

THE ROMANIAN RESPONSE TO THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION OF 1956

THE DECISION MAKING-PROCESS WITHIN THE ROMANIAN WORKERS' PARTY

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of History

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2010

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Abstract

Drawing on archival documents and recent scholarship, the paper contributes to understanding the role of Romania during and after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. First, it provides an account of the decision-making process of the Romanian Workers' Party during the crisis created by the echoes of the Hungarian Revolution in Romania. Second, the paper tries to reconstruct and explain how the Hungarian Revolution affected Romania's domestic and foreign policies. The Hungarian Revolution also became a problem of foreign affairs that could have impacted the ideological stability of the Eastern bloc and endanger the security of the country. The findings of the study reveal that for Romania, at that certain point, the preservation of the regime was more important than a nationalist agenda.

Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank my parents, Pintilie and Tudorița Cărbunaru, for their support and encouragements.

I am grateful to my supervisors Constantin Iordachi and Miklos Lojko for their useful comments and willingness to help.

I am especially grateful to Octavian Cărbunaru and Horia Stancu, for their support and interest in what I am doing.

Many thanks go to Laura Gousha, Lauren Goldstein, Florence Walker and Andru Chiorean.

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Introduction

The year 1956 was not an *annus mirabilis* for the opponents of the communist regimes in Europe. The failure of the Hungarian Revolution illustrated that the anti-communist opposition was powerful, however the Soviet Union made the regimes too strong to be broken from inside. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 did not affect only the Peoples' Republic of Hungary but also its neighbouring countries like Yugoslavia and Romania, and its most important "ally," the Soviet Union.

The Eastern bloc, the group of countries under the influence of the Soviet Union, was in effect a corporate group, an organization heavily under soviet control. Furthermore, the new Communist leaderships of these states were highly and personally dependent on Stalin.¹ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the First Secretary of the Romanians Workers' Party, held the highest position in the party and in the state in Romania since 1944, with Stalin's support and approval. The post-Stalinist period, after 1953, was difficult to handle for the Romanian communist elite. "Differences in practical forms of socialism are the affairs of individual countries" this was the official position of Khrushchev. But the absence of any reforming leaders in the RWP characterized this period.² Although there were attempts of reforms, they remained isolated. Kenneth Jowitt argued that the process of party institutionalization was highly conflict-ridden and contradictory. Expressions of unity were the consequence of elite agreements on specific issues, often based on different justifying considerations, and of Gheorghiu-Dej's effective *patrimonial* definition of the Party's structure, leadership and

¹ Max Weber, *The Theory Social and Economic Organization*, (New York : Free Press, 1964), 20 as quoted by Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania, 1944-1965*, (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1971), 165.

² Dennis Deletant and Maurice Pearton. *Romania observed: Studies in contemporary Romanian history*. (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1998), 128.

operation.³ The events of 1956, including Khrushchev's secret speech and the Hungarian revolution, had a considerable impact on the evolution of the Romanian communist regime, possibly creating a pathway for the withdrawal of the Soviet troops in 1958.⁴

The Hungarian uprising of October 1956 was a sudden and unexpected explosion and not an event carefully planned by vanguards.⁵ Romania was the most affected country of the Eastern bloc by the uprising in Hungary. The effects were not only political, but also social and, especially, economic. Why was the Hungarian Revolution a considerable challenge for the Romanian communist elite? First, the two countries are connected by a considerable Hungarian minority living in Transylvania, under Romanian jurisdiction. Since the end of the Great War, the Transylvanian question was at the forefront of the two countries' bilateral relations. During the Second World War, both countries fought on the same side even though this alliance had been conceived under pressure from Germany. Holly Case argues that the two allies of the Third Reich spent much of the war arguing bitterly among themselves over Transylvania's future, and Germany and Italy were drawn into their dispute to prevent it from developing into a regional war.⁶ The Second Vienna Award, arbitrated by Germany and Fascist Italy signed on August 30, 1940, which re-assigned the territory of Northern Transylvania from Romania to Hungary, played a significant role in this context. After the Second World War, Northern Transylvania returned to Romania and the Hungarians remained the most important minority in Romania and relations between. The relationship between the two countries entered into a new stage. According to the understanding of international relations between socialist countries, the territorial conflict between Hungary and Romania

³ Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 161.

⁴ Johanna Granville, "If hope is sin, then we are all guilty" : Romanian Students' Reactions to the Hungarian Revolution and Soviet Intervention, 1956-1958, *Pittsburgh, PA : Center for Russian and East European Studies*, University of Pittsburgh, (2008): 2.

⁵ Paul Kecskemeti, *The Unexpected Revolution*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 1.

⁶ Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 10.

came to an end with the communist takeover. The bilateral relations had to be future oriented, and not to be blocked by past debates. Needless to say, diplomatic tensions continued to characterize the relationship between Hungary and Romania. After the end of the Second World War, the Hungarian communist regime militated for a revision of the borders.⁷ In connection to this, the problem of national security of Romania came again into discussion during the events of 1956.

The concern of this dissertation is the mechanism of the decision-making process and what was behind the reaction of the authorities, by using the rational choice approach. The political bodies of the RWP are on the one side, and on the other the students and protesters. Romania's reaction was prompt and it functioned in several directions. The results of the decision-making process revealed that the special committees created to manage the crisis were primarily concerned with the containment of student protests in the major cities of the country. The students in Timișoara were the closest, on October 30, 1956, in organizing a mass demonstration due to a combination of psychological, logistical and historical factors.⁸ They had to assure that the social environment was not to be affected by the spread of new ideas, this was done mainly by arrests and changes to the institutions involved. How these decision-making bodies functioned and what their measures and after-effects were, are the concerns of this paper. The inquiry will go in two directions: domestic and foreign affairs. Why was there this connection between the internal and the external affairs?

The prompt answer of the Romanian authorities was not by any means exaggerated. The whole process was effective because it was well-coordinated from the centre. The committees organized at the centre had the capability to enforce their decisions in the

⁷ Anna Fulop, *La Transylvanie dans le Relation Roumano-Hongroises vues du Quai d'Orsay*, (septembre 1944 – decembre 1947), (Cluj-Napoca: Centre de Ressources pour la Diversite Ethoculturelle, 2006), 115.

⁸ Johanna Granville, "If hope is sin, then we are all guilty" : Romanian students' reactions to the Hungarian Revolution and Soviet Intervention, 1956-1958, working paper (The Carl Beck papers in Russian & East European studies University of Pittsburgh, 2008), 5.

territory, because the periphery--in this case the party organizations from the cities of Timișoara and Cluj,--lacked the trust of the Central Committee.

In Bucharest the *Securitate* and the special founded committee monitored students too closely and thwarted each potential rally. Party and university officials in the city of Cluj played the "irredentist card" to prevent mass solidarity among Hungarian and Romanian citizens. Johanna Granville puts an intriguing research questions: had the Gheorghiu-Dej regime not taken such speedy, drastic measures to control the population during the Hungarian crisis, would a nationwide revolution have occurred in Romania? One can surmise that it would have been possible but unlikely, given the general submissiveness of the intelligentsia and the closure of ranks among PWR officials shocked by what had transpired in Budapest.⁹ While such an outcome was not unlikely, it would not have been possible given the existing conditions; this paper attempts to substantiate this point. Moreover, I want to offer an explanation as to why the foreign and internal policies were so connected to each other. I argue that the communist regime in Romania entered a new stage of development after the Hungarian revolution. This identity-forming experience¹⁰ cannot be fully comprehended without understanding the mechanism that helped the party manage the events the country had to face in 1956.

All this leads to the next question that will be answered in this paper. Why was Romania the most active collaborator of the Soviet Union in that period? The answer has two main elements. First, there was the internal situation that required proof of loyalty to the Soviet Union, which was the hegemonic power in the area and had troops in every country. Second, the protests of the students occurred in Transylvania, a part of the country which had

⁹ Granville, *If hope is sin, then we are all guilty*, p 52

¹⁰ Dragoș Petrescu "Fifty-Six as an identity shaping experience: The case of the Romanian communists," in *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Soviet Bloc Countries: Reaction and Repercussions*, edited by. Janos M. Rainer and Katalin Somlai (Budapest: The institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, 2007) pp.48-68

historic and ethnic ties with Hungary. Therefore it became a problem of foreign affairs that could affect the ideological stability of the Eastern bloc and also endangered the security of the country.

The existing literature on this topic is by no means abundant. Several works have been published in Romania¹¹ related to the Hungarian Revolution, but only a few of them refer exactly to the impact of revisionism on Romanian political and social life¹² (. Some are case studies.¹³

In order to prove the main statement, the author has decided to focus on the following aspects, treated in separate chapters. The exploration of the term *crisis* and its development at the domestic and international level is significant to the process that is to be analyzed. In the chapter *Soviet Political System and Decision-Making Process*, I will discuss the main theories and actors involved in the decision-making process. The chapter examines the decision-making process of the Romanian Workers Party, by exploring the model of behaviour of political actors and the coordinates in which the action was situated. The origin of the Soviet political system as a concept offers new and challenging perspectives on political and social development. I will account for the way in which the regime articulated the role of the party and the state and how it is regarded in historiography, as well as the relationship between centre and periphery.

The second chapter, titled *The Relationship between Hungary and Romania. The Hungarian Revolution and the impact on the Soviet Bloc*, will provide a reconstruction of the international context in which the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 took place, and the

¹¹ Corneliu Mihai Lungu și Mihai Retegan, *1956 explozia : percepții române, iugoslave și sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia și Ungaria* [1956 The explosion: Romanian, Yugoslav and Soviet perceptions on the events in Hungary and Poland] (Bucuresti: Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 1996).

¹² Ioana Boca, "1956 în România" [1956 in Romania], in Doina Jelea, Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Ungaria 1956: Revolta Minților și sfârșitul mitului comunist* [Hungary 1956: The revolt of the minds and the end of the communist myth] (București: Curtea Veche, 2006); Johanna Granville, "We have wines of all kinds: red, white, and green," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Volume 54, Issue 2, June 2008)

¹³ Mihaela Sitariu. *Rezistența anticomunistă : Timișoara 1956* [The anti-communist resistance : Timișoara 1956] (București: Sophia, 1998), 30.

immediate response, with special emphasis on Romania. The third chapter, *Romanian Workers' Party: structure and organization*, will explore the most significant organizational and situational factors that are relevant in defining the decision-making process in the autumn of 1956. This undertaking is meant to introduce the framework and institutional bodies that will have a key role in the next chapter, titled *Romania's Reaction: party decisions*. That chapter will describe and analyze the decision-making process taking into account the decisions at the high level and the relationship between centre and periphery (Bucharest and the major cities, Central and local authorities).

At the forefront of the last chapter, *The aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution. The consequences of political reactions*, there will be the behaviour of the Romanian communist leadership in 1957 and 1958: the Nagy affairs, the withdrawal of the Soviet Army and the beginning of a new period. This will lead to an analysis of the consequences of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 on Romanian internal and external affairs in the conclusions.

CHAPTER 1: The Soviet Political System and the Decision-Making Process

In order to understand the party response to political crisis, a proper account has to be given to the process of decision-making. The chapter will be divided into three parts. The first part will concern theories on the decision-making process and its structures and efficiency. The second part will cover the significance of the term crisis. The nature of the communist system and the relationship between party structures and state power will be treated in the last part. The first two parts are directly connected to each other, while the last part functions a theoretical introduction to the political system in which the main activities that will be analyzed in this paper take place.

1.1 The Decision Making-Process: Several Approaches

The decision-making process is an essential part of the mechanism of party functioning. In order to explore how the decision making process functioned, an assessment of the significance of the concept and the main theories available on the topic are necessary. As decisions can be complex, organizations often enact decision-making procedures to compensate for the perceived limited cognitive and managerial abilities of decision makers.¹⁴ It is well established that decision makers use a number of decisional cognitive shortcuts, which can bias outcomes in systematic ways.¹⁵ How are decisions made? What is behind the mechanism of this process? How can the decision-making process be explained?

There are two main theories that discuss the conditions and actual mechanism of the decision making process in times when immediate action is necessary. The two theories are

¹⁴ James G March and Herbert A. Simon, *Organizations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), 15. as quoted by Ben D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises* (Westport, Conn. Praeger, 1993), 20.

¹⁵ D. P. Kahneman, , and A. Tversky, (Eds.) . *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 12. as quoted by Ben D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 20.

connected with the *psychological* versus *rational-choice* explanations.¹⁶ The psychological approach is concerned with the impact of two basic groups of factors on the functioning of decision makers: personality factors and situational variables.¹⁷ Organizational roles are also examined for their impact on the preferences of decision makers and their ability to process information.

Herbert Simon argues that behaviour is substantially rational when it is appropriated to the achievements of given goals within the limits imposed by given conditions and constraints. Personality factors, belief systems, and images are important in determining decisions makers' detections of, and sensitivity to, the environmental stimuli that give rise to the perception of crises.¹⁸ The study of patterns that characterize decision makers' coping with crises is at the heart of the *psychological approach*.¹⁹

The rational choice approach shares the common assumption that decision makers are rational, the principle of rationality is what directs and lends consistency to the theoretical expectations in these studies.²⁰ In this theory rationality means that a person reasons and balances costs and benefits, before taking an action that will influence him or others.²¹ At thought the psychological and rational-choice approaches provide indispensable perspectives in crises behaviour. Mor believes that neither is adequate in itself- the study of immediate decision making requires a theoretical framework that combines both approaches.²²

A major debate between the psychological and rational choice theory approaches concerns the rationality assumption. The proponents of the psychological approach argue that the assumption is largely unrealistic and thus of limited value. That is to say, decision making

¹⁶ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 20.

¹⁷ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 20.

¹⁸ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 6.

¹⁹ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 20.

²⁰ Jon Elster, *Explaining Social Behavior*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 21.

²¹ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 24.

²² Kathleen M. Sutcliffe, "Controlling Decision Making Practice in Organizations," In *Organization Science*, 12 (July-August 2001): 490.

more often than not involves a significant departure from rationality. The rational-choice approach states that political behaviour is intentional and goal-seeking, and can therefore be profitably studied by means of rational models. Consequently, a third theory, articulated by Ben D. Mor, posits that that decision-maker behaviour is shaped both by the formal system of rules and organizational hierarchies, and by the multilevel relational contexts within which action occurs.²³

In this way, multiple levels of influence structure decision-making practice within organizations. Sutcliffe considers three sets of factors, each operating at three different levels: the task/decision level, the subunit level, and the organization level. The most immediate level is that of the decision context. Decisions with particular characteristics are more likely to be addressed with particular methods.²⁴ At a higher level, decision-making practice is influenced by the subunit context in which decision makers are located, reflected in characteristics such as subunit size, subunit specialization, and past performance.²⁵ The organizational context, in turn, influences decision practice through standardization pressures. Factors at each of these levels play some part in influencing the decision-maker behaviour, decision choices, and resulting outcomes. In a crisis authority becomes centralized and the responsibility of the leader, the decision-making group may become too homogeneous, and subordinates insufficiently critical of policies that have the executive's support. Decision-makers may exaggerate their ability to control events and manage the crisis.²⁶

The personality factors are also taken into consideration. This group of factors refers to personality-inherent predispositions and their effect on the performance of individuals in crises related decisions tasks.²⁷ The psychological approach to discount the degree to which it,

²³ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 24.

