the "postwar working-class experience as a whole".<sup>176</sup> The second one was psychological, as the shift in time of the event acted as healing instrument, for the feeling of "humiliation and the loss of self-esteem following upon the impossibility of reacting adequately to the comrade's death".<sup>177</sup> The third one was formal. Portelli could thus argue in favor of a denaturalized memory as a historical fact in itself.

His findings prove essential for shedding light on the subjective, incomplete and aleatory construction of concepts such as memory, history, historical memory, collective memory. In the above case of the steelworkers from Terni, collective memory juxtaposes with historical memory. Although Portelli is short on information on individual memory and its relation with collective memory, one may presuppose, on the basis offered by Howard Hoffman, that individual memory is shaped and influenced by the memories of others, by collective memory. It may well be that this happens not only as a social practice in itself, but also as a routine act of narrating continuously the same modified story, leading in the end to the creation of a socially-accepted version of both a history of the tragic event and of the memory of Luigi Trastulli.

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<sup>175</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "The Death of Luigi Trastulli: Memory and the Event" in Idem, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories. Form and Meaning in Oral History*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991, 1-28. For further details on the significance of Portelli's work for the study of oral history, see Paul Thompson, *op. cit.*, 8.

<sup>176</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *op. cit.*, 26.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibidem*.

These remarks on different types of memory and their relation to the historical discourse can be well applied in the case of the “Song to Romania” festival. The radical political changes which took place in Romania, before and after 1989, have led to a special type of historical discourse, incorporating elements of the communist discourse of pre-1989 Romania, but adapting to the new historical context of post-1989 Romania. On the other hand the experience of the festival has been perceived differently by ordinary people, according to the role they played within the communist society, within the festival, or according to their individual experience, education, etc. Such factors have led to what Maurice Halbwachs and later on Susan A. Crane called “different collective memories”. Nevertheless, despite the existence of a historical memory of the festival in particular, and of the Romanian communist regime in general, as well as of different collective memories, the interviewees have not relied solely on these types of memories. What they remembered were their personal recollections, and one must take into account Howard S. Hoffman’s observation on the psychological processes of memory, as well as the fact that these recollections mirror the interviewees’ personal experiences and their own perception of what happened.

In the end, the memories of the interviewees are a complex and indefinable combination of general historical discourse, collective memory and personal memories. They are primarily conditioned by biological and psychological factors, but they develop and are defined in a certain social and cultural context.

### **3.3 Oral History. Some Remarks**

Oral history is based on what people remember, on their memories. People remember mostly what *they* think is important, they regularly reinterpret their

memories attributing new meanings to them.<sup>178</sup> Internal processes of memory, historically-determined social contexts have a great influence on the specific features of oral history as research science, method of inquiry or historical approach on the past. It is not the purpose of this chapter to offer or to comment in depth on the essence or definitions of oral history. However several remarks regarding its nature and main concepts need to be made before moving on to the oral histories of various persons who witnessed the “Song to Romania” festival.

Alice Hoffman defines oral history as “a process of collecting, usually by means of a tape-recorded interview, reminiscences, accounts, and interpretations of events from the recent past which are of historical significance.”<sup>179</sup> Hoffman’s definition of oral history is rather instrumentalist, focusing on the technical tools of gathering information and on the type of information which is gathered. She offers no insight into the term of “historical significance”, making no comment on who decides about what can be deemed or not as having historical significance.

She also refers to two essential aspects for oral history sources: their *reliability* and their *validity*, as one of the major problems faced by oral historians at the beginning of their discipline was to demonstrate that their sources present these two features. By *reliability*, Hoffman understands “the consistency with which an individual will tell the same story about the same event on a number of different occasions.”<sup>180</sup> She also defines *validity* as “the degree of conformity between the reports of the event and the event itself as recorded by other primary resource material such as documents, photographs, diaries, and letters.”<sup>181</sup>

<sup>178</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994, 12-13.

<sup>179</sup> Alice Hoffman, “Reliability and Validity in Oral History” in David K. Dunaway, Willa K. Baum (eds.), *Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. Second Edition, Walnut Creek, Lanham, New York, Oxford: Altamira Press, 1996, 88.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibidem*, 89.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibidem*.

The way in which Hoffman selects the two main features for oral history and the way she defines them indicate her approach and vision on oral history and its uses. Hoffman does not make any suggestions about how the reliability and validity of an oral source can be interpreted according to its conformity with other sources. Her definition of validity indicates that oral history can be used primarily to provide information about the same topics as other types of sources, only through specific means. If written or visual sources do not match the information provided by oral sources, then this can only imply the invalidity of the latter.

Portelli takes a different perspective. He relies more on a linguistic approach<sup>182</sup>, arguing that: “oral history is a specific form of discourse: history evokes a narrative of the past, and oral indicates a medium of expression.”<sup>183</sup> Portelli refers to the specificity of sources for oral history, showing that oral history interviews are taken with living persons. This means that one is using and analyzing sources one creates. He also notices the ironical aspect that despite the orality of the sources, the oral historian mostly uses transcripts of the interviews he is taking, or, in other words, written texts, or “the classic oral history text”.<sup>184</sup> Still, what is significant for Portelli regarding oral history is not the technical means of collecting information, but the emphasis on reconstructing the subjectivity of people.<sup>185</sup>

As Paul Thompson points out, subjectivity, as used by Portelli, must not be taken literally. Portelli’s definition reveals a more complex understanding of the term.<sup>186</sup> He defines subjectivity in this case as “not the abolition of controls, nor the unrestrained preference, convenience or whim of the researcher. I mean the study of

<sup>182</sup> Alessandro Portelli is Professor of English literature at the University “La Sapienza”, of Rome.

<sup>183</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “Oral History as Genre” in Idem, *The Battle of Valle Giulia. Oral History and the Art of Dialogue*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, 3.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibidem*, 6.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibidem*, 17.

<sup>186</sup> Paul Thompson, *op. cit.*, 8-10.

the cultural form and processes by which individuals express their sense of themselves in history.”<sup>187</sup> Thus subjectivity for oral history becomes a concept in itself, possessing its own “objective” laws, structures and maps.<sup>188</sup>

Portelli’s definition of subjectivity for oral sources makes Hoffman’s definition of *validity* partially invalid. Oral sources can be subjective, in that they refer to other topics than do other types of sources. If the information of an oral source does not match that provided by written or visual sources, the oral source can offer insights into *how* and *why* that specific information differed from others. Or, in Portelli’s own words: “Oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did.”<sup>189</sup> Thus oral sources simply present a different type of credibility.<sup>190</sup>

From these observations and insights one can draw the conclusion that the information drawn from oral sources depends on how the researcher interprets these sources. As Jan Vansina suggests, “interpretation is a choice between several possible hypotheses”.<sup>191</sup> The emphasis here is on the word “choice”, as in the end it is the researcher who decides what he wants to find out from his interviewees and it is he who decides what he wants to draw out from the information provided by his interviewees. This choice depends on the intellectual background of the interviewer and on his attitude and preconceptions toward his interviews. Alessandro Portelli goes even further, developing level of interpretation and offering insight into how subjectivity operates between these levels: “The division of labor between informant and scholar, and the division of the scholar’s labor between fieldwork (collecting the

<sup>187</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “Introduction” in Idem, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories. Form and Meaning in Oral History*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991, ix.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>189</sup> Alessandro Portelli, “What Makes Oral History Different” in Robert Perks, Alistair Thompson (eds.), *The Oral History Reader*, London, New York: Routledge, 1998, 67.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibidem*, 68.

<sup>191</sup> Jan Vansina, “Oral Tradition and Historical Methodology” in David K. Dunaway, Willa K. Baum, *op. cit.*, 124.

data) and analysis (conducted in separate spaces and times) contributes to the perception of testimony as raw material, on which the social scientist performs a verity check and an exclusive interpretative act. The separation between the materiality of the source and the intellectuality of the interpreter is often wrought with class prejudices [...]"<sup>192</sup> The failure to see beyond the "materiality" of the source leads to the failure of noticing that the interviewee develops his own discourse, and this adds to the specificity of oral sources.

Regarding this latter aspect of oral sources as individually developed discourses about personal lived experience, it is once more Portelli who refers to oral sources as narratives, in which the boundary between personal memories and socially-shared stereotypes is elusive.<sup>193</sup>

### **3.4 Oral Histories and "Song to Romania"**

The interviews gathered for this case study are of persons from mainly two residences: Bucharest – Romania's capital – and Câmpina, a province town in the county of Prahova, 90 kilometers from Bucharest.<sup>194</sup> The interviewees are of different

<sup>192</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "Philosophy and the Facts. Subjectivity and Narrative Form in Autobiography and Oral History" in Idem, *The Battle of Valle Giulia. Oral History and the Act of Dialogue*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, 79.

<sup>193</sup> Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different" in Robert Perks, Alistair Thompson, *op. cit.*, 66.

<sup>194</sup> The interviewees are listed below. Because of the different attitudes I have encountered during these interviews, regarding the issue of making public the names of the interviewees, I have decided to name these with fictitious initials only, naming instead accurately the place, date of the interview, as well as general data about the interviewees, such as ethnicity, gender, age (using general frameworks: up to 30 years old; between 30 and 45 years; between 45 and 65 years; more than 65 years. – I have done so, partially because of lack of information regarding the interviewees' exact age and partially to maintain their anonymity), profession. It is my belief that such information on the interviewees can prove useful for a better understanding of their discourse and lived experience.

- a) L.B., Hungarian-Romanian, male, between 30 and 45 years old, assistant professor of Hungarian literature. Personal interview taken in Budapest, February 28, 2007.
- b) R.O., Romanian, female, between 30 and 45 years old, geography teacher. Personal interviews taken in Câmpina, April 18 and 19, 2007.

age, social and professional categories and they present different intellectual and life backgrounds.

Prior to conducting the interviews I have referred to series of theoretical and methodological works about oral history in general and about interview conducting techniques and methods of oral history inquiry.<sup>195</sup> In conducting the interviews I have established a formal set of questions, according to the role played by the interviewee within “Song to Romania”. These questions concerned both general, simple open-

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- c) M.C., Romanian, male, between 30 and 45 years old, history teacher. Personal interview taken in Câmpina, April 20, 2007.
  - d) G.N., Romanian, male, between 45 and 65 years old, history teacher. Personal interview taken in Câmpina, April, 20, 2007.
  - e) L.M., Romanian, male, between 45 and 65 years old, Romanian language and literature teacher. Personal and group interview taken in Câmpina, April, 22, 2007.
  - f) M.M., Romanian, female, between 45 and 65 years old, teacher. Group interview (together with L.M.) taken in Câmpina, April 22, 2007.
  - g) A.P., Romanian, female, between 45 and 65 years old, teacher. Personal interview taken in Câmpina, April 22, 2007.
  - h) V.I., Romanian, female, between 45 and 65 years old, a former pedagogue. Personal interview taken in Câmpina, April 22, 2007.
  - i) M.X., Romanian, male, more than 65 years old, a former president of culture commission. Written notes from verbal discussion taken in Câmpina, April 23, 2007.
  - j) C.R., Romanian, female, more than 65 years old, a former ethnologist researcher. Personal interview taken in Bucharest, May 7, 2007.
  - k) S.P., Romanian, male, more than 65 years old, former profession unknown. Personal interview Taken in Bucharest, May 7, 2007.
  - l) A.T., Romanian, female, under 30 years old, PhD candidate. Personal interview taken in Bucharest, May 9, 2007.

<sup>195</sup> Several articles on various uses of oral history in different research fields have proved useful: Barbara Allen, “The Personal Point of View in Orally Communicated History”, *Western Folklore*, Vol. 38, No.2. (1979), 110-118; Roger D. Long, “The Personal Dimension in Doing Oral History”, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 24, No.3, (May, 1991), 307-312; Bret Enyon, “Cast upon the Shore: Oral History and New and New (*sic!*) Scholarship on the Movements of the 1960s”, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 83, No. 2. (Sep., 1996), 560-570; Jack Dougherty, “From Anecdote to Analysis: Oral Interviews and New Scholarship in Educational History”, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, No.2, Rethinking History and the Nation-State: Mexico and the United States as a Case Study: A Special Issue. (Sep., 1999), 712-723; Pattie Dillon, “Teaching the Past through Oral History”, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 87, No. 2. (Sep., 2000), 602-605; Larry E. Hudson Jr., Ellen Durrihan Santora, “Oral History: An Inclusive Highway to the Past”, *The History Teacher*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Special Focus Issue: The Teaching American History Program. (Feb., 2003), 206-220.

For the technical and methodological part, regarding oral history I have used information from the following guides and articles: Barbara Truesdell, *Oral History Techniques: How to Organize and Conduct Oral History Interviews*, (Indiana University Center for the Study of History and Memory). Retrieved from: <http://www.indiana.edu/~cshmt/techniques.html> Last entry: March 18, 2007; *The Smithsonian Folklife and Oral History Interviewing Guide*. Retrieved from: <http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/pdf/InterviewingGuide.pdf> Last entry: March 20, 2007; Brian Calliou, *Methodology for an Oral History Project*. Retrieved from: <http://www.pacificworlds.com/homepage/education/essays/essay2a.cfm> Last entry: March 18, 2007; George Blanksten, Ronald Cohen, Raoul Naroll, “Social Science Methodology and the Oral History Project”, *African Studies Bulletin*, Vol. 8, No. 2. (Sep., 1965), 15-23.



ended type questions, but also closed-type questions, in order to find out details about my interviewees' accounts.<sup>196</sup> My manner of inquiry was to let the interviewee organize his own narrative at first, and to intervene only if necessary, or to find out answers to problems which were of interest to me but were left unanswered by the interview subject. I have also avoided leading question, so as not to influence my interviewees' order and direction of discourse.<sup>197</sup>

Apart from this, another important dimension that needs to be taken into account consists of the differences of age, gender, social status and intellectual background, which appeared in various ways between the interviewer and the interviewees.<sup>198</sup> Several of the latter tended to view the interviewer initially as being *tabula rasa* with respect to the festival and started to narrate general information about the festival.

### 3.5 Organizers

M.X. is the interviewee whose main function was to organize artistic competitions in Câmpina, within the local level of "Song to Romania" festival.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> See *Fundamentals of Oral History. Texas Preservation Guidelines* (Texas Historical Commission), p. 8. Retrieved from: <http://www.thc.state.tx.us/publications/guidelines/OralHistory.pdf> Last entry: March 18, 2007.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>198</sup> Alistair Thomson speaks of the "cultural awareness" of the interviewer, when conducting interviews, as an important methodological tool. "Cultural awareness is equally necessary when an oral historian is interviewing within his or her own society, which is unlikely to be culturally homogenous. Interviewers need to be sensitive to the relational and communicative patterns of particular subcultures as defined by gender, class, race and ethnicity, region, sexuality, disability and age." Alistair Thomson, "Fifty Years On: An International Perspective on Oral History", *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 85, No.2 (Sep., 1998), 583. I have also consulted works of Erving Goffman, regarding communication and face-to-face behavior. See Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual. Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1967; Idem, *Strategic Interaction*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1969.

<sup>199</sup> This makes M.X. one of the most valuable informants, because of his former position which allows him to provide information regarding the mechanisms of cultural politics at the local level, as well as within the "Song to Romania" festival. Despite his initial openness, he eventually became reluctant to let himself be interviewed on tape, and he only agreed to an informal discussion, allowing the

Until 1989, he was also the president for the Commission of Culture in Câmpina, and this function allowed him to be in control of any artistic and cultural activity in the town, during the time of the communist regime. His case is probably the most interesting one to study, despite his refusal to offer an interview on tape. This is due on the one hand to the fact that he can offer insights to officially not-mentioned mechanisms by which the festival could take place, and on the other to the way in which he organizes his discourse about his past activities. What is important to explore is not necessarily the accuracy of his information, which is more or less relative and requires further information from different sources to verify it, but his construction of his own subjectivity, in the sense given by Portelli.

At first, he is only willing to talk about the negative sides of “Song to Romania”, for fear he might be held responsible for what he states. Later on, when he realizes that he will not be taped, he starts to mention both positive and negative sides of the festival, starting with and stressing the former ones. For him, “Song to Romania” meant a mass mobilization of people and materials, which led to a dynamic artistic life, in both the rural and urban environments: “in the countryside, the festival shook people up, the mayor, the priest, and the peasants”, it led them to a competition, to forming “folkloric groups”.<sup>200</sup>

He stresses the fact that the festival was the main means for ordinary people to make themselves noticed, stating that “everybody wanted to be taken into consideration”, and that workers especially were proud of having their names on posters, which mentioned their participation and their eventual awards won for “Song

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interviewer to take notes. His primary fear was that letting himself tape-recorded would allow others to accuse him of having praised or even talked about the former regime. That is why his initial reaction was to mention only the negative sides of the “Song to Romania”. In the end, knowing that what he was saying would remain totally informal, he developed his own, more unrestrained, discourse on his activity and on the communist regime. His fear and reluctance however can only hint at the atmosphere in which M.X. led his activity as a cultural activist before and after 1989.

<sup>200</sup> M.X., notes from personal discussion. Câmpina, April 23, 2007.

To Romania”.<sup>201</sup> Apart from this he mentions that the main reason for this was that through the festival people could experience a shift of professional status: from peasants, workers, simple pupils, they could become “artists”. They could participate not only in the competition, but also go on to be part of festive celebrations, or “go on tour all over the country, especially if they had connections”.<sup>202</sup>

He thus sheds light on the criteria for selecting participants for higher levels or special manifestations for the festival. This is one case where he refrains himself from passing any moral judgment, letting his interviewer understand that selection by high connections is something of the ordinary, which does not need any extra comment.

He also remembers, as negative sides, the amateurism of the festival, as well as the fact that in most cases he only had to put in practice official indications which he received from a higher level. This is most obvious when he discusses the case of a “artistic-literary performance”, for which he had to make up a choir of 80 persons, mostly amateurs, workers from the factories in Câmpina, all tied up in chains, in order to remind the people of the communist inmates from the “Doftana” Prison.<sup>203</sup> He not only mentions it, but he also considers it as not worthy of an artistic creation, arguing that the number of choir members was too high, and the members themselves highly

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<sup>201</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibidem*. It should be mentioned that the original Romanian note was “puteau participa la un spectacol festival, sau prin țară, dacă era și o relație”. By the last term, “relație”, one understands “high connection”, the fact that there was a selection done of those who were supposed to participate in more than just simple competitions, and that selection was done according to personal criteria.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibidem*. The Romanian term for “artistic-literary performance” is “montaj literar-artistic”. It is very often mentioned both in official sources and in the case of the persons interviewed. R.O., for instance, remembers that every spectacle, no matter how insignificant, had to have at least one “artistic-literary performance”. The latter presupposed a combination of several artistic genres, such as choir, poems, as well as theatrical elements. As for the prison of Doftana, this became a central highlight during the communist regime, due to the fact that it was the place where Romanian communist leaders were imprisoned during the 1930s. The 1940 earthquake caused the death of several leaders, adding a dramatic element to the official history of the Romanian Communist Party. Later on, starting with the 1950s until 1989, “Doftana” was turned into a museum and became a site of pilgrimage for pupils and students all over the country. It was also the site for numerous celebrative, commemorative and festive events. The prison “Doftana” (taking its name after a river which flows nearby, is situated in the Prahova County, approximately four or five kilometers from Câmpina. For further information, visit: [www.telega.ro](http://www.telega.ro) Last entry on May 15, 2007.

inefficient. He also refers to the material means which he had at his disposal, for accomplishing such tasks, recalling that he could make appeal to factory directors for stage design materials, or that he could bring spectators for certain spectacles by bringing in military personnel from the nearby camps in the area. His information leads to a possible conclusion that the festival had become a structure in itself, a sort of parallel field of activity, in which everybody wanted to succeed. But his information is also incomplete; he refers to connections for certain participants, but he does not mention in which way the contributing factories were repaid. Official information on this aspect is non-existent. One can presuppose that such material contributions were obligatory, as failure to provide help could always be interpreted as lack of interest on behalf of the factory director, regarding the artistic activity of the town. But at the same, as M.X. suggests, such collaborations were a perfect opportunity for establishing connections.

The festival provokes a shift in professional status for workers, but also for professional artists, who start to neglect their basic activity and become advisors for different spectacles for “Song to Romania”, an activity which, according to M.X. brings them material and social status benefits. The source of all negative aspects lies, according to M.X., in the political implication which existed in every aspect of the festival and of his activity as an organizer. This is best reflected in the members of the juries who were in charge of selecting the participants. These juries were made up of the town secretary of propaganda – “who always used to sit on the right side” – the Director of the House of Culture – M.X. -, the director of House of *Pionieri*, and a music or sports teacher, according to the event.<sup>204</sup> M.X. considers himself and the

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<sup>204</sup> M.X., notes from personal discussion. Câmpina, April 23, 2007. M.X. mentions two institutions which were central to the cultural and educational activity of every town during the communist regime: *Casa de Cultură* (translated “House of Culture”) was an institution where all the cultural activities of the town were organized, starting with artistic exhibitions and ending with theater performances, etc.

Director of House of *Pionieri* as specialists, identifying the political side of the jury with the secretary of propaganda. Occasionally, the jury was assisted by a political activist from Ploiești, the capital of the Prahova County, the final decision remaining with him in such cases. M.X is ambiguous when referring to the process of selecting participants, stating that this was done through negotiations. But his mentioning of the activists indicates clearly that the political factor was the decisive one in all cases. The Party was again present by specifying the number of spectacles which were supposed to be played, as well as the duration for each performance.<sup>205</sup> This quantitative approach to the artistic environment allowed the participation of a large number of amateur artists, but this also affected the negotiations, as it allowed everybody to support his/their own favorites.