²⁴ Kathleen M. Sutcliffe, "Controlling Decision Making Practice in Organizations", p 490.

²⁵ Sutcliffe, *Controlling Decision Making Practice in Organizations*, p. 490.

²⁶ John R. Oneal, "The Rationality of Decision Making during International Crises," *Polity* 4 (1988): 608.

²⁷ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 20.

too, relies on the rationality assumption. Moreover, “in most cases we cannot really understand and explain a person’s behaviour, unless it is interpreted either as rational behaviour in this particular situation or as an understandable deviation from rational behaviour.”²⁸ Another significant concept is that of *bounded rationality*, which consists in the argument that in complex decisions situations, actors do not optimize, but rather satisfy the requirements in respect to some predetermined level of aspirations.²⁹

‘Rationality’ often involves little more than a simple assertion that actors are pursuing effectively their aims. There are two aspects of rationality according to Michael Nicholson.³⁰ There is a question of analysing an individual preferences and ensuring their consistency. There is also the question of rational belief. An individual must have some ‘rational belief’ concerning the possible consequences of any action and behaviour.³¹

Another model is game-theory, which incorporates psychological variables. The game-theory model introduces initiation into this picture; the model enables the prediction of the conditions under which different player types are expected to initiate crises.³² But much of the political-game theory is predicted on the idea that people rationally pursue goals subject to constraints imposed by resources and the expected behaviour of other actors. This unavoidably goes to the idea of rationality and intentionality as a predictor of behaviour and into the classical model of rational choice.³³

1.2 The Critical Role of Crises in Domestic and International Affairs

The significant role that crises play in international relations demands a systematic knowledge about their origins, development, and termination. According to Ben D. Mor, a

²⁸ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 20.

²⁹ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 24.

³⁰ Micheal Nicholson, *Rationality and the analysis of international conflict*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 48.

³¹ Micheal Nicholson, *Rationality and the analysis of international conflict*, p. 48.

³² D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p. 30.

³³ Nolan McCarty, Adam Meirowitz, *Political Game Theory: A introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 6.

political and international crisis is generally conceived to be a process in which the demand, voluntary or conceived, by one state or actor to change or preserve the status quo forces a policy choice on another state or actor. This generates for the individual, actors and states involved the perception of a high probability of conflict.³⁴

A general theory of international crises must address both the strategic and psychological aspects of this type of conflict.³⁵ The underlining assumption is that the characteristics of a crises situation act as a beginning factor for personality predispositions that manifest themselves in an individual's behaviour.³⁶ As the attention is moving from the relations among nations to relations within a group, the problem took on a more generalized form. It was then transformed into an attempt to understand the fundamental features of cooperative and competitive relations and the consequences of these different types of interdependencies a way that would be generally applicable to the relations between individuals, groups, or nations. The problem of connections had become a theoretical one with a broad, scientific goal of attempting to interrelate and give insight into a variety of phenomena through several fundamental concepts and several basic propositions.³⁷

According to J. Joseph Hewitt and Jonathan Wilkenfeld³⁸ there are *one sided* and *two sided* crises. The difference is in the perception of the crises from one side or both. Beyond the contributions of coordinates such as geographic contiguity, differences in power, violence in crisis trigger, gravity of threat, and regime type of crisis actors the fact that a crisis is, let's say, one sided remains an important factor in explaining whether violence erupts in a crisis or not.³⁹ This suggests that whatever factors lead to the nations that start the conflict to believe it

³⁴ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p 50.

³⁵ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p 50.

³⁶ D. Mor, *Decision and interaction in crises*, p 51.

³⁷ Morton Deutsch, "Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice," *Political Psychology* 3(1983): 433.

³⁸ J. Joseph Hewitt and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, "One-Sided Crises in the International System," *Journal of Peace Research*, 3 (1999): 315.

³⁹ Hewitt and Wilkenfeld, *One-Sided Crises in the International System*, p. 315.

is not in crisis mode, these factors serve as an important component to a larger explanation about why violence occurs in crisis.⁴⁰

The main expectation of difference between the *one sided* and *two sided* crises stems from actors' perceptions about the likelihood of violence in each type. As discussed above, a fundamental condition for a group or actor to perceive itself in crisis is that it must estimate a heightened probability for hostilities in its confrontation with an adversary. If for example, according to J. Joseph Hewitt and Jonathan Wilkenfeld, a nation triggers a crisis for another nation by some foreign policy action, but does not perceive itself to be in crisis, it could be reasonably inferred from this that it does not have clear and immediate intentions to engage in violent conflict with another nation.⁴¹

The first attempt by one actor to change the status quo to the detriment of the other can generate two-sided crises. J. Joseph Hewitt and Jonathan Wilkenfeld argue that "The model was intended to relate the logic of decision making to expectations of each other's behaviour, linking such expectations to policy statements, past behaviour, and capability. In connection to this the deterrence strategy is probably the most analysed. If deterrence is the essence of the game, each side should attempt to give credibility to its threats by at least showing some consistency of behaviour." In addition, "reaction function" becomes a significant subject of analysis, which is a rule, describes how each player determines his or her next move on the sole basis of the current situation.⁴² It has been widely noted that in critical situations operational control moves up the organization and the size of the decision-making group decreases.⁴³

⁴⁰ Hewitt and Wilkenfeld, *One-Sided Crises in the International System*, p. 315.

⁴¹ Hewitt and Wilkenfeld, *One-Sided Crises in the International System*, p. 311.

⁴² Jean-Pierre P. Langlois, "Modelling Deterrence and International Crises," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 1,(1989): 73.

⁴³ John R. Oneal, "The Rationality of Decision Making during International Crises," *Polity* 4(1988): 604.

In times of crises the striking point of domestic politics normally declines, at least for a time, as the other actors respond in order to increase their freedom of action and confront the opposing nation from a position of strength.⁴⁴ Partisan involvement may also be constrained by restrictions placed on the spreading of information by the government. In time of crisis, then, fewer actors are involved in the decision-making process, which means that fewer interests will have to be accommodated.⁴⁵

1.3 Party and State Power: An exploration into Soviet-style Communism

In order for any political system to be viable, it must be institutionalized. Organizations that are specialized to political activity must be created and sustained. Two of the major problems of institutionalization are how to differentiate the organization from its environment and how to establish boundaries between one institution and the other.

Robert C. Tucker argued that Soviet politics constitutes a unique subject matter, a political world apart that can only be understood in terms of its own unconventional if not imitable laws and motivations.

The Soviet state had an official belief-system which is defined as Soviet Marxism–Leninism, which had a number of important implications. First, this body of ideas occupied a monopoly position; no other ideologies were allowed to be publicly disseminated or propagated. All discrepant voices or views were to be censored and silenced.⁴⁶ Moreover this meant that, for almost its entire existence, Soviet Marxism was immune to criticism from outside discourses but was also unaffected by intellectual developments, Marxist and non-Marxist, from elsewhere.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ John R. Oneal, *The Rationality of Decision Making during International Crises*, p. 604.

⁴⁵ John R. Oneal, *The Rationality of Decision Making during International Crises*, p. 605.

⁴⁶ Mark Sandle, “Soviet and Eastern Bloc Marxism” in *20th century Marxism. A global introduction*, eds. Daryl Glasser and David M. Walker, (London: Routledge, 2007), 60.

⁴⁷ Mark Sandle, *Soviet and Eastern Bloc Marxism*, p. 61.

The relationship between the Party apparatus and a host of state administrative agencies is permanent in the formulation and execution of political decisions has been regarded by many observers.⁴⁸ The distinction made between politics and administration in Western pluralistic systems completely disappears in Communist polities. The political process of communist states can best be understood by a consideration of the same kinds of inefficiencies and problems that are evident in all highly bureaucratized states: informal bargaining between various administrative institutions and functionaries for prestige and limited resources; the difficulty of ensuring an accurate flow of information within the organizational hierarchy; the inherent tensions in all complex organizations between line and professional staff employees and the need of top level officials to elicit compliance and efficiency from their subordinates.⁴⁹ The complex organizational approach is concerned with various aspects. As in other political systems, bureaucratic organizations play a significant role in Communist regimes.⁵⁰

Jan F. Triska considers that, like all political systems, the Communist system has goals which are encompassing rather than specific. First of its major goals is what he calls *system maintenance*, the preservation of the integrity and inviolability of the system so that the communist parties can maintain their achievements. Alongside *system maintenance*, there is *system advancement and development*, in terms of economic development, and *system expansion*, in terms of international politics.⁵¹

The political elite had a considerable impact on the political development of the communist regimes. Milovan Djilas's 1954 analysis of the new ruling class revealed a real phenomenon, namely the transformation of a radical group, clandestine and peripheral, into a governing branch and powerful elite. "The position of the communist elites is determined by

⁴⁸ Leonard J. Cohen and Jane P. Shapiro, *Communist Systems in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1974), 8.

⁴⁹ Cohen and Shapiro, *Communist Systems in Comparative Perspective*, p. 9.

⁵⁰ Cohen and Shapiro, *Communist Systems in Comparative Perspective*, p.20.

⁵¹ Jan F. Triska, *Communist-Party States*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill), 4.

the absolute concentration of political power, economic and military at an extent unseen in Europe, and need an ideology to justify that power. The privileges that its members enjoy in consumption are a consequence of their role in society”.⁵² Marxism is the charismatic aura that surrounds it to justify their rule. In addition, as Mark Sandle argues, the “historical communist states” cannot be considered socialist in any meaningful sense, because the ruling elite in control of the state not only deprived the people of any say in political decision-making, but also ran the economy primarily to serve its own private interests and, in essence the ruling elite continued to exploit the working class, just as do capitalist regimes.⁵³ There are a number of variants of this view, but proponents tend to argue that, contrary to the ideals articulated by traditional Marxism⁵⁴, ordinary working people neither controlled the historical communist regimes nor benefited from the wealth they created. Therefore, the ruling elite that seized power continued to exploit and oppress the majority of the population, and these regimes must therefore still be thought of as variants of capitalism.⁵⁵

The speed of bureaucratic expansion during the creation of the Soviet state and the immensity of its responsibilities facilitated an extreme concentration of power within the very highest levels of the bureaucratic class. This concentration averted organizational blockages and enabled the emerging communist system to maintain the dynamism required by its ideology. In addition, it also gave the bureaucracy the appearance of a tyrannical organization rather than that of a social class.⁵⁶ Tom Mayer noticed that the emergence of a division between the political and the administrative dimensions of the bureaucratic class positioned the former in the apparatus of governance and the latter in the institutions of production.⁵⁷ The characteristic of Soviet social structure, the party-state duality does not parallel the political

⁵² Milovan Djilas, *The New Class : an Analysis of the Communist System* (Harcourt: Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 38.

⁵³ Glasser and Walker, *20th century Marxism*, p. 200.

⁵⁴ Glasser and Walker, *20th century Marxism*, p. 200.

⁵⁵ Glasser and Walker, *20th century Marxism*, p. 200.

⁵⁶ Tom Mayer, “The collapse of Soviet Communism,” *Social Forces* 3 (Mar., 2002):767.

⁵⁷ Tom Mayer, *The collapse of Soviet Communism*, p. 767.

administrative bifurcation nevertheless the bifurcation is included in this party-state duality. In some ways the division is somehow similar to the ownership management separation found within the dominant classes of corporate capitalist societies.⁵⁸

In the Soviet case, in exercising patronage and in determining policy, the leading party committees and their bureaucracies had become inseparable from the activities of the state.⁵⁹ In the Soviet Union, it was the party which lent unity to state structures. The communist party apparatus had turned into a hierarchy of bureaucracies with its own institutional identity. The state embraced a pragmatic class-based ideology, which, by means of a variety of structures of class-based discrimination, had quite tangible implications for the ways in which its own population was treated.⁶⁰ The boundaries of the elite were neither clearly defined nor impervious to influence from below.⁶¹ In institutional terms, the elite encompassed members of the leading organs of the party-structure, Sovnarkom, the Politburo, Central Committee and upper levels of the party-apparatus.⁶²

The relationship between *centre* and *periphery*, either within the party or in territorial sense, is crucial in the decision-making process.⁶³ The political centre is utterly dependent upon lower-level units for accurate production figures, which are at the point of production where the centre exercises minimal control.⁶⁴ The centralization and controls of party and state committees at the climax of the political system did not generate the fact that regional political authorities voluntarily caved into the will of the centre.⁶⁵ In the Soviet case the centre continued to face obstruction from regional party authorities well into the 1930s. An

⁵⁸ Tom Mayer, *The collapse of Soviet Communism*, p.780.

⁵⁹ Graeme J. Gill, *The origins of the Stalinist political system* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1990), 52.

⁶⁰ Gill, *The origins of the Stalinist political system* , p 58.

⁶¹ Gill, *The origins of the Stalinist political system* , p.58.

⁶² Gill, *The origins of the Stalinist political system*, p. 51.

⁶³ Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the modern world : the politics of the borderlands from pre- to post-communism*, (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 2000), 10.

⁶⁴ Istvan Rév, "The advantages of being atomized," *Dissent* 34(1987): 339.

⁶⁵ Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Beyond totalitarianism : Stalinism and Nazism compared* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 2009), 51.

institutionally consolidated apparatus connecting the Central Committee with regional party authorities existed.⁶⁶

The centralization of power had led to the executive bodies of the party at each level being efficient decision-making organs with the apparatus to implement those decisions and possessing close links with party levels above and below in the hierarchy, this might have contributed to the development of the party as a powerful institution, with few democratic elements.⁶⁷ The period between 1946 and 1953 marks the beginning of a new role for the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. For the first time the Soviet regime sought to manage institutions and administer society, rather than create new institutions aimed at societal transformation.⁶⁸

According to Cynthia S. Kaplan the party, in the 1930's, as a complex organization responded not only to Moscow's formal demands, but also to the actual tasks and conditions affecting policy implementation. For example economic reconstruction, the most critical policy of the period, is viewed in terms of its separate industrial and agricultural components.⁶⁹ Kaplan sustains that personnel characteristics, environmental conditions, and the degree of task difficulty affect the local party's behaviour in the implementation of policy leading to the informal bifurcation of the party's role.⁷⁰ The party's bifurcated nature is based on the examination of behaviour evidenced by *obkoms* (provincial party committees), *gorkoms* (city party committees), and *raikoms* (urban borough and rural district party committees).⁷¹

⁶⁶ Geyer and Fitzpatrick, *Beyond totalitarianism : Stalinism and Nazism compared*, p. 51.

⁶⁷ Cynthia S. Kaplan, "The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Local Policy Implementation," *The Journal of Politics* 1(Feb., 1983): 3.

⁶⁸ Cynthia S. Kaplan, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Local Policy Implementation*, p 4.

⁶⁹ Kaplan, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Local Policy Implementation*, p 5.

⁷⁰ Kaplan, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Local Policy Implementation*, p 10.

⁷¹ Kaplan, *The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Local Policy Implementation*, p.38.