M.X.'s discourse is a nostalgic one, in the sense that Svetlana Boym uses for the term "nostalgia": "a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images – of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday".<sup>206</sup> In other words, M.X. combines two images, that of the general past, and that of his activity during the communist regime, when he could afford to set up spectacles, to have an audience for those spectacles, and to make his own connections with what he calls "artists from all over the country".<sup>207</sup> His recollections are about the entire period when he was a director of the House of Culture, and it becomes evident that this is the center of his

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*Casa Pionierilor* (roughly translated "House of Pionieri", where *pionieri* referred to the status received by all pupils starting with the second grade. In order to combine the educational and propaganda aspects, education during communist Romania was not organized only according to primary, secondary education and high school. It also comprised of three educational and political levels: *Șoimii Patriei* – "The Hawks of the Motherland" – comprised children in kinder garden and pupils in the first grade. *Pionieri* – translated as "Pioneers" – comprised pupils from second grade to those who from eight grade. Members of UTC, *Uniunea Tineretului Comunist* – The Union of Communist Youth – comprised pupils who were fourteen years old or older. The latter was the last stage until becoming a full member of the Romanian Communist Party. There were cases when not all pupils were made *pionieri* or Members of UTC, as it can be found from this oral history case study also.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>206</sup> Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, New York: Basic Books, 2001, xiv.

<sup>207</sup> M.X., notes from personal discussion. Câmpina, April 23, 2007.

activity. 1989 marked a breakthrough with the past in certain aspects, but at the same time it allowed for the remaining of many of the old habits and practices. After 1989, the political lost complete control over the artistic performances, but at the same time, as M.X. bitterly<sup>208</sup> remembers, the house of culture still depended on funds provided by the mayor, who belonged to a certain political party. All major political parties could hold conferences in the halls of the house of culture, as M.X. could not afford to refuse them and thus lose their financial support once these were in power.<sup>209</sup> This type of discourse can be interpreted at a broader level, indicating an element of continuity in M.X.'s activity: the dependence of artistic and cultural activity on political power and influence. The discontinuity appears at the moment when the house of culture cannot rely on artists and on spectators for its performers and it is subjected to the laws of offer and request. This is where the source of M.X.'s nostalgia lies, in the fact that during communism artistic performances could benefit from all types of sources – materials, instructors, professional artists – because the political power dictated so. This discourse is most obvious when M.X. refers to artists *then and now*: “back then, they would perform for a hot meal, booze and because they could get to see the country, nowadays they show up, only if the *recipe* is high enough”.<sup>210</sup> This adds to M.X.'s personal nostalgia for the times when he was a younger and more important person to the community person, as age plays an important part in his construction of discourse.

Nevertheless, there is information which M.X., consciously, or unconsciously, does not offer. He restrains, for instance, from saying anything about how he made use of his influence and power in administrative decisions. His subjectivity is that of a

<sup>208</sup> “Bitterly” is, of course, a personal and subjective remark on the tone of the interviewee’s voice, when recalling his activity at the house of culture, after 1989.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibidem*. The Romanian term for “recipe” is *rețetă*. By it, M.X. refers to a slang term denoting the sum of money which a performing artist gets paid with for participating to a show.

local representative of the communist nomenclature. It neglects any considerations on events at a broader, regional, or national level, and it is constructed on his own activity at the house of culture, around his nostalgia for the general context which, in his own opinion, allowed him to organize important spectacles, and for the personal context of his youth.

1989 marked a shift in the importance of the genre of spectacles M.X. was organizing. From mass-spectacles, centered around the glorification of the communist party and Nicolae Ceaușescu, which occasionally allowed for a representation of the classic repertoire (literary theater, poetry which was not composed during the times of and for Ceausescu), spectacles became mainly entertaining shows, which depended not on the Party' material and financial support, but on the actual popularity of the respective show among the local community, and, ironically, on the financial support of ordinary people who paid for their tickets, in order to watch the spectacle, instead of simply being brought up to assist it.

### ***3.6 Organizers, Still Participants***

The second category is made up of persons who participated in the festival, but not as simple participants, but as organizers of exhibitions or as coordinators for groups of participants. Of the second category all the interviewees are teachers and the groups they coordinated were groups of pupils.

As an ethnologist, C.R. organized several exhibitions, focused on folk costumes, and folk culture. Several of these exhibitions were part of the “Song to Romania” festival, and in this case, as she recalls, ethnologists were just the persons who set the stage and the objects on display. In most cases, it was political activists

who decided the theme of the exhibition and who had the final word, regarding its design.<sup>211</sup>

C.R.'s case is a different one from M.X.'s. Whereas M.X. was only an organizer, with no proper training for any artistic or cultural field, C.R. was a researcher. But similarly to M.X., she also manifests nostalgia, not for the communist regime, but for her activity as a researcher. That is why she organizes her narration around her researches and her scientific findings around general theories of folklore, often disregarding her initial focus, on "Song to Romania". Her attitude toward the festival is generally negative, but not without its ambiguities.

Her negative attitude comes mainly from the fact that she regards the festival as a political tool of propaganda, which only intermingled with professional research on folklore. In this respect, she refers to the ways in which folk motives from one traditional region of Romania were applied to costumes from other regions, in order to symbolize the cultural unity of the Romanian people.<sup>212</sup> Despite this, she also mentions how the group of researchers which she was a part of, won several awards within the festival, and she refers to the latter as the context in which many traditional folk artisans could make themselves noticed and claim national and international fame, for their products.

Unlike M.X., for whom the festival provided the main means and pretext for his activity, C.R. was not dependent on the festival to such an extent. "Song to Romania" might have meant several diplomas which could be taken into consideration

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<sup>211</sup> C.R., personal interview. Bucharest, May 7, 2007. One such example, very indicative of the atmosphere of censorship and professionalism of political activists is the following: "For one of the exhibitions we had to put up a huge photograph of the "Madrigal" choir. The photo showed the members of the choir singing and the conductor, who was facing his choir, thus appearing with his back towards everyone who would look at the picture. When they came to give their approval, one of them ordered the picture to be put aside. We asked: "Why?" And he said: "You want someone to turn his back on comrade Ceaușescu when he comes to visit the exhibition?" Of course, he never came to visit it anyway...." *Ibidem*.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibidem*.



within the professional field of activity, but apart from that the festival was insignificant as means of reaching a superior professional or social status. Like in the previous case, C.R. also broadens her discourse to cover the post 1989 period and her nostalgia is also influenced by her age and centered on her past professional activity. Unlike M.X., however, she feels no need to be nostalgic about communism, as she did not depend on it to a large extent and the post 1989 events only permitted her to expand her activities as a researcher and to organize folk exhibitions abroad.

R.O. played different roles within the festival. Initially, at the beginning of the 1980s, she was only a participant, but toward the end of the 1980s, as a teacher, she participated in the competition, leading a group of pupils. As teacher, she remembers one such participation, when she and her group of pupils performed a song based on the children's poem "The Grasshopper and the Ant", by Elena Farago.<sup>213</sup> As a teacher participating in the competition, she remembers it to be a boring activity, but one which had to be fulfilled, as it considered an extra artistic-cultural activity for teachers.

R.O. has one photograph from that participation.<sup>214</sup> The photograph depicts her playing a mandolin and three of her pupils, dressed in uniform, singing and watching R.O. as she plays. There are no official symbols, posters, banners to be seen in the picture, and the overall image is that of a school celebration, which is performed just for completing another ordinary task. R.O. has no special recollection about this image and therefore the latter can be considered as a neutral picture, lacking any complementary discourse which could confer it any particular message.

L.M. presents a similar case, of a teacher who organized dance and performance groups, in order to participate to the local and county levels of "Song to

<sup>213</sup> R.O., personal interview. Câmpina, April 18, 2007. Elena Farago was a Romanian poet (1878-1954). She wrote mainly poetry for children. For further information see <http://cerculpoetilor.net/poet.php?idp=29> Last entry: May 15, 2007.

<sup>214</sup> See Annex No. 3.

Romania”. Unlike R.O., he was more involved in such activities, partly because of his profession – a teacher of Romanian language and literature – which forced him officially to participate and partly because of his official duties as a coordinator for the Union of Communist Youth.<sup>215</sup> His primary focus, when remembering the festival, is not on the latter, but on school activities and performances which had to be fulfilled as any other ordinary task. The festival, in this case, becomes only the context for organizing spectacles, or artistic “actions” (he refuses to name them “activities”, as he considers them unworthy of such a name), or for keeping pupils under control.<sup>216</sup> L.M.’s attitude toward the festival is generally a negative one, and he considers it a failure, because of its “mass action features”, and, in the end, just another task with no efficiency for its initial purposes: “they [the pupils – m.n.] would sing just for the sake of singing and they would dance just for the sake of dancing. The pupils were getting bored, and there was no real connection between the performing artists on stage and the audience”.<sup>217</sup> But despite this, he considers that the festival was useful, as it “kept the kids busy, it taught them something, instead of letting them waste their time”.<sup>218</sup> Apart from this, he also mentions that official indications of allowing only the good pupils to participate were often disregarded, arguing that: “if you have an A pupil who cannot sing anything and a C pupil who can really sing, then you also give the C pupil a chance to do what he can do best”.<sup>219</sup> His wife, M.M., was a kinder garden teacher and she used to organize spectacles, which among children’s poems, included songs praising socialist Romania and Ceaușescu. She considers this an ordinary event, arguing that everybody was forced to praise the regime and its leader, and that, to a certain extent, it was a normal thing to do.

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<sup>215</sup> L.M., personal interview. Câmpina, April 22, 2007.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>217</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>218</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>219</sup> *Ibidem.*

Whereas R.O.'s discourse on her participation as a teacher is rather summative, both in terms of information and attitude, L.M., on the other hand, presents us with more information. As for his attitude taken on this information, he simply takes distance from what he remembers, and his narrative seems more of an official report, holding two main characters: teachers and pupils. He recalls and he passes simple judgments, positive or negative, on actions he was often part of. For instance, he remembers how pupils of Protestant religion were forced to participate to the repetitions to the festival on Saturdays, and how these were punished for not attending it. The punishment came from teachers it consisted in low grades or exclusion from the communist youth organizations, such as "Șoimii Patriei" or "Pionieri". He does not add a personal dimension to such events, and he projects them as ordinary happenings within a certain political context which is now gone. He adds a new interpretation to Ritchie's observation that people give actions new significance according to their later consequences.<sup>220</sup> L.M. maintains his recollection, he deems it morally negative, but he distances himself from it and adopts an impersonal narrative style. He gives no particular significance to the events.

A.P. recalls how she would organize school spectacles at the end of each year. She does not remember the "Song to Romania" festival, however she does remember that everyone had to sing or perform poems, songs about the regime and Ceaușescu.<sup>221</sup> She even wrote several such poems, as a pupil, during the 1960s but also as a teacher, during the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>222</sup> She recalls textbooks of political poems as her sources of inspiration and states that she enjoyed writing poems since she saw in them a normal literary exercise, without any aesthetic importance.<sup>223</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>221</sup> A.P., personal interview. Câmpina, April 22, 2007.

<sup>222</sup> See a facsimile of the sketches of such a poem in Annex No. 7.

<sup>223</sup> A.P., personal interview. Câmpina, April 22, 2007.

### **3.7 Participants**

I operate, for this category, with a broader understanding of the term “participants”, by which I mean not just those who acted as performers, but also spectators. I consider this to be useful in order to explore the perspective had not only by people directly involved in the festival, but also persons whose activity was only tangential to it.

Thus, participants can be divided into two sub categories: active participants, comprising persons who participated to the various competitions of the festival, either as pupils, students, workers or peasants. This sub category includes both amateur and professional artists. By the former, I understand different social and professional categories whose main occupation was not within the artistic or cultural field and who were forced by the regime to compose, create amateur works of art, in order to fit in with the image of communist “new man”. By professional artists, I refer to musicians, actors, writers, painters, or sculptors, who had a formal training in an artistic and cultural field and whose main activity resided in producing works of art.

The second sub category is that of passive participants. By this I understand persons who did not participate directly in the festival, as performers or instructors for artistic performances, but whose professions had them perform duties which intermingled with “Song to Romania”. For instance, I refer to teachers who were in charge of bringing their pupils to watch the competitions and performances for the festival.

### 3.7.1 Active Participants

L.B. participated in the festival, during the second half of the 1980s. His case presents several particularities, which are caused mainly by his ethnic Hungarian origin. Living in Covasna, a town in the county of Covasna, as a pupil in a secondary school, with ethnic Hungarian teachers, but with an ethnic Romanian director, L.B. entered a special violin class, conducted by his music teacher, and thus began to play in his teacher's group for various occasions. L.B. remembers this group to have been a very efficient financial means by which his teacher could afford himself various expenditures.<sup>224</sup> Participation to the "Song to Romania" festival was a way of gaining popularity and making themselves noticed. In the case of his group, the performance had to consist of traditional Hungarian folk dances, to which the teacher added what L.B. remembers to be "a classical music performance, for violins".<sup>225</sup> For him, the participation was not just an ordinary pupil's activity, it was a way in which he could develop a career, earn respect and benefit from small financial rewards, such as paid vacations, which followed after his school group won first prize at the national level of the festival in 1989.<sup>226</sup> His narrative is that of a winner, who focuses on the material and time difficulties which he had to deal with in order to achieve his goals.

R.O., mentioned before as a participant-organizer, was also an active participant to the festival, as a high school pupil in the town of Breaza, near Câmpina. As a participant, her main recollection is that the festival gave pupils a goal to achieve, and that, despite the political involvement and control, it allowed young talents to come out into the open. Apart from literary-artistic performances dedicated to

<sup>224</sup> L.B., personal interview. Budapest, February 28, 2007.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>226</sup> *Ibidem.*

Ceaușescu, there were also “complex choirs, or dance performances based on classical music such as Tchaikovsky”.<sup>227</sup> This time she focuses mainly on the professional features which certain performative groups within the local level of the festival had reached through the dedication of their instructors. Her personal photographs from this period are even more suggestive than her oral testimony, in the sense that they summarize her entire discourse. One such photograph depicts R.O. in her folk costume, right after one competition in which she had participated.<sup>228</sup> Unlike the previous case, the picture is saturated with political symbols, such as the portrait of Nicolae Ceaușescu, posters with quotes from his speeches, or poems and slogans praising the Party and its leader. In this sense the picture holds a symbolical topography, dominated by the painting of Ceaușescu, which rests above the room and R.O. She looks straight into the photograph, but the focus is not on her, but on her folk costume. This is evident from the words she had written on the back of the photograph: “December 4, 1980, Eleventh grade. After the show. The costume from the performance”.<sup>229</sup> Another photograph taken on the same occasion presents in the same cadre R.O. together with a group of colleagues. Again one sees the official painting, slogans, posters, but the back of the photograph indicates that its meaning is to be a visual reminder of a group of pupils. The historical context, both general and particular, remains in the background. These photographs corroborated with R.O. narrative indicate that the focus is on the personal experience, in a narrow, local context, in which the political is seen as something which is permanently imminent and inescapable, but never central.

M.C. is aware of his own subjectivity when recalling his participation to the festival. Now, a teacher of history, he applies different theories of oral history he

<sup>227</sup> R.O., personal interview. Câmpina, April 18, 2007.

<sup>228</sup> See Annex No. 4. Also, R.O., personal interview. Câmpina, April 19, 2007.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibidem*.

learned as a student, to his own memories. Nevertheless, he perceives the dualism between subjectivity and objectivity in the classical manner, as observed by Elisabeth Tonkin, seeing the two as opposites, and deeming his “subjectivity” in terms of inaccuracy and unreliability.<sup>230</sup> He is not aware of the importance of his subjectivity, as defined by Portelli, and he states: “What I mean to say is that my information is inaccurate, because I was at the age when instincts are more important than the desire for accurate information. We did not have access to information as kids nowadays have, and I was not interested in this festival and in what was on TV.”<sup>231</sup> However he made one exception from his rule when he watched his participation on TV, to musical performance, which had been directed at the “Doftana” prison, in his home village, of Telega.<sup>232</sup> The performance was a symbolical one, and it was held at the beginning of the summer. It consisted of a number of participants, of various social, age and professional categories, which were supposed to form the figure of Romania. In the middle of this group there was a choir, situated so as to form the figure “XX”. The design was set to mark the anniversary of twenty years from the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party.<sup>233</sup> M.C. recalls that he was taken to the prison early in the morning and that they had to simply stand still, while the choir was miming the lyrics of several propaganda songs, the actual music being playback.<sup>234</sup> Several persons fainted during the filming, but it made no difference to the directors who

<sup>230</sup> Elisabeth Tonkin, “Memory Makes Us, We Make History” in Idem, *Narrating our Past. The Social Construction of Oral History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 95-96.

<sup>231</sup> M.C., personal interview. Câmpina, April 20, 2007.

<sup>232</sup> Telega is the village where “Doftana” prison is located. It is situated 6 kilometers from Câmpina. For further information, see [www.telega.ro](http://www.telega.ro). Last entry: May 15, 2007.

<sup>233</sup> M.C., personal interview. Câmpina, April 20, 2007. The 9<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party was held in July 1965, after the death of the Romanian communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Officially, the Congress was held under the principle of collective leadership, of both the Party and the country. Unofficially, leadership was assumed by a triumvirate, which comprised Nicolae Ceausescu, Chivu Stoica and Ion Gheorghe-Maurer. Later on, Ceausescu would dispose of his colleagues, assuming total power and control over the Party and the country. During the 1970s and 1980s official press identified the 9<sup>th</sup> Congress with the beginning of Nicolae Ceausescu’s “Golden Age” (in Romanian, “Epoca de Aur”). For further information, see Adrian Cioroianu, *op. cit.*, 395-396.

<sup>234</sup> M.C., personal interview. Câmpina, April 20, 2007.

continued their work until they considered it finished. For M.C. this was no burden, as he was young and animated by the desire to see himself on TV and become something important.<sup>235</sup>

A.T. was in primary school when she participated with her school for the local competition within the “Song to Romania” festival. She remembers the repetitions held during the drawing or artistic activities classes, but she also remembers vividly the actual performance, based on a photograph from the event.<sup>236</sup> The photograph depicts three groups of pupils on stage, each group being dressed in one of the three colors of the Romanian national flag. The stage is dominated by Ceaușescu’s portrait, in the center and by the national flag on the left side and the Party’s flag on the right side. Apart from the political symbols, this photograph too can be disregarded as depicted an ordinary school event. At a closer look, however, one can observe the discrepancy between the pupils on stage who are dressed in their costumes and the spectators who are well dressed, thus showing not just that the time of the event was sometime during winter, but also that the hall was not heated and that the condition of the performance were mainly improvised. The entire solemnity of the event, based on the design of the stage and the pupils’ costumes, is thus shattered by the people in the audience, which mark the artificial context of the entire performance. A.T. has studied theories of oral history and she has numerous oral history interviews herself, so she is well aware that she is constructing a narrative about her subjectively lived experience. At the same time, her recollections are not interrupted by any analytical remarks on what she is saying, as in the case of M.C. Her general attitude toward her participation is centered around her fear and excitement of appearing on stage, in a public context (she even thought that Ceaușescu would be present in the hall), but also by her

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<sup>235</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>236</sup> A.T., personal interview, Bucharest, May 9, 2007. See Annex No. 6.



eventual disappointment when she found out that her school did not win the competition to a superior level of the festival.<sup>237</sup> Her memories are those of a child, who only perceives what is happening to her. She did not know who Ceaușescu really was, but his visual presence, on the official painting above the stage, signified his physical presence in the hall also.

R.O., M.C. and A.T.'s recollections are similar in that they rely heavily on subjectivity, without passing any moral judgment or without manifesting any kind of nostalgia. This is mainly due to the fact that all of them were still young when the respective events took place.

### 3.7.2 Passive Participants

“As far as I know...from what I remember...”<sup>238</sup> This is how G.N. begins his oral narration about the festival and his participation to it. He is a teacher of history and this has a great influence on his discourse, as he begins it in the form of a history lesson, classifying the effects of the festival into negative and positive. He starts with the negative effects, stating that “Song to Romania” was related to “a personality cult of Ceaușescu, of neo-Stalinist type”.<sup>239</sup> Then he moves on to the positive effects, arguing that the festival allowed for the discovery of “raw talents”, who were brought out into the open and were allowed to manifest themselves.<sup>240</sup> As a passive participant, he was forced to accompany his pupils to various spectacles and mass assemblies in honor of Nicolae Ceaușescu. He states that the directors of the school where he had

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<sup>237</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>238</sup> G.N., personal interview. Câmpina, April 20, 2007.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>240</sup> *Ibidem.*

been a teacher accepted his refusal to participate to the festival, because of subjective, personal reasons.<sup>241</sup>

On the one hand, he recalls that pupils were happy to see their colleagues on stage. On the other hand, he remembers the repetitions for mass performances on stadium at Ploiești, without making it clear whether he was impressed by their scale, or whether he perceived them as a burden.<sup>242</sup> One might interpret his attitude as that of person who considers that he was a part of a stressful, but important event.

G.N.'s discourse is twofold: he refers to the festival in a general way, in the form of historical discourse, and then he recalls personal memories about the festival, but without integrating these memories in the broader historical framework which he had created previously.

V.I. had a similar function, of accompanying pupils to spectacles and artistic manifestations, although not as a teacher, but as a pedagogue. She was also an active participant, as a dancer, during 1971-1972, for a local folk festival, held in her home village, near Câmpina.<sup>243</sup> Later on, after becoming a pedagogue, whose mission was to supervise pupils in the campus, she had to take them to watch movies at the cinema every Saturday evening, or various artistic performances, during the week.<sup>244</sup> V.I. provides useful insights to the means which education institutions had at their disposal for controlling pupils' activities.