In summation of this chapter, in the first part a review of the main decision-making approaches was necessary in order to construct a framework for the analysis of the decision making process of the RWP's party in managing the domestic and international crises of 1956. From the definition of crises, a double sided crisis, it was from the perspective of the protesters and the RWP's officials, fits the most the approach. Particularities of the RWP party and the political system can be seen throughout the paper.

CHAPTER 2: The Relationship between Hungary and Romania. The Hungarian Revolution and the Impact on the Soviet Bloc

2.1 New Challenges

The Hungarian Revolution was the most important anti-Soviet uprising which occurred in the Eastern bloc. The political developments after the death of Stalin, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union and “the new course” have to be underlined, on the account that for most party leaders in East-Central Europe, Stalinism was the political system under which they have served for more than a decade. In the uprisings of 1956, anti-Stalinism went hand in hand in with anti-Soviet attitude, and consequently with anti-Russian grievances. In this chapter the international context in which the Hungarian revolution of 1956 took place, will be reconstructed in order to provide a broad image of the reactions that occurred in the neighbouring countries, with a special emphasis to Romania. Moreover this undertaking leads to the following problems: How influential was the Hungarian Revolution and if or not the anti-Russian attitude was a one way street, only to escape the Russian influence. The endeavour is necessary to reconstruct the environment in which the problems for the Romanian Workers’ Party occurred.

The Soviet dominance in Eastern and Central Europe is a central motive in comprehending the grounds of the uprising. Above all others, a significant factor that contributed to Hungarian aversion against Russian dominance concerned the political model of Stalinism.⁷² Stalinist repression, which is different from the Soviet exploitation, having been internally conducted, had in many ways been harsher in Hungary in the first decade of communist rule than in other countries. The reasons are connected with the social composition, the role of the Church and the loss of territories in the aftermath of the Second

⁷² Johanna C. Granville, *The First Domino: International Decision Making during the Hungarian crisis of 1956* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 7.

World War, was something that the new communist government could not undo and virtually it did not had the support of the Soviet Union to do so.

The long period of communist foreign policy, between 1945 and 1956, in Central and Eastern Europe was characterized by total obedience towards the USSR, with some notable exceptions that have produced some holes in the camp. The first two are those of Tito's Yugoslavia (beginning with 1948) and Albania's Enver Hoxha (from 1956). The third is Romania, although it did not constitute a radical break, as in the two cases mentioned.⁷³ The latter case became more important since the crises of 1968 in Czechoslovakia, where Ceaușescu appeared as a leader with liberal tendencies. The roots of Romanian desire to have a relative autonomy in internal affairs did not begin with Ceaușescu's coming to power, but earlier. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had started a process that would culminate with Ceaușescu's opposition towards the invasion of Czechoslovakia, but if his agenda was nationalist or not is something that is still under question.

In order to comprehend the echoes of the Hungarian revolution on the neighbouring states and the international context, certain events that happened prior have to be highlighted. For the Romanians politicians during the interwar period, Hungarian revisionism, was an imminent danger for the stability of the country. This issue remained a source of constant irritation if not concern, for Romania's post-war Communist leaders, as well, creating conditions for a certain perception of the events in Budapest in autumn 1956.

After the Second World War, the return of the Romanian administration in Northren Transylvania presented a dilemma for the Hungarian authorities. First, they could not challenge the decision of Stalin, ignoring the national feelings would be a sign of political weakness and loss of support. Initially, they seemed to accept the situation, on the assumption

⁷³ Ruxandra Ivan, *Între internaționalismul proletar și național-comunismul autarhic. Politica externă sub regimul comunist* [Between proletarian internationalism and autarchic national-communism. Romanian foreign policy under the communist regime] in *Transformarea Socialistă*, [The Socialist transformation] ed. Ruxandra Ivan (Iasi: Polirom, 2009), 99.

that the predictable socialist development of the two countries will resolve the dispute.⁷⁴ the Secretary General of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, Pal Sebestyen, met in April 27, 1946, with Gheorghe Tătărescu, Romanian Minister of foreign affairs at that time and Petru Groza, Prime-minister. The Hungarian government wanted a revision of borders. Both Romanian officials have rejected any negotiations concerning a possible sharing of Transylvania. There was a conversation between Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Rákosi Mátyás, General Secretary of the Hungarian Working People's Party, but there was nothing conclusive.⁷⁵

On January 24, 1948 a treaty of friendship and collaboration was signed. The treaty had to stand for 20 years. The relations were based on Marxist-Leninist views on foreign policy, non-interference on domestic affairs, and socialist internationalism.

The Presidium of the Provisional People's Republic of Romania and President of the Hungarian Republic have decided to conclude a treaty of friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance in designating their representatives for this purpose; Dr. Petru Groza, Chairman of Ministers of Romania's communist government, and Mr. Lajos Dinnyes, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Hungary⁷⁶

This treaty was not officially denounced but the relations between the countries continued on its basis.

2.2 Political Developments between 1953 and 1956

After 1953, the methods in handling external affairs began to change in Romania. Gheorghe Gheroghiu-Dej, the first secretary of the Romanian Workers Party, engaged in normalizing and enhancing relations with “Titoist” Yugoslavia.⁷⁷ The revolutionary militantism of the Stalinist elite in Romania was not manifesting with the same pace for the time being. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej had made the necessary act of contrition and underlined the necessity of a better relationship with Yugoslavia, but that was as far as change was to go

⁷⁴ Alexandru Purcăruș, *În vâltoarea Războiului Rece* [In the front of the Cold War] (Editura Cetatea de Scaun: Târgoviște, 2009), 160.

⁷⁵ Anna Fulop, *La Transylvanie dans le relation roumano-hongroises vues du Quai d'Orsay*, (septembre 1944 – decembre 1947), (Cluj-Napoca: Centre de Ressources pour la Diversite Ethoculturelle, 2006), 115-116.

⁷⁶ *Traité d'amitié, de collaboration et d'assistance mutuelle entre la Roumanie et la Hongrie* (Budapest, 24 janvier 1948). <http://www.ena.lu/>. last accessed November 21 2009

⁷⁷ Dennis Deletant and Maurice Pearton. *Romania observed: Studies in contemporary Romanian history*. (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1998), 70.

for the time being. Resumption of ties between the USSR, Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland and political evolutions convinced Gheorghiu-Dej that it was necessary to define his political line, too.⁷⁸ At the time of the outbreak in Budapest Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was in Yugoslavia, after a visit of Tito in the summer of the same year in Romania.⁷⁹

The political turning point of the year 1953 is seen from different angles in literature. According to Vladimir Tismăneanu, Stalin's death in March 1953 left Gheorghiu-Dej, like other dictators in Eastern Europe, in a state of prostration. He portrays the leaders of the communist parties as “confused orphans” who did not know how to react.⁸⁰ When, at the instigation of the successors of Stalin, the tandem Khrushchev, Malenkov's "new course" was adopted in Hungary, too, Gheorghiu-Dej was convinced that he had to do certain manoeuvres to keep his position. The plenum of the Central Committee of the RWP in August 1953 condemned the cult of leaders that were alive and stated that the past deviations were regretted and future attentions will be given to the needs of the consumers. It was a simulacrum of thaw.⁸¹ Stalin's death had had little impact on Romania's internal affairs, according to Dennis Deletant: there had been no major change in the party leadership, no decentralization of the economy, and no stop to the collectivisation of agriculture.⁸²

In April 1954, Lucrețiu Patrășcanu, in the eyes of Vladimir Tismaneanu, the only Communist leader who could embody a legitimate alternative inside the Romanian Workers Party to the group lead by Gheorghiu-Dej, was executed after a trial conducted by magistrates, which were by no means independent. Patrășcanu was a charismatic leader who

⁷⁸ Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, [= The ghost of Gheorghiu-Dej] (Bucuresti:Humanitas, 2008), 132.

⁷⁹ Deletant and Pearton, *Romania observed*, p. 260.

⁸⁰ Tismaneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, p. 132.

⁸¹ Tismaneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, p. 132.

⁸² Deletant and Pearton, *Romania observed*, p. 252.

according to Vladimir Tismaneanu, could have gathered and congealed an oppositional faction with a possible support of a revisionist power.⁸³

Starting with May 14, 1955 the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, also known as the Warsaw Pact was concluded by eight communist states in Eastern Europe, which was established at USSR's request. Romania and Hungary were both founding members.

In 1956, the 20th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was held. During the congress, Nikita Khrushchev promoted his new policy under "the Leninist principle of coexistence of states with different social systems." Consequently, he repudiated the personality cult of Joseph Stalin and Stalinism. Khrushchev's secret speech denouncing the former Soviet leader followed the establishment of a new line in Soviet foreign policy. In Hungary the dismissal of Mátyás Rákosi, one of the most devoted Stalinists, gave an immediate incentive to demand for reform within socialism. In 1953, Imre Nagy was named prime-minister of Hungary. In 1956 Wladislaw Gomulka became secretary general of the United Workers Party in Poland, a turning point in the evolution of Polish communism.

In Hungary the dismissal of Mátyás Rákosi, one of the most devoted Stalinists gave an immediate incentive to demand for reform within socialism. In 1953 Imre Nagy was named prime-minister of Hungary. In 1956 Wladislaw Gomulka was named secretary general of the United Workers Party in Poland.

The first major revolt in the communist bloc occurred in Berlin in 1953, caused by an increase in norms of production in constructions, and represented a primary phase from a series of events that were to lead gradually to the disintegration of the homogenous space of the Soviet bloc.⁸⁴

⁸³ Tismaneanu, *Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej*, p.130.

⁸⁴ Deletant and Pearton, *Romania observed*, p. 80.

The first strikes and revolts in 1956 appeared in Poznań, related to the change of economic policies, and the government forces intervened. The Romanian embassy to Warsaw transmitted a message to Bucharest, portraying the events as follow: “The places of some bandit elements⁸⁵ were spotted and dispersed.”⁸⁶ The telegram using a rigid language revealed the approval to any kind of methods of repression.

2.3 The Revolution of 1956. Autumn in Hungary

The Hungarian uprising of October 1956 was a sudden explosion, not organized beforehand by vanguards; the events were not anticipated.⁸⁷ In October 6, 1956 the commemoration of László Rajk, took place, former communist official who was accused of being a "Titoist Spy", an agent for western imperialism and one who planned on restoring capitalism.⁸⁸ The manifestation was not only unique in its nature; it also had political and economical connotations. A demonstration of solidarity with the Polish workers, in October 23, represented only a catalyst in the whole scheme of things. What made Imre Nagy the leader of the opposition was the fact that he could outline a program to back up the activities he managed. The Imre Nagy – Géza Losonczy group spoke of a “better socialism” and “the purification of democracy”⁸⁹. Nagy underwent an immense transformation, from Communist with close ties to the Soviet Union, to a politician willing to undertake a considerable political, economic and social reform, including the establishment of a multi-party state in Hungary, and insistent on the withdrawal of all Soviet forces from the country.⁹⁰ By November 1, Nagy took declared Hungary's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and the

⁸⁵ The word “elements” was often used in news paper articles and speeches when referring to the protests or revolts.

⁸⁶ Message from Warsaw, 25 October 1956 quoted in Corneliu Mihai Lungu, *1956 explozia: Perceptii române, iugoslave si sovietice asupra evenimentelor din Polonia si Ungaria*, [The explosion, Romanian, Yugoslavian and Soviet peception about the events in Poland and Hungary] ed. întocmita de Corneliu Mihai Lungu și Mihai Retegan. (Bucuresti: Editura Univers Enciclopediic, 1996), 20.

⁸⁷ Paul Kecskemeti, *The Unexpected Revolution*, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Terry Cox, *Challenging communism in Eastern Europe : 1956 and its legacy* (London : Routledge, 2008), 20.

⁸⁹ Terry Cox, *Challenging communism in Eastern Europe : 1956 and its legacy*, p. 20.

⁹⁰ Csaba Békés, Malcolm Byrne, János M. Rainer (editors), *The 1956 Hungarian revolution: a history in documents* (Budapest : CEU Press, 2002), 40.

countries neutrality, appealing to the United Nations to assure this. On November 4 1,000 Russian tanks rolled into Budapest. They had destroyed the Hungarian army and captured Hungarian.⁹¹

By November 7, on the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution Janos Kádár, former Deputy Secretary-General of the Hungarian Communist Party, backed by the Soviets, have taken the oath of office and became the chairman of the council of ministers. Kádár was able to begin the long process of "normalization" that featured suppressing dissent of any kind and trying at the same time to firmly convince the Hungarian society into going along with the new regime.

2.4 The Hungarian Revolution. The International Context. The Impact on Romania

For the Romanian Workers Party the 1956 crisis produced by the events in Hungary was external and internal. First, it endangered the whole construction of the Eastern bloc. Second, it was an internal crisis created by an event that took place in a neighbouring country, a crisis which called into question the stability of the regime.

Territorial conflicts were still present in the relationship between Romanian and Hungarian Communists. According to Johanna Granville, to varying degrees every new military brings old national wounds, reviving painful memories and fears. The Hungarian crisis not only set off an alarm, mentally warning Romanian leaders to forearm themselves, but it also permitted them to reinterpret past conflicts with Hungary in a self-serving way. “For at least two PWR leaders, Valter Roman, director of the Political Publishing Company, a Hungarian speaker, and Nicolae Ceaușescu, Central Committee Secretary, Responsible for organizational problems, the Hungarian revolution reminded them of Bela Kun and his short

⁹¹ Deletant and Pearton, *Romania observed*, p. 241.

communist revolution (of 21 March–1 August 1919).”⁹² The author believes that the Hungarian revolution may have had different meanings for each RWP leader, however this did not influence or affect the decision making process. Since the introduction of the “new course” the Romanian political elite monitored closely the evolutions in Hungary.

From the point of view of foreign affairs, Dennis Deletant argued that the convergence of interests with the Soviet Union and not just slavish obedience determined the stance adopted by Gheorghiu-Dej. The Romanian communist had two main concerns: a successful revolt in Budapest against Communist rule might spread to the two-million strong Hungarian minority, and a non-communist Hungary might lay claim to part of Transylvania.⁹³ The first concern was backed by the spread of information about the uprising in Hungary in the regions inhabited by the Hungarian minority. The second one was more speculative, the Romanian leaders had in mind the cooperation between socialist states and the events of the Second World War, when Hungary occupied Northern Transylvania, after the dictate of Vienna. Therefore, from the perspective of the RWP leadership, a non-communist Hungary will not affect that stability of the country.

Gheorghiu-Dej was anxious to bring the Hungarians back into the socialist bloc; the two leaders agreed that a Romanian delegation, led by Gheorghiu-Dej, should travel to Budapest on 3 November to hold discussions with Imre Nagy. The Soviet leadership was holding a meeting of a very different nature with Janos Kádár, the purpose of which was to coordinate the overthrow of Imre Nagy government.⁹⁴

The impact had not been confined to Romanian citizens of Hungarian origin. It had filtered through to workers, students and the intelligentsia. The uprising and the response to it

⁹² Johanna C. Granville, “Forewarned is Forearmed: How the Hungarian Crisis of 1956 Helped the Romanian Leadership,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, (June 2010): 615.