This becomes evident from a series of documents and reports about her activity, which she kept for herself as personal reminders. One such document is an activity plan, for the school year of 1979-1980, which mentions administrative,

<sup>241</sup> *Ibidem*. G.N. states that he explained to the school directors he could not attend the rehearsals for performances, because of his time schedule, and the directors understood him.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>243</sup> V.I., personal interview. Câmpina, April 22, 2007. The festival at which V.I. participated as a dancer was a local one, called "Crăițele". After 1976 such local festivals would be integrated in the framework of the "Song to Romania" festival.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibidem*.

planning and educational-artistic activities which had to be fulfilled over the course of one year.<sup>245</sup> Among the artistic activities one finds obligatory subscriptions to newspapers such as *Scântea Tineretului*, the communist official newspaper for youth, but also scientific research magazines such *Gazeta matematică* [Review of Mathematics].<sup>246</sup>

What is of interest is not the plan in itself, but V.I.'s comments upon it. V.I. refrains from passing any kind of moral judgments. She only makes brief comments on each of planned activities. She perceives every activity from the plan of activity as a natural, normal one, in which the political is of secondary importance. The forefront of the entire image is taken by social relations which appear between pupils, between pupils and pedagogue, or between pupils and their teachers. She also refers to relations based on control, which is at a professional and not at a political level. For V.I., control does not necessarily mean political control, which is still present, but of secondary importance, it means control from her direct superiors, such as the school director.

### **3.8 By-Standers**

One might find surprising the inclusion of persons who had nothing to do with “Song to Romania” in a classification of interviewees, who participated more or less in the festival. Nevertheless, the official aims of the communist regime regarding “Song to Romania” were to include almost everyone. For this latter category I observe the

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<sup>245</sup> See Annex No. 8, Activity Plan for School Year 1979-1980. (Facsimile)

<sup>246</sup> *Ibidem*. Also, V.I., personal interview. April 22, 2007.

effects which the festival had, by its simple existence, on persons who were not directly affected by it.

S.P. is a rather lonely and retired person, spending his days mostly reading books of history and physics. He is well over seventy years old, and he was a passive witness to the entire Romanian communist history, which he now rejects and deems responsible for the actual economic, social and moral state of Romania.<sup>247</sup> After a series of personal tragic events, he chose to isolate himself from social life and not only: “after I realized what politics in communist Romania was all about, I stopped watching TV. I only watched the films and the show on New Year’s Eve.”<sup>248</sup> When asked about “Song to Romania”, S.P. argued that it seemed to him like “the image of many cheerful people, surrounding a dead person”.<sup>249</sup> The festival was a complete failure, as it did not manage to produce anything worthy: “it did not bring joy to those who were poor and unhappy”.<sup>250</sup>

His narrative lacks any kind of precise information on the festival. But this is not of interest in his case, as a by-stander. What is of interest is his overall image of a structure he was not part of. “Song to Romania” does not stand out in any particular way, except for its officially, forced atmosphere of fake celebration. As in the case of the other interviewees, such as M.X., or C.R., his narrative discourse is marked by nostalgia. Opposite to the other nostalgic interviewees, S.P. distinguishes between two historical periods, to which he confers absolute features: the first one is that of the communist regime, with a totally negative side, while the other is the interwar period, which marked the development of Romania and has totally positive connotations. He uses the case of “Song to Romania” to exemplify this, by praising famous folklore, or

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<sup>247</sup> S.P., personal interview. Bucharest, May 7, 2007.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>249</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>250</sup> *Ibidem.*

popular singers, like Ioana Radu or Maria Tănase, who, in his opinion could not have appeared as a result of “Song to Romania”.<sup>251</sup>

### 3.9 Conclusions

Oral history analysis presents two types of findings for the case study of “Song to Romania”. The first type refers to information which contradicts official claims about the functions, structure and resources of the festival. Official media maintains complete silence, when it comes to the material and financial means, by which organizers were able to stage mass performances, or to conduct the festival in its various levels of competitions. Corroborated with other types of written sources, especially at local level, oral history can offer insights into how the festival became a structure in itself, which made use of various resources, through unofficial channels. M.X.’s information proved to be a starting point in this respect.

Information provided by the interviewees has also shown how ordinary people dealt with official directives; in certain cases, those who were allowed to participate in the competitions were not necessarily the best pupils or the hardest-working persons – as official sources claimed –, but whose who were considered to have a native artistic talent. In several cases (presented by R.O., A.T.), the official aim of occupying the entire people’s time with working and artistic activities was ignored, and often people skipped their every-day activities or profession, in order to accomplish the cultural tasks of “Song to Romania”.

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<sup>251</sup> *Ibidem*. Ioana Radu (1917-1990) is considered to be one of the greatest Romanian traditional singers. Maria Tănase (1913-1963) was a Romanian singer of traditional and popular music. For further information see [http://www.glattundverkehr.at/728\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.glattundverkehr.at/728_ENG_HTML.htm) Last entry: May 15, 2007.

The second and probably most important type of information, provided by oral history lies with how interviewees construct their subjective narrative about their past and “Song to Romania”. One also needs to explore the interrelations between historical memory, collective memory and personal, which appear in this oral history case study.

Most interviewees construct their subjectivity around their personal experience, but they always related themselves to the general context, without making any strong connections between the two. Organizers, organizer-participants, active or passive participants, by-standers have different recollection and memories and they pass different judgments, which are caused, first of all, by their own personal experience. These are also caused by the different roles each interviewee has played within the festival. In this respect, an obvious example is M.X., who, as a former organizer, is more focused on the political control aspect, than those who were simple participants.

Different functions are not the only factors that matter in the analysis, despite the fact that the oral history interviews were structured according to this criterion. The criterion of age differentiates between nostalgic and non-nostalgic persons. Nostalgia itself varies according to personal experience.

Intellectual background is also important when analyzing the way in which each person develops his/her narrative. It contributes to their memories in the sense that it makes people more or less aware of the existence of a present socially-shared historical memory on communism in general and on “Song to Romania in particular, and it provides several interviewees with the means to operate with this historical memory and to include it in their narrative discourse.

Another, rather paradoxical, observation which needs to be made is that by-standers tend to speak more about the propaganda and political implications of the

festival, than those who were directly connected to it, especially participants. This might be caused by several factors.

Firstly, most of the interviewees were young as participants, and their focus was not on the political features, which they accepted more or less, but on opportunities to make themselves noticed, or to establish new relations. That is why, the festival partially failed in achieving its goals of establishing Ceaușescu's personality cult, because ordinary people found ways of resisting to it, exactly by formally accepting it. In reality, they dealt with it as an ordinary event, or task which simply had to be fulfilled, as part of everyday routine activity. Nevertheless, this conclusion is very much influenced by the fact that this case study focused mainly on persons who took part at local level, where the political control, as well as artistic standards were not as high as those at the regional or national level.

Secondly, this observation can be explained by the way in which interviewees develop their discourse. Several of them (R.O., G.N., L.M., M.M., M.X., A.P.) discuss the positive aspects of the festival, from various point of view, which intersect in the argument that the festival led to the emergence of artistic values. This latter argument can be interpreted in several ways. One can agree to it, as the festival indeed provided several artists to manifest themselves and show their talent. On the other hand one can argue against it, by stating the overall control of the political regime and its mitigation into artistic and cultural activities, which raise numerous questions about the actual aesthetic value of the latter.

What is of interest in this case is not the general argument in itself, but how this general argument is developed by the interviewees. They use this argument in order to justify their actions, to present them in a positive light.

One can identify in these recollections strong elements of a generally accepted negative historical memory about communism. This historical memory is present in every discourse which starts by deeming “Song to Romania” as a failure. This might explain why most interviewees deem the festival as a failure, but neglect to mention in what exactly it failed. “Song to Romania” failed together with the entire structure of the communist regime.

Apart from a general negative historical memory, one observes a certain type of collective memory, largely influenced by the local context. This type of collective memory reinterprets the festival as a negative enterprise with positive effects for certain categories of people. It can be explored in all the narratives which start with the negative side of the festival, but then turn to its positive effects, without mentioning if these effects manifested at a general level, for large categories of people, or simply for the respective interviewee.

These two concepts, of historical and collective memory intermingle with each other and are modified by personal memories. Each interviewee reduces the festival to his own personal experience and each finds different reasons for deeming as a negative action or positive one. Whereas the negative aspect is always linked with the issue of political control, the positive aspects may vary from material opportunities to professional ones, either financial or of a different nature, such as control over pupils. This is explainable by the fact that all interviewees experienced a dramatic change in official discourse after the events of 1989. It can be well argued that the radical political change of 1989 marked a memory rupture at the level of the collective and that it influenced more or less the ways in which ordinary people shape their recollections about their past experience. Although further research needs to be conducted on this issue, especially to other levels than the local ones, it can be stated



that this memory shift defined the ways ordinary people construct their subjectivity at different levels, in order to justify their past actions and existence and to integrate them in a present-oriented collective memory.

## Conclusion

“Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must keep silent”  
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*

This thesis aimed at providing an analysis of the “Song to Romania” festival from the perspective of political festivals, as an instrument of conferring legitimacy to the communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu and of creating a mass identity for ordinary people. Moreover, it has aimed at exploring the reaction of ordinary people to this tool of mass propaganda, as well as their subjective recollection of the festival.

Despite the sheer scale and the official importance of “Song to Romania” during the communist regime, present day discourses on “Song to Romania” vary from negative general comments regarding the political use of traditional culture to mute appreciations of people who managed to make themselves noticed within the festival and later on to claim a status of professional artists. Nevertheless, remarks on “Song to Romania” are rather rare, as the festival seems to have been long forgotten despite its obvious recentness. This silence is not explainable simply by its failure due to its association with the regime led by Nicolae Ceaușescu, or by its past and present deeming as a morally negative structure.

“Song to Romania” was a political festival, in the sense that it incorporated a set of politically organized performative and celebrative events, mass assemblies and artistic competitions, with the purpose of disseminating political symbols of the socialist and national ideology of communist regime. It did not have the sole purpose of providing political legitimacy, as there were other means to achieve this goal. By using the pretext of constructing a new culture, the festival aimed at creating a new set of social relations, at inducing a shift in social status for intellectuals and professional artists, in order to avoid any critique or resistance from the latter.

In doing so, the festival became the ideal framework for bringing together two main components of what was intended to be the socialist order of communist Romania under Nicolae Ceaușescu: the masses and the leader. Political rituals were used extensively to mark this dissociation and traditional aspects of festivals, such as the temporary reversed social order were reinterpreted, in order to fit in with Ceaușescu's personality cult. The ultimate aim, although never officially recognized, was to create a new mass identity, in which individual values were left aside. Mass rallies at the ending festivities for each edition of the festival proved to be an ideal source for exploring the functions of political rituals for the case of Romania, in particular, and for modern societies, in general.

The official image is, nevertheless, transformed if one construes the unexplored side of the festival: ordinary people's response to the festival. Most people did not have any particular reaction, as they perceived the festival as something normal for the respective period. Moreover, depending on their social, age and professional status, as well as on their intellectual background and access to information, people responded in various ways. They either participated in it, without getting involved, or regarded it as a formal activity, part of everyday responsibilities. They also perceived it as an occasion to be promoted, or to witness a change in social status. The festival in itself became an independent structure, an alternative plan, which needed to be fulfilled similarly to economic plans in industry and agriculture.

Consequently it can be implied that it led to the appearance of new social relations and changes in social status for awarded participants, or for organizers. Workers and peasants suddenly found themselves applauded and praised as innovating and representative artists, and could afford financial and material advantages which were normally out of their reach. Activists organizing various

competitions within the festival managed to interrelate with economic directors, in order to insure their funding. Although official sources claim that special funds were attributed to the proceedings of the festival, present interviews with organizers suggest a different version. Further inquiry still needs to be undertaken regarding this particular aspect, but the research conducted so far on interviewees proves to be a promising starting point for revealing an entire alternative social structure, left outside official recordings.

Furthermore, “Song to Romania” can prove insightful when discussing the complex issue of how people remember communism. Historical memory and collective memories intermingle with personal memories from case to case to offer various narrative discourses. Beyond this narrative variety lies a set of patterns, out of which the most important one is the ambiguity in people’s recollections of the festival. Most interviewees have first mentioned its negative side, only to stress the positive aspects later on, in an “it wasn’t that bad” type of discourse. Two main explanations can account for this. On the one hand, the festival comprised so many activities that, in the end, it did not take over ordinary course of events, it simply integrated into them. Despite official claims, political control varied from local levels to the national level, allowing people to modify official requirements according to their own interests and abilities. Moreover, 1989 marked a radical political rupture with the past, at least at the official level. This meant that ordinary people had to abruptly modify their set of values and their socially accepted discursive code. Whereas before 1989 there was a code of publicly accepted discourses and private opinions which had to remain private, after 1989, most people retained only this duality but completely changed the corpus of “publicly accepted” versus “privately accepted” statements.

This research opened new questions of research, regarding the use of political festivals in Romania, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the use of political celebrative manifestations in general. For the first issue, further research needs to be conducted on political festivals during the dictatorship of King Charles II, in the 1930s, and on the ways in which these festivals influenced by any possible means festivities of the Romanian communist regime during the 1950s and later on during “Song to Romania”. Comparisons of such historical case studies are important for the study of totalitarian regimes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this sense, the study of “Song to Romania” gains importance, by adding knowledge to an under researched field, that of mass artistic and political assemblies in Eastern Europe. Furthermore, analyzing how people remember such similar mass manifestation, but from different regimes, can also prove most useful for the studying of memory about these regimes and for identifying the factors which count for their way of remembering.

This present research, however, did not just open the path for new fields of inquiry. It showed how political festivals and rituals were put to use by the communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu and how ordinary people reacted to it now and react to its memory in the present. When interviewed, or when simply discussing about their past memories, their recollections and their silence, in Wittgenstein’s sense of the word, proved most revealing.

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## Annexes

### Annex No. 1:

**Excerpt from Nicolae Ceaușescu, “Expunere cu privire la activitatea politico-ideologică și cultural-educativă de formare a omului nou, constructor conștient și devotat al societății socialiste, multilateral dezvoltate și al comunismului în România”[Presentation regarding the political-ideological and cultural-educational activity of forming the new man, a conscious and devoted constructor of the socialist, multilaterally-developed society and of communism in Romania] in *Congresul educației politice și al culturii socialiste 2-4 iunie 1976* [The Congress of Political Education and Socialist Culture], Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1976, 50-53.**

### **Intensificarea activității cultural-artistice în rândul oamenilor muncii de la orașe și sate**

Stimați tovarăși,

După cum am înfățișat în cadrul expunerii, dispunem de o puternică bază materială pentru activitatea politică și cultural-educativă de masă. Este necesar să luăm toate măsurile pentru folosirea cu rezultate cât mai bune a tuturor mijloacelor create de societatea noastră în vederea ridicării la un nivel superior a muncii de educație.

Pornind de la faptul că întreaga activitate educativă va trebui să se desfășoare sub conducerea nemijlocită a organelor și organizațiilor de partid, doresc să subliniez totodată, că sarcini importante revin în această direcție Consiliului Culturii și Educației Socialiste, precum și comitetelor de cultură și educație socialistă județene, care au menirea să asigure conducerea unitară a activității cultural-educative, imprimându-i un spirit militant, orientînd-o în direcția formării conștiinței noi, revoluționare a maselor, a promovării și răspîndirii largi a creației literar-artistice puse în slujba intereselor și idealurilor celor mai înaintate ale poporului. În întreaga lor activitate, aceste organisme trebuie să se sprijine pe un larg activ obștesc, să asigure unirea într-o singură direcție a instituțiilor și a bazei materiale, a tuturor forțelor intelectualității noastre.

O atenție deosebită este necesar să acordăm activității caselor de cultură și cluburilor din întreprinderi și instituții, care trebuie să se manifeste ca adevărate focare de educație și cultură, de formare a conștiinței socialiste a oamenilor muncii. Nu trebuie să existe întreprinderi și instituții în care să nu se desfășoare o intensă și bine organizată activitate educativă, care să nu dispună de formații cultural-artistice. În cadrul tuturor unităților economice și sociale trebuie să asigurăm îmbinarea armonioasă a producției cu educația, a muncii cu organizarea plăcută și educativă a timpului liber, făcînd din întreprinderile și instituțiile noastre puternice centre de formare a omului nou, cu un larg orizont de cultură, cu o înaltă conștiință socialistă. Pentru realizarea acestui obiectiv, impus de cerințele dezvoltării multilaterale a

societății noastre, apare necesar să constituim în întreprinderi și instituții consilii unitare de educație și cultură, care să organizeze, sub conducerea organizațiilor de partid, întreaga activitate de răspîndire a științei, de educare politică, munca cultural-artistică, precum și organizarea plăcută și educativă a timpului liber. (*Aplauze puternice*).

În mediul rural, școala și căminul cultural trebuie să devină puternice centre de răspîndire a cunoștințelor științifice și culturale, de educație politică, cetățenească și etică a locuitorilor satelor, de organizare a unei vieți și variate activități artistice de masă. Pentru conducerea unitară a vieții cultural-educative este necesar să constituim în comune consilii de educație și cultură care să cuprindă și să antreneze toate forțele de care dispunem, asigurînd desfășurarea unei largi mișcări de masă, imprimînd un nou și puternic avînt creației și interpretării artei populare. În general, trebuie să stimulăm mai mult spiritul de creație al maselor în sfera culturii, dezvoltînd cenacluri literare, cercurile artistice, cercurile cu caracter științific și tehnic. În acest scop, este necesar să se extindă concursurile de creație și interpretare artistică, atît la nivelul comunelor, orașelor și județelor, cît și la nivelul întregii țări, veghind ca acestea să capete un caracter activ, nu formal, și să reprezinte un mijloc eficient de manifestare a talentelor autentice de masă, de participare a oamenilor muncii la viața culturală a societății noastre. În acest sens, cred că ar fi mai bine să ne gîndim la organizarea anuală, la începutul lunii iunie, a unor festivaluri sau concursuri naționale, culturale-sportive, pe întreaga țară. (*Aplauze puternice*.)

Trebuie să fim pe deplin conștienți de faptul că vasta și complexa operă de formare a omului nou, stăpîn pe cele mai înaintate cuceriri ale științei, ale cunoașterii umane, cu o profundă cultură revoluționară, nu se poate înfăptui doar de către activiștii din acest domeniu sau de către intelectuali, oricît de geniali și talentați ar fi aceștia. Formarea omului nou presupune conlucrarea strînsă a activiștilor, a intelectualilor cu oamenii înaintați din toate categoriile sociale, cu masele largi ale celor ce muncesc și, pe această bază, crearea unei ample mișcări populare în domeniul educației și culturii. Ca în toate sectoarele vieții materiale și spirituale, rolul determinant în crearea culturii noi, revoluționare îl au masele populare, geniul ineputabil și mereu inovator al poporului. Educația socialistă, dezvoltarea culturii revoluționare constituie o problemă de cea mai mare importanță pentru întreaga societate și ea nu poate fi soluționată decît cu participarea activă a maselor populare, a întregului nostru popor. Această activitate se integrează, dealtfel, în procesul lărgirii continue a democrației noastre socialiste, reprezintă un factor de mare importanță în dezvoltarea generală a țării, în participarea întregului popor la construirea conștientă a propriului său destin. (*Aplauze puternice*).

În desfășurarea muncii educative și cultural-artistice, un rol sporit revine Uniunii Generale a Sindicatelor, Uniunii Tineretului Comunist, Consiliului Național al Femeilor, uniunilor cooperatiste, celorlalte organizații de masă și obștești, Consiliul Național al Frontului Unității Socialiste, consiliile județene, orășenești și comunale ale Frontului Unității Socialiste trebuie să acționeze pentru unirea tuturor forțelor organizațiilor componente în acțiunea de răspîndire a științei, de educație politică și cultural-artistică a maselor. Sub conducerea organelor și organizațiilor de partid, este necesar să se asigure o strînsă conlucrare a Consiliului Culturii și Educației Socialiste, a Ministerului Educației și Învățămîntului, a celorlalte organisme ideologice, politice și culturale în vederea organizării unitare a activității educative pe întregul cuprins al patriei noastre.

O importantă latură a muncii de educație, a dezvoltării culturii noastre noi, socialiste, o constituie răspîndirea cărții politice, științifice și literare, organizarea



unitară a bibliotecilor din cadrul așezămintelor de cultură și al școlilor, comunelor și orașelor.

Un rol important în vasta activitate educativă desfășurată în țara noastră revine teatrelor, operelor, operetelor, orchestrelor filarmonice și celorlalte formații artistice. Pentru a răspunde la nivelul cel mai înalt cerințelor maselor populare, repertoriul acestor instituții trebuie să asigure punerea în valoare a bogatului nostru patrimoniu artistic clasic, să promoveze creațiile noi, cu caracter revoluționar, cu o ținută artistică corespunzătoare, să facă cunoscute spectatorilor cele mai reprezentative opere din tezaurul artistic universal. În același timp, toate aceste instituții trebuie să stabilească o legătură stinsă cu mișcarea artistică de masă, să participe la organizarea și desfășurarea activității formațiilor de amatori din întreprinderi, instituții, din orașe și comune.

În munca educativă, o pondere deosebită are arta cinematografică, cu largă audiență în rîndul cetățenilor, cu mare putere agitatorică, capabilă să asigure pătrunderea în conștiința spectatorilor a ideilor avansate ale societății noastre. Tocmai de aceea se impune să manifestăm toată exigența față de calitatea filmelor artistice românești, acordînd, în același timp, atenția corespunzătoare producției de filme documentare și de popularizare a științei. [...] “

**Translation from original source:<sup>252</sup>**

The Intensification of Cultural-Artistic Activity within Working People from Towns and Villages

Esteemed comrades,

As I have argued in my presentation, we possess a strong material base for a mass political and cultural-educative activity. It is necessary that we take all measures to use as efficiently as possible all means created by our society, in order to bring the education work to a superior level.