⁹³ Purcăruș, *În vâltoarea Răzvoifului Rece*, p. 263.

⁹⁴ Purcăruș, *În vâltoarea Răzvoifului Rece*, p. 264.

in Romania had reminded Gheorghiu-Dej how depended he was on force and on the Soviet Union as the source of his power.⁹⁵

The disorders that occurred at the same time with the uprising in Hungary, did not have a severe impact but they were the most significant of the whole Soviet bloc, after Hungary and Poland. They occurred mainly among students in Bucharest, Timișoara, Cluj, Iași and Târgu Mureș.⁹⁶ But generally, there is a tendency to refer very broadly to demonstrations in Romania.⁹⁷ In the revolts the Hungarian minority was particularly involved, including students, workers from various types of factories and peasants. In Timișoara the first mass meetings or demonstrations were able to occur, due to a combination of psychological, logistical, and historical factors. Both were quickly dispersed by the *Securitate*.⁹⁸

The major requests of the students in these centres were: the removal of Marxist-Leninism from schools, the abandoning of the economic and agricultural policy of the party and the change of status of the Russian language.⁹⁹

In the 1920s students protest and reaction to different kind policies were frequent phenomena in Romania. Students have been to a certain extent at the forefront of the anticommunist demonstrations in the years 1945-1946, prior to the entire instalment of the regime. Hence they were also an important target of Communist repression. Upon the unification of youth organizations after 1944, Miron Constantinescu, first vice-president of the Council of ministers and minister of education, proposed that The Union of Romanian

⁹⁵ Purcăruș, *În vâltoarea Războiului Rece*, p. 269.

⁹⁶ Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă : Timișoara 1956*, p. 30.

⁹⁷ Johanna Granville, "We have wines of all kinds: red, white, and green," *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 2 (June 2008): 7.

⁹⁸ Granville, *We have wines of all kinds: red, white, and green*, p. 7

⁹⁹ Ioana Boca, "1956 în România" [1956 in Romania], in Doina Jelea, Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Ungaria 1956: Revolta Minților și sfârșitul mitului comunist*, [Hungary 1956: The revolt of the minds and the end of the communist myth] (București: Curtea Veche, 2006), 180.

Students and The Union of High-School Students will not be implemented immediately, until they are restructured. The intention was an intense control of the youth organizations.¹⁰⁰

In the summer of 1956, the idea of training student associations was implemented, which, through a more relaxed and adapted strategy, was made to attract students. The idea of setting up student associations did not meet the consensus of members of the Central Bureau, some fearing that association will be diverted and will miss the party control, so which, moreover, was like it happened.¹⁰¹

Several of the student protests of autumn 1956 have had an outbreak in meetings of the Union of Working Youth or student associations. In Bucharest, protests in September have started from the meeting for election of a new office of the organization's fourth-year leadership of the department of Philology. In Cluj, in October, a group of students from the Faculty of Philology-History of the University Bolyai have developed a draft program in which stipulate that the association is “free, democratic, autonomous”¹⁰². One of the request basically looked like this:

“We the citizens of Romania, we are fighting for these causes:

1. The change of the communist regime;
2. The withdrawal of the Soviet army;
3. A free country and close relations with the West;
4. Liberty to fight with the Hungarian brothers.”¹⁰³

The demands were expressed simplistic and going basically in two directions. This was not something new. Pan-Soviet feelings were not very frequently, in most of the cases

¹⁰⁰ ANIC, fond CC al PCR - Cancelarie, dosar nr. 63/1948, f. 3. Comisia Prezidentiala pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din Romania., *Raport Final*. Edited by Dorin Dobrinu and Cristian Vasile. (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2007), 230.

¹⁰¹ Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă : Timișoara*, p. 35

¹⁰² Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă : Timișoara*, p. 35

¹⁰³ ANIC Jud. Timis a Arhivelor Nationale (in continuare DJTAN), Fond “Comitet Raional de partid”, Dosar 6/1956 f.26 [The Party Regional Committee of Timis, file 6/1956] in Mihaela Sitariu *Rezistența anticomunistă : Timișoara 1956*, p. 35.

portrayed by the official propaganda. The number of student organizers increased every day and it is hard to say who the main leaders were. The most conspicuous were Alexandru Ivansiuc, Mihai Victor Serdaru, Paul Goma and Marcel Petrișor in Bucharest, in Cluj István Várhegyi and Aristid V. Târnovan¹⁰⁴, in Timișoara Teodor Stanca, Imre Balázs and Gheorghe Păcuraru.¹⁰⁵¹⁰⁶

In Bucharest, the meetings were held in the Polytechnic Institute, C.I. Parhon and the Faculty of Philology. In October 24, in Cluj, a gathering of students started to question the policy of the party and the alliance with the Soviet Union¹⁰⁷ at the University Bolyai. The Professors couldn't fully explain to them the situation in Hungary,¹⁰⁸ creating thereafter a state of confusion. Sînnicolau, Pecica, Arad, Lipova, Jimbolia, Timișoara, Lugoj and other cities in the region of Timișoara were places where minor revolts appeared immediately after the student riots in the Universities.

In Romania, the Party members and the Technical University, in discussions of summer and autumn of 1956, attacked the central management of the Romanian Working Youth or criticized the organization.¹⁰⁹ The regime realized that the debate has opened a Pandora box, taking immediate action to freeze public discussion and to punish protesters.

Alongside political demands, one of the students' most vociferous grievances concerned scholarships. Romanian communist leaders had reneged on their promise to increase the amount and number of scholarships, which were low and were given out only to the children of peasants who earned below a certain amount. In early September the

¹⁰⁴ Granville, *We have wines of all kinds: red, white, and green*, p. 194.

¹⁰⁵ Granville, *We have wines of all kinds: red, white, and green*, p. 200.

¹⁰⁶ Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură, România între internaționalismul proletar și stalinismul anti-sovietic* [Romanian between proletarian internationalism and anti-soviet Stalinism] (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2001), 152.

¹⁰⁷ ANIC Jud. Timiș a Arhivelor Naționale (in continuare DJTAN), Fond "Comitet Raional de partid", Dosar 6/1956 f.26 in Mihaela Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă : Timișoara 1956*, p. 72.

¹⁰⁸ Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă : Timișoara 1956*, p. 72.

¹⁰⁹ Dorin Dobrinu and Cristian Vasile, *Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România. Raport Final*. (București: Humanitas, 2007), 148.

Romanian Central Committee passed a resolution to raise scholarships by almost 3 per cent of the value.¹¹⁰ Simultaneously, the Bucharest leadership raised the parents' salaries, thus reducing the number of students eligible for scholarships.¹¹¹ Students who had received scholarships the previous year were suddenly deprived of one in the 1956-1957 academic year. For those students whose parents' wages had been increased, exceeding the ceiling by 20-30 lei, meal tickets for the cafeteria that they had received when classes started were withdrawn, and they lost the right to live in dormitories.¹¹² There were some feature of the protests that may differ from city to city, but overall the anti-establishment character can be observed clearly.

The containment and the immediate actions taken by the communist leaders, in order to keep the situation stable will be developed in the chapter *Romanian Reactions: Party Reaction*, but not before a portrayal of the system in *Romanian Workers Party: Structure and Organization*.

From the point of view of foreign policy, Romania might have been able to insulate itself against what was happening in Poland, but could not do so against Hungary. The ties between the two countries were too strong. Geopolitically, Poland was more important than Hungary to the Soviet Union. But it is worth noted that the Soviets wanted the preservation of the Warsaw Pact. Withdrawal of any member state would have constituted a clear signal of lack of viability of the treaty, placing it in an inferior position to the "imperialistic" bloc; Germany was previously admitted to NATO. This for Khrushchev would have a huge personal failure.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Granville, *We have wines of all kinds: red, white, and green*, p 200.

¹¹¹ As Securitate agents reported: "If up to now a father had had an income of 650 lei, his son would have been eligible for a scholarship. Now that the father gets 750 lei, his son is no longer eligible for a scholarship." in Johanna Granville, *We have wines of all kinds: red, white, and green*, p. 198.

¹¹² Granville, *We have wines of all kinds: red, white, and green*, p. 198.

¹¹³ Purcăruș, *În vârtoarea Răzvoilui Rece*, p. 64.

In 1957, the Soviet Government had made perfectly clear that, while it might be prepared to tolerate certain revision in the system in its associate states. The new Kádár government was installed, but the situation was still fragile.¹¹⁴ For Moscow, Hungary was necessary not only for its own defence, but if the Red Army had been ordered to march across the continent. "In a strategic offensive against Western Europe, territories and armed forces of Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia were indispensable as Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria would have been if the target was the South."¹¹⁵

For that reason, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej himself told the regional party in the Hungarian Autonomous Region that any one opposing the attainment of political and the economic power served the interests of reactionary, counter-revolutionary forces.¹¹⁶

The Hungarian crisis and Soviet interventions strengthened the position of the Romanian communist leadership and gave them the opportunity to show its support for the Soviet Union. The aims of this attitude are complex. Firstly, it reinforced their desire to see Soviet troops leave Romania, in order for the local elite to have a free hand in internal policy. This is an assumption also employed by Dennis Deletant, but cannot be fully proven by the events of 1956. As can be seen in the chapter entitled *Romania's Reaction: Party Decisions*, the reaction aimed to maintain the system intact. Second, the crisis brought back the problem of national security and irredentism in Transylvania. A support for the Soviet troops would mean, in the eyes of the Romanian officials, the cease of any inter-ethnic conflict in the area. These are the motives that explain the attitude of the RWP.

Stalinism at home required the enforcing of social control after the tremors of 1956 but also, since it was to be Romanian Stalinism, reconnecting Romania with its own historical past.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Deletant and Pearton. *Romania observed*, p. 241.

¹¹⁵ Purcăruș, *În vârtoarea Răzvoifului Rece*, p. 70.

¹¹⁶ Purcăruș, *În vârtoarea Răzvoifului Rece*, p. 157.

¹¹⁷ Purcăruș, *În vârtoarea Răzvoifului Rece*, p. 157.

After the brutal repression of the revolution, Janos Kádár concluded an agreement with the Romanian authorities to send Imre Nagy to Romania for several months, until the situation would normalize. The Nagy affair will be developed in the next chapter entitled *The consequences of political reactions*. The repressive measures of the Kádár government were the following: tens of thousands of persons imprisoned or sent to labour camps. In June 1958 Imre Nagy and his collaborators received the death penalty.

As there can be seen from above, there was a two sided crises for the RWP in 1956. Firstly, there was an international problem created by the uprising in Hungary in the autumn of 1956, which could have interrupted the balance in the Eastern Bloc, which was not desired by Romania and the Soviet Union. Secondly, the RWP had at the same time domestic protests, inspired by the Hungarian uprisings, against its policies. It was a situation in which external politics were connected to internal affairs. This two sided connection is significant in understanding how the decisions were made in the autumn of 1956.

CHAPTER 3: Romanian Workers' Party - Structure and Organization

3.1 *The Romanian Workers' Party: Early Developments*

The most significant organizational and situational factors in defining the decision-making process in the autumn of 1956 that will be considered in this chapter are the following: leadership and party structure.

“The old state of things will never return to Romania,” stated Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in one of the party meetings of 1956. And indeed the Romanian Communist Party transformed itself and with it the country. When it emerged from illegality, in 1945, the Romanian Communist Party had approximately 1000 members.¹¹⁸ In 1944 the leadership of the Romanian Communist Party was composed of several groups.¹¹⁹ Stefan Foris, an important leader from the inter-war period, had been deposed from his position as Secretary General, and the Romanian Communist Party, the official title of the party at that time, had four leaderships: one around Gheorghiu-Dej, a second around Patraşcanu, a third was led by Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca (former illegalists), and last but not least, there was the Emil Bodnaraş (former member of the Soviet intelligence) faction, which acted as a link between the Soviet Union and the Romanian Communist Party.¹²⁰

In the period between 1944 and 1955 there were no risks to the Romanian Party's power and identity. In this period the lowest item on the Romanian elite's scale of priorities was the direct concern for creating a new political community.¹²¹ In February 1948, the Romanian Social Democratic with the Romanian Communist Party and formed Partidul

¹¹⁸ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all seasons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 87.

¹¹⁹ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 75.

¹²⁰ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 76.

¹²¹ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 114.

Muncitoresc Român, the Romanian Workers' Party, which remained the party's official name until 1965 (when it returned to the Romanian Communist Party).¹²²

In the case of RWP, Gheorghiu-Dej was not simply concerned with the process of institutionalization, but was intensively preoccupied with creating a particular type of institution, one that reflected the way in which he defined the ideology, demanding action and consistent development. The experience of the Romanian Workers Party with collectivisation between 1949 and 1951 showed the negative effects of the low level of institutionalization. The Party's behaviour during this period was marked by the lack of effective control over the Ministry of Internal Affairs, primarily by the failure to maintain a consistent policy.¹²³

As an organization becomes more institutionalized, and this was the case with the Eastern European Communist parties, membership becomes more stable, admission becomes relatively more difficult, and turnover is less frequent. For example, in the Romanian Workers Party, institutionalization was a major internal problem. By 1948, it managed to eliminate all organized opposition, and therefore it was concentrated on developing a high degree of institutionalization. There was a very rapid expansion of the RWP's membership in the first four years, and this was achieved at the expense of boundary establishment. Members were admitted with relatively little formality, frequently in groups, and membership requirements were minimal. Gradually, the party began to exhibit concerns about its admissions policy, however, and by February 1948 rigid admission standards had been established and were consciously enforced thereafter.¹²⁴

After the purge of Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca and Teohari Georgescu (former RWP leaders) in 1952, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej's view was the only one that was important in

¹²² Victor Frunză, *Istoria stalinismului în România* [The History of Stalinism in Romania] (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 1990), 259.

¹²³ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-196*, p. 134.

¹²⁴ Robert R. King, *A history of the Romanian Communist Party* (Hoover Institution Press: Stanford, 1980), 60.

terms of internal and external policy¹²⁵. Emil Bodnăraş secured his position. In an address to the to the Third Cominform Conference, held in Bucharest in November 1949, it is clear that Gheorghiu-Dej was anxious to do anything to remove any suspicions about his loyalty to Stalin and to follow Soviet instructions, when he attacked Tito's heresies and identified Laszlo Rajk, Lazar Brankov (Counselor, Yugoslav Legation, sentenced to life imprisonment, belonging to the Rajk group), Traycho Kostov (Reformist Bulgarian leader, sentenced and executed in 1952) and Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu, who had the same fate, as agents of the Anglo-American imperialist espionage agencies alongside the Yugoslav leader.¹²⁶ Lucreţiu Pătrăşcanu, who was perhaps the best known and accepted of the RWP elite in Romanian non-communist circles, was both a nationalist and a Leninist and appears to have greatly resented the extent and style of Soviet control in Romania after the Second World War.¹²⁷

Patrimonialism, according to Kenneth Jowitt, the form of Gheorghiu-Dej's commitment to party supremacy and institutionalization, was antithetical in several respects to the Party's ability to perform a managerial and political role. Therefore, under Gheorghiu-Dej's rule the Romanian regime was patrimonial; it continued to be incoherent in many ways even though the character of the incoherence changed.¹²⁸ With this statement Kenneth Jowitt thinks that "the nature of the elite's statements leads one to conclude that the political climate within this stratum was one of increased confidence combined with continuing anxiety."¹²⁹

According to Kenneth Jowitt, given Gheorghiu-Dej's demonstrated loyalty to the Soviet Union, the identity of ideological tenets, the greater coherence and unity of the Party and Khrushchev's statements, it would not be too difficult to argue that by the end of 1955

¹²⁵ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p.144.