Starting from the fact that our entire educational activity will have to be done under the direct guidance of Party institutions and organizations, I wish to stress also that, in this respect, important tasks await the Council of Socialist Culture and Education, as well as county committees of socialist culture and education, which must ensure the unitary organization of the cultural-educational activity, lending it a militant spirit, and directing it toward the formation of a new, revolutionary mass conscience, toward the promotion and the wide spreading of literary-artistic creation, in order to serve the most forward-looking interest and ideals of the people. In their entire activity, these institutions need to rely on a mass and active support, to ensure the unity of direction of the institutions and of the material basis, of all our intellectual forces.

A special attention needs to be given to the activity of houses of culture and to clubs from factories and institutions, which must act as true centers of education and

<sup>252</sup> All translations of official and personal archive documents and sources used in this thesis have been done by its author. In most cases, when dealing with the official linguistic style, I have maintained the topic used in Romanian language, in order to avoid misunderstandings, which could have been caused by an eventual transfer of English topic to Romanian one. For instance, I have on purpose neglected the topic rule of Subject-Verb-Direct Object-Adverb, in cases where the direct object consisted of a long enumeration, which could have altered the sense of the phrase, and I have situated the adverb (of time, of place, etc.) right after the verb, or following the Romanian topic.

culture, as centers of formation for the socialist conscience of the working people. There must not be a single enterprise or institution without an intense and well organized educational activity, without a cultural-artistic formation. Within all economic and social institutions, we must ensure a harmonious blending of production and education, of work and pleasant, educative organization of leisure time, turning our enterprises and institutions into strong formation centers of the new man, with a wide cultural horizon and forward-looking socialist conscience. In order to achieve this objective, imposed by the requirements of the multilateral development of our society, it is necessary to develop, in enterprises and institutions, unitary councils of culture and education, which, under the guidance of the Party organizations, would organize the entire activity of spreading scientific knowledge, political education, cultural-artistic education, as well as the pleasant and educational organization of free time. (*Prolonged applause.*)

In the rural areas, schools and houses of culture<sup>253</sup> must become strong centers of circulating scientific and cultural knowledge, of political, civic and ethic education for villagers, of organizing a live and rich mass artistic activity. In order to achieve a unitary leadership of cultural-educational life it is necessary to build in rural areas councils of education and culture which would include and engage all our available forces, ensuring the development of a large mass movement, lending a new and powerful impulse to the creation and interpretation of folklore. Generally, we must stimulate even further the creative spirit of masses in the cultural sphere, organizing literary circles, artistic groups, scientific and technical groups. In order to achieve this, it is necessary to expand competitions of artistic creation and interpretation, both at the level of villages, towns and counties and at the level of the entire country, watching over them so that these may get an active, not just formal character, and that they may efficiently represent a means of manifestation for authentic mass talents, and of participation for our working people to the cultural life of our society. In this respect, I think it would be a good thing to annually organize, at the beginning of June, of cultural and sports, national festivals or competitions all over the country. (*Prolonged applause.*)

We must be fully aware of the fact that the vast and complex undertaking of creating the new man, who could master the most advanced discoveries in science, of human knowledge, with a profound revolutionary culture is not possible only through the work of activists in this respective field or of intellectuals, no matter how talented and intelligent the latter might be. Formation of the new man presupposes a close cooperation between activists, intellectuals and forward-looking people of all the social categories, between the former and the large masses of those who work, and, on this basis, it presupposes the creation of a vast popular movement in the domain of education and culture. As with all sectors of material and spiritual life, the deciding role in creating the new, revolutionary culture goes to the masses, to the inexhaustible and always innovating genius of the people. Socialist education, the development of revolutionary culture constitute a problem of the highest priority for all society, and

<sup>253</sup> The Romanian term is “Cămin cultural”. According to the “Decret pentru stabilirea normelor unitare de structură pentru instituțiile cultural-educative 703/1973” [1973 Decree 703, for establishing unitary norms of structure for cultural educational institutions], “Cămin cultural” was one of the main cultural educational institutions for rural areas, as opposed to “Casa de cultură”, which was the main cultural institution in urban areas. See *Culegere de legi, decrete și hotărâri în ajutorul activului sindical*, Vol. VII, Bucharest: Editura politică, 1974, 512-513. I have used Andrei Bantaș’ translation of the term “cămin cultural”, from his *English-Romanian and Romanian-English Dictionary*, Bucharest: Teora, 2000, 275. I preferred this translation as this particular dictionary, despite its date of publishing, includes terms which were extensively used in the communist vocabulary.

the only way it can be solved is through active participation of the popular masses, of our entire people. This activity also integrates itself in the process of continuous enlargement of our socialist democracy, it represents a factor of great importance for the general development of the country, for the participation of the entire people to the conscious construction of its own destiny. (*Prolonged applause.*)

In carrying on the educational and cultural-artistic work, an important role comes to the General Union of Syndicates, The Communist Youth Union, The National Women's Council, to cooperative unions, to the other mass and civic organizations. The National Council of the Socialist Unity Front, county, city-town and communal councils<sup>254</sup> of the Front of Socialist Unity must take action for the union of all the forces from their organizations, in the activity of spreading science, of political and cultural-artistic education of the masses. Under the leadership of Party organs and organizations, it is necessary to ensure a close cooperation of the Council of Socialist Culture and Education, of the Ministry of Education and Teaching, of the other ideological, political and cultural organisms in view of a unitary organization of educational activity all through our country.

An important aspect of the education work, of developing our new, socialist culture is the spreading of political, scientific and literary books, the unitary organization of libraries within institutions of culture, as well as schools, communes and town-cities.

An important role in the vast, educational activity from our country comes to theaters, operas, operettas, philharmonic orchestras as well as other artistic formations.

In order to respond in the highest degree to the requirements of the popular masses, the repertoire of these institutions must ensure the capitalization of our rich classical artistic patrimony, it must promote new creations, with a revolutionary character, with an according artistic form, it inform the spectators of the most representative works of our universal thesaurus. At the same time, all these institutions must establish a close connection to mass artistic movement, they must participate to the organization and evolution of activities done by amateur formations from factories and institutions, from towns-cities and communes.

In the educational activity, a special role comes to cinematographic art, with a large audience within citizens, with a great propagandistic power, capable of ensuring that the advanced ideas of our society reach through to the spectators' conscience. That is exactly why we must show the highest exactingness with respect to the quality of Romanian artistic films, also devoting our attention to the production of documentary and science popularization movies. [...].

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<sup>254</sup> I have used this collective term after Daniel N. Nelson's translation. See Daniel N. Nelson, "Issues in Local Communist Politics: The Romanian Case", *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3. (Sep., 1977), 385.

**Annex No. 2: Excerpts of Articles from *Scînteia* before the appearance of “Song to Romania”. Year: 1975**

**Article No. 1**

“Am fost animați în permanență de idealul creării unui teatru politic, a unor spectacole care să sprijine eficient formarea unei noi conștiințe, să corespundă sarcinilor generale și imediate ale politicii partidului și statului nostru în domeniul artei și culturii.”

„Rezultatele bune nu au întârziat să se arate: planul cultural a fost realizat în proporție de 104,40 la sută la număr de reprezentații, 100,01 la sută la număr de spectatori și 109,66 la sută la încasări.”

„În perioada imediat următoare, organizația noastră și-a propusă se ocupe de felul cum se desfășoară stagiunile permanente în județ. De asemenea, intenționăm să intensificăm toate formele de educare și stimulare morală a spectatorilor, prin spectacole organizate pentru fruntașii în producție, prin sprijinirea mișcării artistice de amatori, pregătirea unui recital de poezie patriotică și a unei săptămîni de teatru românesc la Bîrlad și Vaslui, în cinstea alegerilor de deputați de la 9 martie 1975.”

*Scînteia*, Friday, January 17, 1975, p.4.

**Translation into English:**

“We have been constantly inspired by the ideal of the creation of a political theatre, of shows which would efficiently support the forging of a new conscience, which would correspond to the general and immediate tasks of the politics of our Party and state in the field of art and culture.”

“Positive results have already appeared: the cultural plan has been fulfilled with 104.40 percent regarding the number of performances, 101.01 percent with respect to the number of spectators and 109.66 percent regarding the profit.”

“In the forthcoming period, our organization has set its goal to handle the way in which the permanent theatrical season of the county is evolving. We also intend to intensify all the means of education and moral stimulation of our spectators, through organized spectacles for top-ranking workers, by supporting the amateurs’ artistic movement, by organizing a patriotic poetry recital and a week-long festivity of Romanian theatre, at Bîrlad and Vaslui, in honor of the deputy elections for the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 1975.”

**Article No. 2**

“Arta populară – cusăturile, sculptura în lemn (vestitele porți de la Fildu), olăritul – încurajată în continuare, a devenit o parte componentă a unei mișcări culturale ample și din ce în ce mai diversificate. S-au construit patru noi case și cluburi de cultură, spațioase, atractive, dotate cu săli de spectacole și de conferințe, cu instrumentarul necesar unor manifestări cultural-educative și îndeletniciri artistice multiple. Efectuează frecvente turnee prin județ trupe profesioniste, prezintă apreciate spectacole ansambluri de teatru amator.”

**Translation into English:**

“Folklore-seams, wooden sculpture (the famous gates at Fildu), pottery- permanently encouraged, has become an integrant part of a large and ever developing cultural movement. Four new, spacious, attractive houses and clubs of culture have been built, endowed with spectacle and conference halls, and with the equipment required for cultural and educational manifestations and multiple artistic activities. Professional assemblies are on tour throughout the county and amateur theatre assemblies present well-received shows.”

**Article No. 3**

“Graiul artei unui popor, asemenea limbii lui, se creează și se dezvoltă organic de-a lungul istoriei. El capătă particularități specifice psihologiei poporului, psihologie formată de condițiile și evenimentele istorice proprii aceluia popor. Graiul artei deci nu se naște peste noapte și nu poate fi opera unui individ sau unui grup.”

“Libertatea, firește, este condiția principală pentru ca arta să crească, pentru ca personalitățile să se afirme, iar poporul să beneficieze de cultură. Dar libertatea – se știe și aceasta – nu este identică cu liberul arbitru; este construcție, conștiință, capacitate de integrare în idealurile poporului, care nu sunt nici “adoptate”, nici “însușite”, ci pur și simplu **sunt implicit** ale tale. Căci **este un nonsens a crede că libertatea ta este alta decît libertatea poporului tău sau poate fi deasupra acesteia.**”

“[...] Programul P.C.R. – principiu potrivit căruia nici fericirea personală a artistului nu poate fi concepută altfel decît în contextul fericirii întregii obști a țării.”

Excerpts from “Creația artistică – un permanent examen în fața propriului popor”,  
written by Sabin Bălașa.

*Scînteia*, Friday, June 13, 1975, p.4.

**Translation into English:**

“The speech of the people’s art, like its language, is organically created and developed all along history. It is forged by particularities which are specific to the people’s psychology, which in its turn is formed by the circumstances and historical events of that respective people. The discourse of art is therefore not born in an instant and it cannot be the work of a single individual or group.”