¹²⁶ Dennis Deletant, "New Light on Gheorghiu-Dej's Struggle for Dominance in the Romanian Communist Party, 1944-49," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 4 (Oct., 1995): 688.

¹²⁷ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 126.

¹²⁸ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 149.

¹²⁹ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 149.

Gheorghiu-Dej must have felt there was no reason why the RWP should not, with permission, exercise greater operating autonomy.¹³⁰

It is possible to relate Gheorghiu-Dej's preference for Khrushchev both to the individuals who opposed Gheorghiu-Dej in 1954 and 1957. It appears that Miron Constantinescu was the major focal point of opposition to Gheorghiu-Dej between 1954 and 1957. However Constantinescu remained a dedicated communist and a party man. Constantinescu demonstrated a position which emphasized the state, rationalization and a more flexible control.

3.2 The New Type of Organization

In the models provided by other socialist states in Europe, with the exception of Yugoslavia, there was virtually no local autonomy encountered at the community level, except for the expressions of opinions on the part of local representatives in state and party organs. There were few, if any, responsibilities carried out within a local community without prior approval and consent on the part of *judet* (county) people's council. The role of the *judet* president and the first vice president is a significant one in which they must continually seek new funds and support from the central government's ministries and other institutions of the central authority.¹³¹

All instances of issue resolutions, except for the most routine items, either required action at the provincial level in the administrative offices of the people's council or necessitated action in Bucharest by provincial authorities in conjunction with the central government.¹³²

¹³⁰ Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 155.

¹³¹ Lawrence S. Graham, *Romania. A developing Socialist State* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1982), 91.

¹³² Lawrence S. Graham, *Romania. A developing Socialist State*, p.95.

In the early 1950s the Central Committee of the RWP was organized after the model structure of the USSR. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the leader of the RWP, considered that the political, economical and social objectives could not be fulfilled with the existing party organization. Reorganization of the central apparatus of the Romanian Workers' Party consisted of the creation of an Organizational Office and of a number of specialized departments, such as executive bodies of the Central Committee.¹³³

In 1956, all the regional Party committees had the following sections: Party Organization, Propaganda, Agrarian, Administrative, Women Organization and Economic Affairs.¹³⁴ The Romanian Workers Party was the only one in Eastern Europe not to hold a New Course Party Congress by the end of 1954; it was not held until September, 1955. In Romania the combined post of Party Secretary and Prime Minister was split and Gheorghiu-Dej took the latter post, placing a close ally, Gheorghe Apostol, Politburo member from 1948, in the position of First Secretary and removing from the Secretariat individuals such as Iosif Chisinevski, a leading ideologue of the party, Miron Constantinescu and Alexandru Moghioroș, deputy president of the council of ministers. ¹³⁵ In 1955 it became evident that Khrushchev's power position was increasing at the expense of Malenkov. Gheorghiu-Dej called the Congress and on October 5, 1955, resumed the position of First Secretary, giving the post of Prime Minister to Chivu Stoica, member of the Central Committee, reflecting the power situation in the Soviet Union and his own personal and organizational preferences.¹³⁶

Party apparatus and party organs were the most important institutions of the Romanian People's Republic. Representative institutions of the state had to assure appearance of democracy in the functions of the system. The Party power actually belonged to an

¹³³ Nicoleta Ionescu-Gura, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Roman* [Nomenclatura of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party] (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2006), 25.

¹³⁴ Nicoleta Ionescu-Gura, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Roman*, p. 25.

¹³⁵ Ghita Ionescu, *Communism in Rumania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 52.

¹³⁶ Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development, The case of Romania, 1944-1965*, p. 171.

overlapping state. The Grand National Assembly, the supreme organ of state power and also the legislative body of the Romanian People's Republic, had only a formal role.

The government of the People's Republic of Romania was only an appendage to the party. The revocation and change of ministers was decided by the party, namely by the Central Secretariat, and not by the Parliament, as envisaged in the Constitution.¹³⁷

The heads of the Central Committee and party instructors had more power than ministers of the government. For example, the heads of the Department of Industry of the Central Committee of the RMP developed draft regulations, sometimes in collaboration with other ministries, and they also controlled how the party and state bodies should implement them.¹³⁸

With the approval of the CC Secretariat of the RWP, the heads of departments inside the CC had the power to urge ministers to give them oral or written information on matters related to their activity. The central departments had to make reports, which included concrete proposals for improving different set of conditions, which they then had to advance to the party leadership for approval.¹³⁹

Local organs of state power and administration (popular advice, executive committee) had been directed and controlled by local party activity. Members of the executive bodies of the People's Committee offices at the regional, district and city levels were elected according to criteria established by the party leadership, and the elections were always formal.¹⁴⁰

For example, beginning in 1965, the Romanian Communist party gradually abandoned the consolidation policies of its own power in favour of including in its power some social

¹³⁷ Ionescu-Gura, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român*, p. 137.

¹³⁸ Ionescu-Gura, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român*, p. 138.

¹³⁹ Ionescu-Gura, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român*, p. 140.

¹⁴⁰ Ionescu-Gura, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român*, p. 142.

segments which had a relatively respected autonomy.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, entering the party could assure certain benefits. Thus, party membership became more attractive for young people, affecting to a certain extent the social status of an individual in the communist society.

The involvement of citizens in politics, and especially in party organizations, was essential for the credibility of institutions, as well as for the realization of citizens' demands and the accountability of their representatives. Party memberships in a totalitarian regime and in a parliamentary democracy have two different understandings. According to Dragoş Petrescu, the making of the new political culture had three important elements: Cohesion, Ideology, and Gheorghiu-Dej's leadership style.¹⁴² This might be the case, but cohesion is a delicate factor. Ideology was significant, but the political survival was the primary engine of party changes. Gheorghiu-Dej, after the death of Stalin, managed to impose upon the party a particular political style that can be defined as follows: under his rule the Romanian Workers Party's immediate political goals were contextually defined and the strategies devised to pursue them were context-dependent.

One of the first approaches will be towards the policies of party inclusion, which had several forms, starting with what the communist party represented in the late 1940's and at the beginning of the 1950's. Social mobilization was dependent on the communist system. All the major changes that took part in the latter affected the former. Therefore, there were different approaches to social mobilization at the beginning of the 1950's and in the late 1980's. Samuel

¹⁴¹ Kenneth Jowitt, "Inclusion and mobilization in European Leninist regimes", in Jan F. Triska, Paul H. Cock, editors, *Political Development in Eastern Europe*, (Praeger, New York and London, 1977), p. 97. as quoted by Daniel Barbu, *Republica Absenta*, [= The absent Republic], (Bucuresti: Nemira, 2004), p. 65.

¹⁴² Dragoş Petrescu *Fifty-Six as an identity-shaping experience, The case of the Romanian Communists*, p. 48 Dragoş Petrescu's definition was inspired by the terms used by Marc Howard Ross in "Culture and identity in Comparative Political analysis in Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*.

P. Huntington observed that rapid or substantial expansions of the membership of an organization in a system, tends to weaken coherence.¹⁴³

After Gheorghiu-Dej, communism in Romania was based on the emergence and straightening of the party core, which it had done before. But the party, which had more than doubled its size between 1955 and 1966 as a result of the rise of a new generation, adopted a new outlook. In propaganda, in education, in everyday behaviour, the focus was shifting imperceptibly from bloc solidarity to local interest, while attendant philosophy had led to a rejection of Stalinist practices.¹⁴⁴

By 1955 most party members had completed at least evening courses in ideology and other topics considered essential by the party. This concern with education continued, though with less urgency, until 1971, when a new emphasis was placed on ideology, something which continued to be an important concern of the leadership. Ideological education remained essential in maintaining boundaries, and proper ideological preparation was now a prerequisite for admission to party membership. Another aspect was the effort to increase the party coherence and reduce disunity within the organization.¹⁴⁵

This was the party, with its structure and organization that had to deal with a number of protests in the major cities of the country during the Hungarian Revolution. The following chapter will analyze the decision-making process and the efficiency of the authorities in trying to suppress the activities that questioned the regime.

¹⁴³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The crisis of democracy : report on the governability of democracies to the Trilateral Commission*, (New York: New York University Press, 1975), 30.

¹⁴⁴ Francois Fejto, *A history of the peoples democracies* (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1977) , 111.

¹⁴⁵ Francois Fejto, *A history of the peoples democracies*, p. 61.

CHAPTER 4: Romania's Reactions - Party Decisions

The events of 1956 for the Romanian communist authorities were very much a party affair, in the sense that it was contained and suppressed by high-party officials. The author agrees with Vladimir Tismăneanu when he says that "The decision-making process in Leninist organizations is secretive, cliquish, and programmatically deceptive- the very opposite, in fact, of the transparent, consensual, impersonal procedure aimed at in democratic polities."¹⁴⁶ Contrary to expectations, in this case it was more than secretive and cliquish. It was characterized by lack of trust in the party apparatus. The underlining process was more centralized than an ordinary basis, because the situation was unmatched until then. The crises had to solve with specific directions from the central headquarters.

In literature, the events of 1956 are seen from different point of views. Most of them agree that there was a problem of survivor and security. Dragoş Petrescu argues that it was the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 that contributed decisively to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's political survival.¹⁴⁷ Gheorghiu-Dej was a political survivor, he profited from the first wave of de-Stalinization and he saw the Soviet troops leaving the country. One thing he did not manage, and Dragoş Petrescu underlines this, was to gain the support of the new people.¹⁴⁸ The new direction of the party meant the building of a new political community. It was a process of selective community building, because Gheorghiu-Dej was not close to Romanian traditional nationalism. His policies were related to the party-masses relationship rather than the popularity of old nationalist views.¹⁴⁹

One of the main goals was Petrescu calls system maintenance, the preservation of the integrity and inviolability of the system so that the communist party can maintain their

¹⁴⁶ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all seasons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 20.

¹⁴⁷ Dragoş Petrescu, "Community-Building and Identity Politics in Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania" in, *Stalinism Revisited*, ed. Vladimir Tismăneanu, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 450.

¹⁴⁸ Petrescu, *Community-Building and identity politics in Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania*, p. 416.

¹⁴⁹ Petrescu, *Community-Building and identity politics in Gheorghiu-Dej's Romania*, p. 416.

achievements. Vladimir Tismăneanu, the main political purpose of the Romania party elite in 1956 was to gain and retain power at all costs. The issue was the political survival of the group named by Tismăneanu “Dej’s men”. This approach is closer in understanding what happened with the party in 1956. But this Machiavellian explanation is too simple, there wasn’t only the political group around Dej, but the whole system that was build until then.

At the questions what pushed the party elite to take such measures and what factors influenced the decision making process. Johanna Grenville points out that certain factors, such as the “*Securitate's* paranoia” and Gheorghiu-Dej's determination to intimidate the students in Timișoara, should also be considered. Granville also points put the immediate reaction for survival. “The year 1956 was a struggle for political survival; the Romanian communist devised a strategy of survival that had at its core a slow and cautions return to autochthonous values.”¹⁵⁰

In relation to this, the author will argue the main political aim was to maintain the centralized party hierarchy and its attributes in the decision making process and this was necessary, from RWP’s leadership point of view, for maintaining the stability and security of the country. This can be seen by the way the party responded to protests and unrest, as well as how it reacted to the events in Hungary. The debates and measures taken, new structure and new policies, and implementations reveal that for the RWP’s party this was not a simple instigation, but a complex event (internally and externally connected) which needed the involvement of high-profile leaders from the centre. It is hard to say that the regime of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was or not nationalist, but it is clear desired a certain amount of independence to solve its internal problems and the events of 1956 gave proved them that only a centralized and hierarchical system is the right answer to state security challenges. The author believes that a psychological approach will point out that only the adherence of the

¹⁵⁰ Granville, *Foreword is Forearmed*, p 618.

party leaders to the ideology made them mobilize in that way. This interpretation is misleading because for Gheorghiu-Dej and his close allies ideology suffered some changes afterwards. I will show this in the chapter *The consequences of the political reactions*.

4.1 Internal Affairs

On the eve of the Hungarian revolution, the Romanian Workers Party (RWP) faced a number of internal problems, connected internally to power struggle but managed to solve them in its specifically discrete manner. One of them was related to the high level power struggle. In the summer of 1956, in the desire to suppress any attempt to political changes, the Politburo, after similar actions in the past, decided to expose a first group consisting of old party members from the period in which the party was banned.¹⁵¹ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, the leader of the RWP, refused to endorse de-Stalinisation, but managed instead to bring the leadership of the party closer to his person. His success in resisting attempts to liberalize the party proved to be a boon for Khrushchev later in the year in the midst of major challenges to Communist authority in Poland and Hungary.¹⁵² The protests and unrests which occurred in the autumn of 1956 were primarily about changes, but this time they were pressured from outside, by a group made out of primarily students whose main aim was to make the regime more liberal.

As it was mentioned above, from October 26 onwards, Romanian communists were actually starting to refer plainly to the events in Hungary as a “counter-revolution”. From that day, October 26 1956 on, the reaction of the Romanian officials to the events in Hungary was

¹⁵¹ Elis Neagoe-Plesa, Liviu Plesa, *Dosarul Ana Pauker* [The Ana Pauker file], Vol. 1 (Nemira: București, 2006), 45 This is also mentioned in Johanna Granville, *Early roots of Romanian independence*, in Johanna Granville “Dej-a-Vu: early roots of Romania's independence,” *East European Quarterly* (2008): 381. “On June 16-17, 1956, just one week before the Polish workers' revolt in Poznan (June 28), Dej even purged a group of old communist veterans, the so-called *Eremia group*. For allegedly opposing the party's economic and membership policies, Dej expelled General Ion Eremia from the party, and censured his *accomplices*, such as Constantin Agiu, Victor Duța, Dumitru Petrescu, and others.”

¹⁵² Dennis Deletant, *Communist terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 258.

characterized by firmness and determination. Three important meetings of the high officials of the of the Romanian Workers' Party were held on 24, 26 and 30 of October. During these meetings, the concise information related to the situation in Hungary and the political and organisational measures that had to be taken were discussed in detail. The first meeting was attended by high official party members such as Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Alexandru Moghioroș and Gheorghe Ghiroghiu-Dej. The following dispositions were taken:

“After processing the basic organizations of the party and the Union of Working Youth and informing them of the serious events in Hungary, meetings will be organized in the enterprises and institutions with all employees in departments, workshops and trade union groups, services, directions, etc, to inform all employees about the situation in Hungary.”¹⁵³

The Romanian press attributing the unrest in Hungary to the work of subversive organizations incised by foreign reaction explained that the Hungarian government had asked for Soviet help. They also alleged that Hungarian workers, who continued to support the Communist Party and the relations with USSR, were hostile to revolt. Anyone dependent entirely on the Romanian press and radio for their news would get little idea of the nationalist and anti-soviet nature of the developments”¹⁵⁴ Complaints against the U.S. continued to appear in the media, as for example, there was a scandal related to balloons with anti-communist leaflets. Hungarian revolution, the October 23, 1956, resulted in a return to aggressive anti-American speech, the U.S. is presented as the instigator of the rebellion against communism. Discussing how the events in Hungary had organized the Romanian

¹⁵³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Dosar 169/1956, Stenograma No 54 al Ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 26 oct. 1956 octombrie, f. 32 [Minutes of the CC of RWP's Politburo Meeting of 26 October 1956], the translation of the author

¹⁵⁴ Deletant, Dennis, Maurice Pearton. *Romania Observed*, p. 28.

publications argued that "counterrevolutionary rebels" had received logistical support from the United States.¹⁵⁵

At the second meeting, of the Politburo, the same measures were discussed, but this time the mobilization was backed by the information from the daily newspaper *Scînteia* (The Spark). Moreover, the deposition also stated:

"In the factories and institutions gathering of workers will be arranged [...] The news of the newspaper *Scînteia* will be read to the workers. [...] The presidents of the committees had the duty to present the situation and explain the measures."¹⁵⁶ These kinds of meetings were organized throughout the country, in which workers and clerks had to condemn "the reactionary forces in Hungary and express solidarity with the heroic struggle of the Hungarian working class to put a stop to it as soon as possible".¹⁵⁷

In the third meeting on October 30 1956, the retaliatory measures were intensified.

"All the information about the situation in the country will to send general headquarters.[...] All law enforcement measures in regions and districts will be taken under the leadership of that specific party organization. Directorate of propaganda and culture of the CC of the RWP will send Politburo of CC of RMP list of Agerpress (Romanian news agency) news bulletins. [...] New measures will be proposed against former leaders of the Iron Guard, the Hungarian fascist parties and the former bourgeois parties".¹⁵⁸

In the eyes of the officials the measures had to be taken rapidly. Containment and repression were to be used in the case they were considered necessary. The mass mobilization went hand in hand with the arrests. Those examples were clearly showing how this policy was

¹⁵⁵ Bogdan Barbu, *Vin americanii!* [The Americans are coming!] (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2006), 157.

¹⁵⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secţia Cămară, Stenograma şedinţei Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 28 octombrie [Minutes of the CC of RWP's Politburo Meeting of 26 October 1956], the translation of the author.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secţia Relaţii Externe, Stenograma şedinţei Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 28 octombrie [Minutes of the CC of RWP's Politburo Meeting of 26 October 1956], the translation of the author.

implemented at micro level. The officials realized that the only way to prevent sudden was to organize counter-mobilizations in each factories, and university by university. Their indications were as follows: “In those meetings [in the factories] young workers and officials will condemn the counter-revolutionary actions of the reactionary and fascist forces in the Hungary and will declare solidarity with the heroic struggle of the working class in Hungary as soon as possible.”¹⁵⁹

The syllogism that portrayed anti-communist protesters as fascists was commonly used in the trials against political opponents. The workers who were assigned to speak against the revolution in Hungary were part of a practice deeply rooted in the Romanian Workers' Party organization and mass mobilization. “Meetings will be organized with students at all academic on years of education or education groups.”¹⁶⁰

4.2 Centre and Periphery: How Immediate Actions are Being Taken?

Centre and periphery are in this case, Bucharest, as the capital and political centre, and the important cities in the country, and at the same time party headquarters at the central level and local level. In order to coordinate the actions and measures based on operational decisions of the Central Political Bureau of RWP, a special committee was constituted on October 30, 1956 made up Emil Bodnăraş, Nicolae Ceauşescu, Alexandru Drăghici, minister of State Security and Leontin Sălăjan, minister of Defence. The special committee was to operate under the direction of the political bureau of the CC of the RWP and the Council of Ministers of the Romanian People's Republic. The centre of command would keep in touch with

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Sectia organizatorica, Protocol No 55 al şedinţei Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 28 oct. 1956 f. 40 [Minutes of the Meeting of the Politburo of CC of RWP held on October 28 1956] the translation of the author.

Gheorghe Gheroghiu-Dej, the Secretary General and Chivu Stoica, the President of the Council of Ministers.

The special committee, as an executive body, had the following tasks: the coordination and expansion of intelligence to a permanent state of subversive knowledge; the supervision of the atmosphere in the Armed Forces and The Ministry of Internal affairs troops, and to watch the State Security apparatus, the road infrastructure, naval fleet, air travel, and telecommunications. It also had to ensure security measures to party and state bodies, plants and factories, food, equipment and ammunition, and ensure a more secure border with the People's Republic of Hungary.¹⁶¹

The committee was entitled to take action to preserve order, including the right to order open fire if necessary. If an unexpected event would occur, the special committee was allowed to declare state of emergency in those areas. The field of action would be determined in relation to the situation - this measure will then be subject to approval of the Central Political Bureau of the RWP. The committee would take steps to suspend classes in some institutes of higher education if the situation will require it.

The Party had to take immediate measures to organize guards in the central institutions in the capital and in main cities. Their guard had to be provided by the state security bodies, and army forces were is needed. In connection with the students' protests in Timișoara, the Party had to take measures to detain those involved in the events, which were names "hostile elements". The committee organized armed detachments of workers in factories. This leads to the conclusion that the desired outcome was the suppression of actions that would threaten the state order.

¹⁶¹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Sectia organizatorica, Protocol No 55 al ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 28 oct. 1956 f. 40 [Minutes of the Meeting of the Politburo of CC of RWP held on October 28 1956] the translation of the author.

After the committee made of Politburo members of the CC of the RWP and led by Nicolae Ceaușescu and Emil Bodnăraș was established, another committee under the leadership of Alexander Moghioroș, a Politburo member of the CC of RMP, was formed and was primarily responsible for solving operational problems concerning food supply and infrastructure.¹⁶² At the same time the general public, through media channels had to be informed that the situation was calm in the country.

Decision-making organizations that functioned in the early days of the Hungarian crisis, the ones that were just formed, were aimed to pacify the population, making sure that the citizens were not irritated through measures that might cause resentment. The RWP leadership was not only informed of all the arrests that took place, but even endorsed the warrants issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A committee headed by Politburo member of the CC of the RWP, Gheorghe Apostol, was tasked to coordinate this issue.¹⁶³

Why were these measures necessary to certify a crisis if the situation was quiet in Romania as official statements and press articles tried to illustrate? In fact, information coming from the ground indicated that centres of “counter-revolutionaries” were organized in various localities, and that in some places the population was prepared to revolt.¹⁶⁴ The Communist leader, Gheorgiu-Dej, wanted to leave the impression that at party level they were not afraid of student actions or any possible disturbances caused of Hungarians in Romania.

The directive clearly specified the attributes of the Special committee, created to manage the crisis and lead by Gheorghe Apostol: “The Ministry of Internal Affairs will work only after prior approval of arrests by the party. Gheorghe Apostol will coordinate this issue on the party line. The Ministry of Internal Affairs will operate arrests without approval only in

¹⁶² Ioana Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură, România între internaționalismul proletar și stalinismul anti-sovietic* [Romanian between proletarian internationalism and anti-soviet Stalinism] (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 2001), 116.

¹⁶³ Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură*, p.117.

¹⁶⁴ Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură*, p. 118.

flagrant cases, however, and these cases will be notified to the party leadership within 24 hours.”¹⁶⁵

A campaign to deal with potential as well as actual sources of unrest began. Gheroghe Apostol, the head of the trade union organisation, went in person to the Grivița Roșie railway, one of the most well known work yards, to “expound the Government’s views on the Hungarian situation”.¹⁶⁶

Measures for the supervision of the population, especially of Romania citizens that travelled to Hungary were taken especially in region of Timișoara. Nominal tables were made at the border control in Curtici (a city at the border with Hungary).¹⁶⁷ The meetings and the correspondence reveal that the whole situation was controlled by the party through the political police – *Securitate*. The arrests had to be made on the basis of warrants, but in most cases *Securitate* acted without previous approvals. The attitude was not uniform, there were arrests and releases: “The Ministry of Internal Affairs will take steps to release some students who were detained in Bucharest and they will be thought that the position and attitude they have shown are unhealthy.”¹⁶⁸ For the party officials this represented a state of emergency mainly due to the proximity of some cities to the Hungarian border. In addition the Hungarian minority was active in several university centres in Transylvania; student associations had not been closely monitored prior to the events and this could create an environment in which revisionist opposition can rise.

The party regional committee of the Hungarian Autonomous region addressed a letter to the Central Committee, headed by Gheorghiu-Dej, condemning the “Horthist Savage forces in Hungary.” At the same time, the Hungarian-language newspapers (*Előre*, *Utunk* etc) were

¹⁶⁵ Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură*, p. 118.

¹⁶⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Secția Relații Externe, Stenograma Ședinței Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din 26 octombrie [Minutes of the CC of RWP’s Politburo Meeting of 26 October 1956], the translation of the author

¹⁶⁷ Mihaela Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă: Timișoara 1956* [The anti-communist resistance] (București: Sophia, 1998), 30.

¹⁶⁸ Sitariu, *Rezistența anticomunistă: Timișoara 1956*, p. 30.

closely supervised. In November 23 to 26 a party committee went to Cluj following orders from Gheorghiu-Dej. In the report that was presented at the end of the inspection, among those who were underlined as being part of the “contra-revolutionaries” were the intellectuals and students of the Hungarian Bolyai University. But the report mentioned that the situation of the Hungarian intellectuals and students improved, thanks to work previously done by party organizations with the direct support of the Central Committee. The regional standing committee of the RWP handled these categories (intellectuals and students). A positive element, for the party, was that a significant part of Hungarian teachers' worked with the party in solving the dilemmas they had.¹⁶⁹

The Committee considered that in the future it would be necessary for the RWP's Regional Committee in Cluj to change some of the members of the party leadership in order to eliminate confusion and to counter foreign influence among intellectuals and students. The committee proposed the appointment of a new chief of regional security, since the one who was in charge. He proposed the preparation of a document to be debated at a session of the CC about the events in the region.¹⁷⁰

There were similar reports from other cities in Transylvania.

“In Oradea [a city close the border with Hungary] the Regional Party Committee, has respected all the indication from the CC of the RWP. The vast majority of people condemn the actions in Budapest of counter-revolutionary elements. In some areas, some hostile elements in isolated cases, manifested against the regime after hearing the news of Hungarian radio.”¹⁷¹

The party reports also added that in Timisoara the mood among people at large was good. Different rumours were launched by hostile elements. A rumour that Pauker, Luca and

¹⁶⁹, ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Sectia Relatii Externe , Dosar nr 75/1956, f. 4 [Foreign Affairs CC of PWR] the translation of the author.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Georgescu, will be rehabilitated circulated in Lugoj.¹⁷² "Among those who are acting against the regime," the reports stated, were many former members of the Iron Guard and especially members of national minorities. All these have been identified as some were arrested, others placed under the supervision of the state.¹⁷³

The *Securitate* officials argued that the Bucharest student movement was only the beginning of a plot aimed at one group of former members of the Iron Guard, in connection with hostile elements belonging to the bourgeoisie to overthrow the communist regime.¹⁷⁴

4.3 Measures to Avoid Future Protests: Improvement of Facilities

Starting with the summer of 1956, the PWR leadership closely monitored the events in Hungary, sending *Securitate* officers to Budapest to gather intelligence. They kept a close tab to persons who were crossing the border and returned to the country.¹⁷⁵ The authorities, by means of one of the most well-organized and efficient intelligence systems in the communist block, were prepared to take the necessary steps that would change the institutional bodies involved in the protests. After the demonstrations that took place in autumn 1956, which are described in details in the chapter *The Relationship between Hungary and Romania. The Hungarian Revolution and the Soviet bloc*, a campaign of repression began against students. All former political prisoners or those who had a political prisoner in the family were dismissed from universities. The authorities changed the criteria of admission to university, putting emphasis on the social origin and political affiliation of the candidates.

¹⁷² ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Dosar 77/1956 Sectia Relatii Externe, f. 2 [File no 77/1956 Foreign Affairs CC of PWR] the translation of the author.

¹⁷³ Fond CC al PCR Dosar 36/1956 Sectia Relatii Externe, f. 4 [File no 36/1956 Foreign Affairs CC of PWR] the translation of the author.

¹⁷⁴ Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură*, p. 120.

¹⁷⁵ Granville, *If hope is sin, then we are all guilty*, p. 2.

In a meeting of the Politburo of CC of PWR and the Board of Ministers, Ceaușescu presented a short briefing on the situation in the country following the events in Hungary and the measures taken by the Politburo of the CC of PWR, which contained the following:

1. The Propaganda and Culture Directorate of the Central Committee of RWP had to guide the party organizations, press and radio, assessing and interpreting the events in the Hungarian People's Republic.

2. The Council of Ministers had to examine what medicines and food aid may be granted to the Hungarian People's Republic. The RWP planned to send a delegation on 30 October to be accompanied by a group formed by Aurel Mălnășan (deputy foreign minister), Valter Roman and endorsed by the government to discuss with the authorities of the Hungarian People's Republic and to see what kind of help it needed.

3. To complete, with no delays, the draft measures on higher education. They also had to assure the appropriate conditions for the celebration of November 7.¹⁷⁶

Just prior to the events, on 20 October 1956, a meeting attended by party elites highlighted the need to improve the “political-educational work” among students.¹⁷⁷ But after the events, given the hostile demonstrations of groups of students from Timișoara, it was necessary to take the following measures:

1. To intensify political work among the working class and to reinforce its militancy against the enemy class. Particular attention was to be given to political work among youth, especially among the intellectuals and students, which is more easily influenced by hostile elements.

¹⁷⁶ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Dosar 123/1956 Cancelarie, f. 28 [File no 123/1956 Chancellery CC of PWR] the translation of the author..

¹⁷⁷ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Cancelarie Dosar 120 / 1956 Cancelarie, f. 8 [File no 120/1956 Chancellery CC of PWR] the translation of the author.

2. To take measures to strengthen the guard of the Party headquarters of the regional and municipal. Steps were taken to strengthen security groups and regional and municipal people's councils.

After the crisis, some regional and city party committees and grassroots organizations took steps to implement the decisions. It was brought to the attention of regional and city party committees and organization that it was necessary to improve political activity among teachers in higher education institutes. The meetings that had taken place concerned thoroughly the role and tasks of teachers and staff that worked to educate students.