“Freedom, of course, is the essential condition so that art may grow, artistic personalities may stand their own ground, and the people may benefit from culture. But freedom – this is also known – does not mean freewill; it is construction, conscience, ability to integrate oneself into the ideals of the people, which are neither “imported”, nor are they “assimilated”, but **are merely and implicitly yours**. For **it is a nonsense to think that your own freedom is different from the liberty of your own people or it can be above it.**”

“[...] The Program of the Romanian Communist Party – a principle according to which the artist’s own happiness cannot be conceived independently of that of the entire country.”

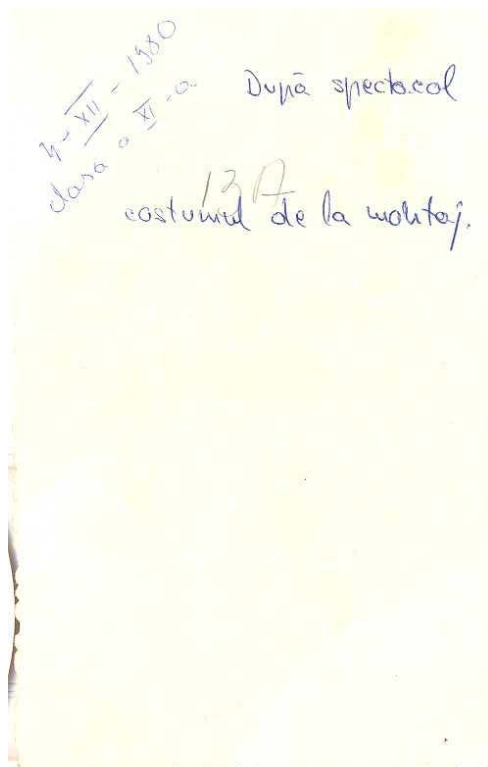
**Annex No. 3**

**Photo of R.O., as a teacher with a group of pupils, during an artistic performance (R.O., personal archive)**



**Annex No. 4**

**Photo of R.O., after a literary-artistic performance at a local level, for “Song to Romania”. December 4, 1980. (R.O., personal archive)**

**Front cover:**

**Back cover:**  
**“December 4, 1980. 11<sup>th</sup> Grade.**  
**After the show.**  
**The costume from the performance.”**



**Annex no. 5**

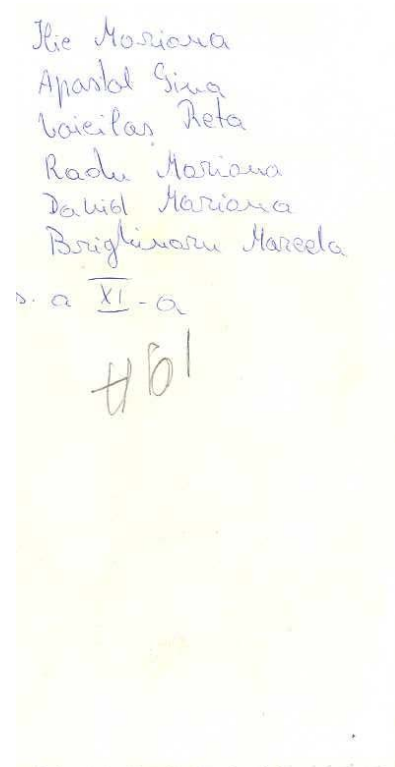
**Photo of R.O. and colleagues after the artistic-literary performance, at local level, for “Song to Romania” (R.O., personal archive)**



**Front cover.**

**Back cover.**

**A list of R.O.’s colleagues is written on the back cover of the photo.**



**Annex No. 6**

**Photo of A.T. as a primary school pupil during a local level performance for  
“Song to Romania” (A.T., personal archive)**



Annex No. 7

Facsimile of sketches from a poem glorifying the Romanian Communist Party,  
written by A.P. (A.P., personal archive)

Partidule, iubit conducător  
Tu ne conduci spre-un mândru  
viitor

Necăpătătoare spre-un mândru  
ne-gădănuiești ce e bun și dăruiești  
bănușul viteoz și înțelept  
Tu te-ai născut în barăbte  
(Tu meruni de restorță și de jale)  
și sângi ceușă a uns pe-o ușa  
glie

~~Partidule~~ triumfal  
Dar ai ieșit și uitat,  
Partidule, iubit conducător,  
Tu ne-ai adus un cer senin, călduros  
și-ai arătat la lumina-uită  
Căci este stăpân în fața noastră  
diaga

C-ai alungat și lucruri și nevoi  
și ești mereu alături din noi  
Deci, He-he-dău a ușa noastră  
retreagă  
Partidule, conducător  
diaga,

## Translation into English of the amateur political poetry sketches of A.P.:<sup>255</sup>

Party, our dear leader  
You lead us toward a proud future [*line erased in the original*]  
You guide us toward a proud [*line left unfinished*]  
You lead the way toward what is good and right [*an arrow indicating that the line should come after the first verse*]  
Courageous and wise old man  
You were born in battle  
In sad times of sorrow [*verse put between brackets*]  
And there was blood shed on our land

For the triumph [*line left unfinished and erased in the original*]  
Still you won the battle,  
Party, our dear leader.  
But you brought us a clear sunny sky [*line erased*]  
And showed the world  
There is a master in our beloved country  
For you put an end to tears and hard times  
And you are always with us  
Thus, we give our life to you  
Party, our dear treasure.

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<sup>255</sup> The translation is mainly literally, in order to describe most accurately the message of the text, disregarding the rhyme and rhythm of the original text, in Romanian. The comments between brackets belong to the translator.



# Annex No. 8

Facsimile of an Activity Plan, regarding the various means intended to educate pupils (V.I., personal archive)

ANUL SCOLAR 1979-1980			
PLAN DE MUCA			
Trimestrul I			
Obiective	Sarcini și măsuri de realizare	Termen	Cine răspunde
I. Organizarea colectivului.	1. Prefacerea regulamentului de organizare și funcționare a internatelor și cantinelor școlare.	1.X.1979	Pedagogul
	2. Alegerea comitetelor de internat și cantină.	1.X.1979	"
	3. Intocmirea registrului.		
	4. Repartizarea elevilor pe dormitoare.	1.X.1979	"
	5. Stabilirea programului zilnic	1.X.1979	"
	6. Organizarea serviciului la internat și cantină-scurtarea autogospodăririi, autoservirii.	Periodic	"
II. Ridicarea nivelului la învățătură.	1. Organizarea meditației.	1.X.1979	"
	2. Urmărirea frecvenței la cursuri.	Permanent	"
	3. Menținerea legăturii cu profesorii, diriginții și părinții elevilor.	"	"
	4. Formarea unor grupe de ajutor reciproc.	Dacă e cazul.	"
III. Îmbunătățirea activității educative în rândul elevilor.	1. Respectarea programului zilnic.		
	2. Urmărirea ținutei și a comportării elevilor în internat, cantină și în sfera școlară.	Permanent	"
	3. Măsuri pentru educarea politico-ideologică și patriotică a elevilor: sumarul presii, vizionarea programului la televizorul școlii.	"	"
	4. Organizarea unor concursuri de înfrumusețarea internatului: -concursuri "Cel mai frumos dormitor", "Cel mai îngrijită ținută".	Periodic	Președ. internat
...//...			

Annex No. 8  
Facsimile, page 2

- 2 -

Obiective:	Sarcini și măsuri de realizare	Termen	Cine răspunde.
	5. Activități cultural-artistice și științifice: - abonamente la Știința tinerețului, Gazeta matematică și alte publicații. - participarea elevilor la manifestările culturale organizate la biblioteca școlii. - vizionarea în comun a spectacolelor, filmelor și discutarea lor. - participarea la activitățile sportive organizate de liceu. - vizitarea muzeelor "Nicolaie Grigorescu", "Doftana", "Hășdeu" - organizarea unor seri literare, științifice, distractive.	Permanent  Când e cazul  Sâmbătă Duminică  Când e cazul.  Duminică  Spre sfârș. trim.	Prof. specialit.  Bibliotecar Pedagog  Profesor sport.  Pedagogul  Președ. internat
	6. Educația sanitară: întâlnire cu medicul școlii și difuzarea unor broșuri pe teme medicale.	Una pe lună	Pedagogul
IV. Probleme administrative.	1. Procurarea mobilierului și lenjeriei.	15.IX.979	Administr.
	2. Stabilirea programului pentru spălat-călcat.		
	3. Controlarea curățeniei în internat.	Permanent	Pedagogul
	4. Controlarea activității desfășurată de elevii de serviciu la cantină.	Permanent	"

## Translation into English of Annex No. 8

School Year 1979 -1980

*Name of High School*

### Activity Plan First Trimester

Objectives	Tasks and Means of Accomplishing the Tasks		Deadline	The Person in Charge
I. Organizing the Collective of Pupils.	1.	Presenting the rules of organization and functioning for boarding schools and school canteens.	October1, 1979	Pedagogue
	2.	Elections for the boarding school and canteen committees.	October1, 1979	“
	3.	Organizing the register.	October1, 1979	“
	4.	Distribution of schoolgirls to their dormitories.	October1, 1979	“
	5.	Organizing the daily schedule.	October1, 1979	“
	6.	Organizing services for boarding school and canteen – increasing self management and self service.	Periodically	“
II. Increasing the level of education.	1.	Organizing private learning.	October1, 1979	“
	2.	Observing if pupils attend the classes.	Permanently	“
	3.	Maintaining contact	“	

	4.	with teachers, head teachers and the pupils' parents.  Forming groups of mutual help.	If necessary	“
III. Improving the educative activity of pupils.	1.	Observing the daily schedule.		“
	2.	Keeping the pupils' way of dressing nduct under surveillance inside the boarding school, canteen and outside them.	Permanently	“
	3.	Measures for political and ideological education of schoolgirls: press review, watching the TV news on the school TV set.	“	“
	4.	Organizing competitions in order to embellish the boarding school.	Periodically	President of the boarding school
	5.	- contests: “The cleanest bedroom”, “The cleanest school uniform”.  Scientific and cultural-artistic activities:  - subscriptions to <i>Scînteia tineretului</i> [Scînteia of youth], <i>Gazeta matematică</i> [Review of Mathematics] and other publications. - participation of schoolgirls to the cultural manifestations, organized in the school library.	Permanently	Teacher of respective subject matter
			When necessary	Librarian Pedagogue
			Saturday Sunday	
			When necessary.	Sports teacher.
			Sunday	Pedagogue



	6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- group watching of spectacles, films and discussing them.</li> <li>- participation to the sports activities organized by the high school.</li> <li>- visiting the “Nicolae Grigorescu”, “Doftana” and “Haşdeu” (<i>sic!</i>) museums.</li> <li>- organizing of evening literary, scientific, entertaining gatherings.</li> </ul> <p>Sanitary education: appointment to the school doctor and distribution of brochures on medical issues.</p>	<p>Toward the end of the trimester.</p> <p>Once every month.</p>	<p>President of boarding school</p> <p>Pedagogue</p>
IV. Administrative problems.	1.	Obtaining furniture and bed sheets.	September 15, [1]979	Administrator.
	2.	Setting the schedule for washing and ironing.		
	3.	Maintaining order within the boarding school.	Permanently	Pedagogue
	4.	Controlling the activity of pupils on duty, at the canteen.	Permanently	“