Measures had to be taken also at the level of the redistribution of resources, in order to avoid minor disturbances: “In order to solve operational problems, the food centres have to work properly in all the cities affected.”¹⁷⁸ The food supply to the population had to be done apace. Regional teams established by Circular no. 23 of the CC of the RWP from October 26, 1956 ensured that the tasks set out in the circular were enforced in order to mobilize local resources (collective farms, cooperatives, local industry, handicraft cooperatives) ensuring the completion of the regional supply.¹⁷⁹

Between October 13 and November 6, 1956 as committee worked in three universities to find that after the measures taken by regional Committees and institutes were enforced by members of the party and students. The report declared that the regional party organizations were weak and especially the leaders of institutions had to be pushed to ensure the proper conditions for learning and for cultural and educational activities of the students. The Ministry of Education, institutions of higher education, party organizations, the council of Ministers

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Dosar 122/1956 Secția Cămară – CC al PCR, f. 20 the translation of the author.

and student associations, had to pay special attention to living conditions of students and take steps to liquidate the existing gaps.¹⁸⁰

In the Hungarian Autonomous Region, during the events in Hungary, nobody knew the reality and have been especially troubled few districts with a majority of Hungarian population. The problem, according to the report is that the propaganda department of the CC of the RWP did not take immediate action. The media should given more concrete articles related to the actual situation.¹⁸¹ The committee was authorized to suspend classes in those institutes of higher education where the needs demanded it (as happened in Timisoara on October 31 when the classes were suspended).¹⁸²

In one of the meetings of the Politburo, one of the members said the following: “We have to strengthen the vigilance of the working class, so that we could prevent future conflicts. I also pointed out about events in Hungary, we have basic economic condition, but we do have a class struggle. The laws of the country should be applied.”¹⁸³

CC of RWP sent a committee to the university centres of Timisoara, Craiova, **Petroșani**, and other cities asking them to collaborate with local authorities and State party to consider how living conditions have been improved. This was in the spirit of the Politburo’s decision on certain political and educational measures meant to improve the educational environment and the living standards of the students.

The first measure taken by the authorities was repression. The hundreds of arrests that were made in all university centres were meant to bring fear among students. The measures taken in Bucharest along with the brutal suppression of any protest were meant to pacify the

¹⁸⁰ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Dosar 75/1956 – Propaganda și Agitație Fond CC al PCR, f. 12 translated by the author.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură*, p. 118.

¹⁸³ ANIC, Fond CC al PCR, Sectia Propaganda și Agitație a CC al PMR Dosar 75/1956, . [Minutes of the meetings One of the department of Propaganda 20 and 21 December 1956.] f. 8. the translation of the author.

students by adopting social decisions designed to change the daily life of students, and to improve their study conditions.¹⁸⁴

The authorities were forced to change their education policy and introduced strict criteria for admission into universities. An important role was given to new established student associations which--it was claimed--, under the cloak of apparently independent and apolitical organizations, politicized student life.¹⁸⁵ The actions of leaders in Bucharest allowed taking the appropriate measures for preventing a possible insurrection. The role of mass mobilization in those days was of an utmost importance for the RWP. It had to explain to students the harmful effects of the counter- revolution in Hungary, characterized as a movement of reactionary forces and to publicize the measures taken by Romanian and RWP leadership to deal with the impact of the political crisis in the neighbouring country.¹⁸⁶ Particular attention has been given to those categories of population who could be expected to display a negative attitude toward the regime.

4.4 What Made Possible These Events? Lessons and Plans for the Future

According to latter reports, the events in the university centres were made possible because the party organizations had given no support to the efforts of the Communist youth organizations during the process of education. The entire organization is provided by the secretaries and other activists among students who were members of the Bureau of the Party organizations. The new measures had to improve scientific activities in student circles and new forms of organization regarding the leisure time of students. One example of superficiality, according to the reports, in the political-educational work of students was the

¹⁸⁴ Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură*, p. 171.

¹⁸⁵ Boca, *1956 un an de ruptură*, p. 181.

¹⁸⁶ Fond CC al PCR, Sectia Propaganda și Agitație a CC al PMR, Stenogramele Ședinței din 20 și 21 decembrie, f. 20. [Minutes of the meetings One of the department of Propaganda 20 and 21 December 1956] the translation of the author.

manner in which they received their political information. The same can be said about the concern for cultural and educational content delivered to students.

According to the Politburo, the shortcomings in the work of party organizations institutes were due primarily to regional and city party committees that have guided and controlled these organizations sporadically. Problems which required a long time to solve, remained to be followed by regional Party committees based on commitments previously made. The authorities went as far as to check how the environment looked before the actions and protests of the students in the university centres. Other aspects were checked like cafeterias and accommodation facilities. “One of the lessons from what happened is that the party propaganda has to be less combative, more courageous and determined. Petty bourgeois liberalism and the ideological concession contribute much to the political confusion which included many of Hungary.”¹⁸⁷

This denial of reality of the events is found not only in the press but even in sessions devoted to analyzing the situation created in the university in late 1956. In the autumn of 1956 the student movements were the only ones who managed to organize a protest with a timetable, which sought to affect the entire Romanian society. This was the internal problem that the RWP had to face. Concerning the problem of foreign affairs one of the most significant documents related to the reaction of the Romanian communist authorities to the Romanian revolution is the report of the two high councils Valter Roman and Aurel Mălnășan, concerning the visit of the RWP delegation to Hungary in order to evaluate the events that occurred in that situation.¹⁸⁸ Two major elements were emphasized by Valter Roman: 1) Under Mátyá Rákosi, the Hungarian Worker’s Party was not accepted by the Hungarian people due to its arrogance and disregard for national values; and 2) The

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Dragoș Petrescu, “Community-Building and Identity Politics in Gheorghiu-Dej’s Romania”, in, *Stalinism Revisited*, ed. Vladimir Tismăneanu, (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 450.

leadership of the Hungarian Workers' Party displayed an anti-Romanian spirit and never took an appropriate and just attitude regarding Transylvania. These two conclusions were presented in front of the RWP. These important "elements" shaped the political culture of the Romanian communists, explaining their fear of Moscow and distrust of Budapest policies.¹⁸⁹

More or less, the decision-making process in the case of the events influenced by the Hungarian revolution, which disturbed the party even at the high level, was primarily related to the link between centre and periphery. The committees which were formed to manage the crises were made from people closely related to the communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, which had the power to enforce the will of the party in the territory. Timișoara, which was a ticking time bomb due to various factors, especially its geographical position and logistic factors, had to be contained with the necessary price. Bucharest due to its proximity and deep party control was not a significant problem. Transylvania was different, first and foremost for the reason that it had a strong Hungarian minority which kept strong ties with neighbouring country. The party realized that the regional committees were not capable to contain the protests and had to build a special committee from the centre. This tells basically why the communist did not prefer a decentralized system in dealing with the crisis.

In the second chapter, *The relationship between Hungary and Romania. The Hungarian Revolution and the impact on the Soviet bloc*, the impact of the Hungarian Revolution on Romania and the major events that followed that moment, were reconstructed.

¹⁸⁹ Dragoș Petrescu "Fifty-Six as an identity shaping experience: The case of the Romanian communists," in Janos M. Rainer and Katalin Somlai, eds., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Soviet bloc Countries: Reaction and repercussions* (Budapest: The institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, 2007) 48.

CHAPTER 5: The Aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution. The Consequences of Political Reactions

5.1 The Return to the “Normal” State of Affairs

Immediately after the end of the uprisings in Hungary, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej told to the Romanian Politburo: “We were not passive; we did not watch the events in Hungary as simple spectators”. At a December 1 PWR Politburo session, he added “I was directly concerned that these events develop in the interests of the Hungarian people and of Hungarian socialism and in our interests, so we did not just wait; we did not leave the Soviet Union to manage the situation by itself.”¹⁹⁰ When the hostilities were ceased the PWR leadership took the initiative right from the start to offer “asylum” to Nagy and his close allies.

The aims of this chapter are the analysis of the behaviour of the Romanian communist leadership in 1957 and 1958 and of the consequences of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 on Romanian internal and external affairs. Moreover this could lead to several questions: What represented the Hungarian revolution for the Romanian communists? How come in the period after 1956 the internal and external policy is gradually changing? This was by all means their achievements. In addition, the inquiry about whether or not the roots of Romanian national-communist can be traced back to Gheorghiu-Dej will be taken into account.

The absence of a compelling portrayal of events (e.g. the Nagy affair in Romania is practically ignored with several exceptions), the gains of the political elite in Romania, the political advantages that the authorities of one country could gain in spite of the other, are several gaps in research that can be found related to this period.

For the most part, during the 1950’s Romania was behaving like a small player of the 19th century, trying to benefit from its neighbour’s, Hungary, disadvantage, to gratify the big

¹⁹⁰ Granville, *Forward is Forearmed*, p. 634.

player, the Soviet Union. About Romania and the 1950s, significant studies were published but they were focusing either on the party or on the political elite and internal policy. Few things have been known, however, about Romania's role in the suppression of the Hungarian uprising of 1956 and the time when Imre Nagy was in Snagov, Romania.¹⁹¹ The chapter is divided in two. The Imre Nagy affair will be treated in the first part. The analysis tries to reconstruct the political climate of the arrival in Romania of Imre Nagy, which became one of the delicate aspects of Romanian – Hungarian relations in the second half of the 1950s. While the political developments that occurred after 1956 will be analyzed in the second part, this will lead to the reappraisal of the internal developments and the power relations within the Romanian Workers' Party. The intention is to examine how far Romanian politicians were caught up in the consequences of the aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The question of the end of strict Soviet control in Romania was essential at the time. Thus the beginning of a new chapter in relations with the Soviet Union was on the political agenda.

Let us turn to the context. When the revolution was crushed by the Soviet invasion of Hungary, Nagy, with a few others, was given sanctuary in the Yugoslav Embassy. Regardless of a written guarantee of free passage by János Kádár, on 22 November, Nagy was arrested by the Soviet forces when he was leaving the Yugoslav Embassy, and taken to Snagov, Romania. Afterwards, the Soviets returned him to Hungary, where he was charged with organizing the overthrow of the Hungarian people's democratic state and with treason. By dint of following the Stalinist model, the Romanian Workers party was able to punch far above its weight, in the right historical circumstances. Their structure afforded them enormous potential for expansion. Like it was mentioned in previous chapters, after 1956, several thousand students were detained and dozens were convicted. Numerous organizations across the country were

¹⁹¹ Please see Imre Nagy, *Însemnări de la Snagov* [Imre Nagy, Notes from Snagov. Correspondence, reports, calls] (Polirom, Iași, 2004)

dissolved. Romania's loyalty toward the Soviet Union paid off when the Soviet troops leaved the country in 1958, making a unique case in the Soviet bloc.

5.2 The Nagy Affair

On the meeting which was held on December 1 1956, Emil Bodnăraş declared: "In general the decision was exclusively ours, without any influence from anyone [...] Since no other solution was found we took the initiative of bringing Nagy to Romania."¹⁹² The reason that Bodnăraş added this was in support of the idea that Yugoslavia will be in an undesired position. The concern towards Yugoslavia was not backed by evidence, Romania restarted bilateral relations in 1953 but that was as far as it can go, the reason was that the Romanian leadership would dome everything to secure the instalment of Janos Kádár. The Soviets proposed that Nagy and his group be deported in one of the Warsaw Pact countries.¹⁹³ Romania was a suitable location, because of the proximity and security. Alexandru Moghioroş was the firs main actor in the Romanian Nagy affair, the Romanian Politburo member of Hungarian origin, met the group at the international airpor and accompanied them to Snagov. The second was Valter Roman, which became the most frequent visitor in Snagov. Other important figures were Iosif Ardeleanu, chief of the Romanian censorship office, and Nicolea Goldberg, rector of the Institute of Social sciences and former communist secretary of Northern Transylvania, both Hungarian speakers, who also visited Nagy several times.

The period between November 1956 and April 1957, when Imre Nagy was in Snagov, was marked by isolation and intensive control. One of the most important sources for the reconstruction of that period, are Nagy's notes and daily journal. The notes written by Imre Nagy in Snagov follow the events of October 23, 1956 and the situation of the refugees from

¹⁹² ANIC, fond CC al PCR /Cancelarie, dosar nr. 365/1956 ff. 1-45, 'Stenograma Sedintei Biroului Politic al CC al PMR din ziua de 1 decembrie 1956' in Granville, *Forward is Forearmed*, p. 634.

¹⁹³ Granville, *Forward is Forearmed*, p. 635.

the Yugoslav embassy group on November 4, 1956, at the time of the second Soviet armed intervention in Budapest. They concern both causes and consequences of those events.

Others accounts that were preserved are on Géza Losonczy, Hungarian journalist and politician, Ferenc Donath, politician, and György Lukács, Marxist philosopher and critic.. Members of Imre Nagy group. One is related to the group. And the last one is made of documents from the Romanian archives. An essential chapter reveals the letters that Imre Nagy wrote to Romanian officials Chivu Stoica, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Walter Roman, and to Aurel Mălnășanu. In this letters Imre Nagy often mentions the Hungarian – Romanian agreement from November 22 1956 and how the regulations were not respected. He asks Aurel Mălnășanu, the deputy foreign affairs minister, to allow his departure into a third country. Yugoslavia was preferred. The Imre Nagy group was brought together with their families and they were kept in strict isolation from each other, strict security, severe restrictions, including prohibition of movement, except for a perimeter increasingly limited. They could obtain only minimal information about the international situation and their status at that time.

The notes reveal some details regarding Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej. He is portrayed as “having continuously wrong expectations, hurt in his pride that he cannot defeat ideologically Nagy, jubilant at the same time he felt more tired and more conciliatory, at least in style.” They appear on pages of letters, intercepted discussions between the Romanian authorities and Hungarian detainees, Imre Nagy and his family. The comments of Imre Nagy and the others delegates are written in haste, under the impulse of immediate impressions.

Nagy was isolated from his colleagues and from the world. Nagy mentions in these notes, written in enforced Romanian exile, the important decisions taken between June 1953 and October 1956, before he knew what fate awaited him. Imre Nagy requests that the Romanian ambassador shares with the Romanian leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej the

rumours of an impending Soviet invasion of Hungary. The notes describe that Nagy's request was transmitted to Gheorghiu-Dej and in response a Romanian representative was dispatched to Budapest.

Imre Nagy's journal and notes were written during a crisis: the daily practice of writing that accompanied his house arrest, not being allowed to contact other persons, and it is a project in its own right—one of the most intensive explorations of the everyday environment, of personal relations, and the changing self.

Then Romanian communists played Kádár's game which was also in their own interest. According to Johanna Granville, had the decision regarding Imre Nagy's fate, rested solely with Khrushchev leadership, Nagy's life must have been spared. Khrushchev was blamed for the Hungarian revolution and sought the maximum punishment for Nagy.

What was revealed after was that neither the Nagy government not the post-1956 Kadar government actually had revisionist goals.¹⁹⁴ The new regime in Hungary needed good relations with Romania. In February 1958, there was visit of Hungarian delegation, led by János Kádár to Romania. In 1961 the Romanian communist leader, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej led a party and Government delegation to Budapest. The year 1956 marked a change of policy in the two countries.

In *Forewarned is Forearmed*, Johanna Granville introduces the hypothesis that the Nagy affair deepened the Romanian leaders' desire never to be in the fallen leader's position. Therefore, the expelling of Soviet troops from Romania will help to ensure that in the future the communist leaders of Romania will not be in that position¹⁹⁵ "There is no one better than the captor to witness the captive's suffering."¹⁹⁶ This argument is somehow speculative. The Romanian authorities never portrayed themselves in this way, the relationship between them

¹⁹⁴ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all seasons*, p.153.

¹⁹⁵ Granville, *Forward is Forearmed*, p. 632.

¹⁹⁶ Granville, *Forward is Forearmed*, p.632.

and the Soviet were quite different, taking into account the fact that most of them were very different in view than Imre Nagy. Needless to say, the Nagy affair helped the Romanian elite to maintain the trust of the Soviet Union.

5.3A New Beginning? The RWP in the Aftermath of the Hungarian Revolution

What represented the Hungarian revolution for the Romanian communists? Now that the political purpose was obtained, the leadership of the RWP had to enforce its one “new way”, which will be different from all other communist states. The way in which the crisis perceive in the post-1956 decisions and how the RWP started a new chapter in its existence is the concern of this undertaking.

The year 1956 remain a turning point in the history of Romanian communism. Vladimir Tismaneanu sees the year 1956:

"Romania was the only communist state in Eastern Europe to resist the shock waves of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU and Khrushchev' denunciation of the Stalinist cult. Khrushchev had tested the trustworthiness of the Romanians in the turbulent fall of 1956, when, unlike Hungary and Poland, Romania produced no significant mass movement towards liberalization (which is not to gloss over the student unrest in Bucharest, Cluj, and Timisoara). Moreover, Gheorghiu-Dej had persuaded the Soviet leaders that Romania was immune to any "bourgeois" or "revisionist virus": in June 1958, based on complex arrangement between the Romanians, the Russians, and the Yugoslavs, the occupying Soviet army units left Romania.”¹⁹⁷

The belief that the country will benefit from acting independently rather than collectively under the tutelage of the Soviet Union, emphasizing national rather than international goals, was there. The culture of the nation appeared much later. This is why a nationalist communist party and agenda is still hard to find. This undertaking will deal with

¹⁹⁷ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all seasons*, p. 25.

the events that occurred between 1953 and 1956 in order to reconstruct further and interpret Romania's attitude.

Dragoş Petrescu in another important volume dedicated to the Hungarian revolution and published in English *The 1956 Hungarian revolution and the Soviet bloc countries : reactions and repercussions* implies that the Hungarian revolution was a major identity-forming experience for the Romanian communist elite and therefore had a significant impact on what was called the regime's political culture.¹⁹⁸

After the end of the unrests and protests, arrests and interrogations continued. Legal grounds gave *Securitate* from 1957 the opportunity to liquidate all forms of opposition or disagreement with the authorities, expressed openly or merely outlined, which unleashed a wave of arrests of the same magnitude as the instalment of "popular democracy", and the imprisonment of those who "seek to endanger the state order." Alongside students of Romanian origin, ethnic Hungarians, Hungarian-language Institutions and regions all became targets of the Romanian reprisal, after 1956. Between 1956 and 1962 as many as 28000 peoples were arrested for political reasons.¹⁹⁹ The ethnic Hungarians received longer prison sentences than the Romanians.²⁰⁰

If the 1948-1952 repression was mainly aimed at the political opponents, in 1958-1959 this was no longer an issue in the same terms. Johanna Granville endorsed this idea. News of the Hungarian population involvement in the events of 1956 in Romania, reinforced the Romanian communist leadership's distortion of events in 1944-1945 and lead to discriminatory policies against the Hungarians from Transylvania in the following years.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ Dragoş Petrescu, "Fifty-six as an identity-shaping experience. The case of the Romanian communists" in *The 1956 Hungarian revolution and the Soviet bloc countries : reactions and repercussions* edited by M Rainer, (Budapest : Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, 2007), 40.

¹⁹⁹ Stefano Bottoni, *Transilvania rossa : il comunismo romeno e la questione nazionale* (1944-1965), (Roma : Carocci, 2007), 221.

²⁰⁰ Stefano Bottoni, *Transilvania rossa : il comunismo romeno e la questione nazional*, p. 40.

²⁰¹ Granville, *Forward is Forearmed*, p. 642.

The collectivisation process was also affected by the echoes of the Hungarian Revolution. The second phase of collectivization corresponds to the year 1956 and it is found only in the political discourse and the proposed resumption. Because of the situation in Hungary the second stage was postponed.²⁰²

In 1959 the universities Bolyai and Babes were merged. On December 24 1960, the Hungarian autonomous region was “gerrymandered” and then eliminated completely by the Ceaușescu regime on February 16 1968.²⁰³In The same year the Hungarian Autonomous region was dismissed. The beginning of the discriminatory policies can be easily regarded in the next years after 1956, but does not prove that the repression in 1956 had an anti-Hungarian agenda. As it can be seen in the chapter Romania’s reactions: Party decision, The RWP official collaborated with the local authorities in the Hungarian Autonomous Region.

At the central level “revisionism” remained very much on the public agenda. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej combined Stalinist convictions, and in part from the tactical need to alienate Khrushchev, the position Prime Minister as well as First Party Secretary. The Soviet Union was and would remain Romanian’s first priority. Therefore, the Romanian leadership lost no opportunity to stress its fidelity to Leninism, to the Warsaw pact and “its abhorrence of any tendencies to the contrary”.

The existence of Soviet troops on Romanian territory had been first regulated by the Armistice Agreement of September 1944. The Paris Peace Treaty of 1947 had conferred “lines of communication” rights: ten years later, the Warsaw Pact contained a “status of force” agreement. Extensive troops’ withdrawals had already taken place in Hungary and East Germany, but not total withdrawal. At a conference in Budapest, which took place in the first days of 1957, Gheorghiu-Dej, Moghioroș and Petre Borilă, Deputy President of the Council

²⁰² Please see Dorin Dobrinicu and Constantin Iordachi (editors), *Țărănimea și puterea. Procesul de colectivizare a agriculturii în România (1949-1962)*, (Iași, Polirom, 2005)

²⁰³ Granville, *Forward is Forearmed*, p. 631.

of Ministers participated, representing the Party and Government of Romania. The Conference published a communiqué which established the only view that it had been a counter-revolutionary attempt to destroy the system of People's Democracy and the Hungarian status quo, to reintroduce fascist dictatorship and to turn Hungary into a dangerous breeding ground of a new war in Europe. This attempt has been "smashed through the efforts of Hungary's working people under the leadership of the Revolutionary Worker-Peasant Government with the assistance of Soviet forces."²⁰⁴ The withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Romania marked the beginning of a new period characterized by a relative autonomy.

The author agrees with Stefan Fisher Galati that in the first decade of communism there was a loss of national identity by the destruction of the "bourgeois nationalist" legacy and the diminution of Romania's national sovereignty under the influence of the Soviet Union.²⁰⁵ Katherine Verdery states that the Romanian communist had not recreated or reinvented national ideology, the cultural production on national ideology continued in Romanian cultural and political sphere without any interruptions.²⁰⁶ Michale Shafir says that there was a combination of revived and officially sponsored nationalism, and on a national pride in the country's industrial achievements.²⁰⁷ This attitude was more conspicuous during the period of Ceaușescu, rather than the crucial years of the 1950's.

The roots of the Romanian national-communism can be regarded in different ways. The author agrees with Johanna Granville in saying that Johanna Granville, Gheorghiu-Dej masterminded the exodus of Soviet troops (1958) and KGB advisors (1964) from the country, making Romania a unique case during the Cold War. "The cunning strategist feigned loyalty

²⁰⁴ Maurice Pearton, *The Romanian Leadership and its problems* in Dennis Deletant and Maurice Pearton, *Romania Observed*, p. 247.

²⁰⁵ Stephen Fischer Galati, *The New Rumania. From People's Democracy to Socialist Republic*, (Cambridge, Mass, 1969), 50.

²⁰⁶ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*, (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1991), 12.

²⁰⁷ Michael Shafir, *Romania, Politics, Economy and Society* (Boulder Colorado, Rymme Rienner, 1985), 23.

to Khrushchev (whom he loathed) and kept a low profile in order to survive de-Stalinization and eventually expel Soviet troops from his country”.²⁰⁸

Two lessons can be drawn from this endeavour: The Romanian authorities proved efficient in solving the problems, using mass-mobilization deep rooted in its practices, and classical measures maintained the status quo, but the revolts were on a smaller scale. The second consequence was RWP rethinking of its own internal and external policy. The Romanian communist elites condemned the Hungarian revolution at once and succeeded in convincing the Soviets of their deep loyalty. In addition, they took rapid measures to stop spreading information about the real significance of events in Hungary.

²⁰⁸ Johanna Granville “Dej-a-Vu: early roots of Romania's independence,” *East European Quarterly* (2008): 366.

Conclusion

The Sovietization of Romania during the first decade after the end of the Second World War, created a powerful elite which had to gain power in order to control any political action from the centre. The events of autumn of 1956 were a test for the Romanian Workers' Party. In Romania, in the autumn of 1956 the student movements were the only ones that managed to organize a protest with a timetable, which sought to affect the entire Romanian society.

The decision-making process in the case of the events influenced by the Hungarian revolution, which disturbed the party even at the high level, was primarily related to the link between the centre and periphery. The committees, which were formed to manage the crisis, were made from people closely related to the communist leader Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, who had the power to enforce the will of the party in the territory.

The crisis basically created a situation in which external politics were connected to internal affairs. This two-sided connection is significant in understanding how the decisions were made in the autumn of 1956. First, there was the internal situation that required proof of loyalty to the Soviet Union, which was the hegemonic power in the area and had troops in every country. The protests of the students which occurred in Transylvania and in Bucharest represented the first serious political opposition to the RWP since 1945. Information coming from the ground indicated that centres of "counter-revolutionaries" were organized in various localities, and that in some places the population was prepared to revolt. However, the opposition in Bucharest and the main cities, if students and protesters are included, was weak.

Their agenda was not intended to change the regime radically; they knew that this was not possible. Their position was geared towards a more liberal regime, which is indeed a relative demand. The Communist leader, Gheorghiu-Dej, wanted to leave the impression that at the party level they were not afraid of student actions or any possible disturbances caused by Hungarians in Romania. Decision-making organizations that functioned in the early days of the Hungarian crisis, specifically the ones that were just formed, had several aims: to pacify the population and to make sure that the citizens were not irritated by measures that might cause resentment. The RWP leadership was not only informed of all the arrests that took place, but even endorsed the warrants issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A committee headed by Politburo member of the CC of the RWP, Gheorghe Apostol, was tasked with coordinating this issue.

First, the special committees created to manage the crisis as a result of the decision-making process revealed that the leadership of the RWP was primarily concerned with the containment of student protests in the major cities of the country. Second, they had to assure that the social environment would not be affected by the spread of new ideas. This was done mainly by arrests and changes to the institutions involved. The local decision-making bodies had no real authority; the command came from the centre, as the documents reveal. The party realized that the regional committees were not capable of containing the protests and had to build a special committee from the centre. This tells basically why the communists preferred a centralized system in dealing with the crisis.

It also became a problem of foreign affairs that could affect the ideological stability of the Eastern bloc and also endangered the security of the country. It was not so much ideology as it was stability that was at stake. The Hungarian Revolution became a challenge for the Romanian elite, one that they could not afford to neglect.

Gheorghiu-Dej, the main character of this paper, was a political survivor. He profited from the first wave of de-Stalinization and managed to prove himself a trustworthy ally of the Soviet Union. The new direction of the party meant the building of a new political community. Gheorghiu-Dej was not close to Romanian traditional nationalism. Rather, what could be interpreted as nationalism developed later. His policies were related to the party-masses relationship and the security of the country rather than the popularity of old nationalist views. But Gheorghiu-Dej's primary concern was that communism in Romania had to be based on the emergence and straightening of the party core, which eventually adopted a new outlook.

The present study used a two-tier inquiry to examine the subject: It carried out an investigation into Romania's internal situation as a whole, and then it concerned itself with the decision-making processes of the RWP at a time of exceptional crisis. The actions were indeed the most 'rational' ones at that moment. They had the priority to secure their achievements. It was a problem of ideology, although at first glance it might seem like that way. After the purges at the beginning of the 1950s, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej surrounded himself with CC members who he could trust. The repressions were party affairs. The intention was to maintain their present positions, rather than to have a vision of the future of communism. In addition, speaking of foreign policy, whether or not Romanian communist leaders had something to gain in the short term is not clear. The national agenda was not present in 1956, nor was it present in the aftermath of the events. The intention of the RWP was to contain any type of discourse against the position it had. The roots of national-communism are complex and had several elements from the past. Gheorghiu-Dej and his close allies were not nationalists, what they desired was a certain level of autonomy, not even independence, which they knew was not possible.

The main political aim was to maintain the centralized party hierarchy and its attributes in the decision-making process, and this was necessary for maintaining the stability and security of the country. From a rational approach the regime of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was not nationalistic, but it desired a certain amount of independence to solve its internal problems, and the events of 1956 proved to them that only a centralized and hierarchical system would be the right answer to state security challenges.

In 1958 the Russian army withdrew from Romania, making the country a special case in the Soviet bloc. 1965 became a turning point for the Romanian Workers Party. N. Ceausescu became Secretary General, the party changed its name to the Romanian Communist party, and the country became the Socialist Republic of Romania. In 1968, the administrative counties were changed and the Hungarian Autonomous region ceased to exist. The country had a free hand in solving its internal affairs. These events can not be linked directly with what happened in 1956. The Romanian communist leaders had already passed an identity-shaping experience by that time, as Dragoş Petrescu described the situation, which helped them survive and improve their relationship with the Soviet Union. As was shown from the response to the events in Hungary, the actions were executed rapidly, and the events that occurred later could not have been predicted at that moment.

This was not meant to be a shared entangled history. At the forefront was the Romanian view of the events, which is why the author has relied on Romanian sources, archival material and scholarship in his research.

The Imre Nagy affair is a fragile moment in the relationship between Hungary and Romania. In 1989 Romania responded in an unfriendly manner to the reburial of Imre Nagy. Anyway, the confinement of Imre Nagy in Snagov, as well as the journal he wrote there,

produced a treasure trove of Hungarian and Romanian history, especially for those acquainted with the problem; its prismatic pages exercise a hypnotic fascination. Yet at roughly one hundred pages, it remains Imre Nagy's last known work. The notes and correspondence of Imre Nagy are materials of great historical value, but they are still archival materials and should be treated and analyzed as such.

Timișoara, especially due to its geographical position and logistic factors, had to be contained at a necessary price. Bucharest, due to its proximity and deep party control, was not a significant problem. Transylvania was a different case. It had a strong Hungarian minority which kept strong ties with neighbouring country, where information could have spread very easily. Johanna Granville points out that Timișoara virtually carried that spirit on until December 1989.²⁰⁹ The city became the center of anti-communism in Romania; however the author is not convinced that this link can so easily be made. The events of 1989 were provoked by different circumstances and it was approached with a different attitude.

What is important to understand is that in 1956 Romania's reaction was not exaggerated. It was not a carefully planned offensive, but a defense of the status-quo, of the regime and of the direction the leaders envisage it. The committees organized at the centre had the capability to enforce their decisions in the territory because the periphery, in this case being the party organizations from Timișoara and Cluj and other cities, lacked trust from the Central Committee. The concern at that moment was to maintain the centralized system and its achievements.

²⁰⁹Granville, *If hope is a sin, then we are all guilty*, p. 52.

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