

“The 1974 Moment” and the Romanian Communist Press:

Nicolae Ceaușescu’s Leader Cult

By

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Abstract

The structural formation of the leader cult in Communist Romania has been subject to intense scholarly debates since 1989. Most studies analyse its development and relationship with the social in association with the creation of mythology within the Romanian context, the evolution of ‘nationalist’ ideas, and political structural changes that affected the regime down to its core. This thesis unravels its mission in two ways: on one hand, it analyses the development of the leader cult in Romania during the 1970s by insisting on the role of the written press on feeding the regimes proclivities; on the other hand, it contextualizes the social and temporal boundaries of that evolution by an introspection into the importance of the Election of Nicolae Ceaușescu as the first President of Romania. As such, the thesis argues that this event had the role of legitimizing the leader in front of the Romanian people, while at the same time enhancing the image of Ceaușescu as the incorporation of national will. Furthermore, this short study brings about the content changes within the press that were triggered by the Election, as well as an analysis on how all leader cult elements have been gradually constructed by the press in the 1970s.

The empirical work done the subject is entwined with a short analysis of the main concepts dealing with the origins and evolution of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s cult. In this sense, the analysis of the main newspapers and magazines during the period is defined in accordance with target audiences, political impact on narration of events, and shifts within press coverage. One main research contribution is also based in theory, namely that in the second half of the 1970s the leader cult became a permanent feature of social life, together with the myth-based image of Ceaușescu. This work aims at analysing the role of the press in the construction of the cult, while at the same time contributing to the field of comparative history and politics by claiming a historical (re)examination of the main elements that have been used in Romania’s leader cult case.

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Last but not least, I would like to dedicate this work to all those who suffered because of the Romanian Communist past and authoritarian regimes all over the world, to all those seeking freedom, in all parts of the globe, to all those who said “No!” in front of evil, even with the price of their lives.

Dedicated to all those who fought, suffered, and ultimately gave their lives for freedom.

“Concealing or denying evil is like allowing a wound to keep bleeding without bandaging it!”

Pope Francis

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
1. Literature and Theoretical Framework	4
2. Conceptual methodology	11
Chapter 1. An overview of the Romanian Communist press and its role in leader cult development	15
1.1. The Communist Press at its beginning - the role of ideology	15
1.2. Newspapers and press organization	18
1.3. Nicolae Ceaușescu and the press	29
Chapter 2. The leader cult's theoretical construction and its appliance in leadership	36
2.1. The origins of Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult	37
2.2. The 1974 Election as President	42
2.3. The myths of Ceaușescu's cult	50
Chapter 3. Themes around Nicolae Ceaușescu's leader cult and their press construction	58
3.1. The leader cult and the masses	60
3.2. The leader cult and the workers	69
3.3. The leader cult and intellectuals	73
3.4. The development of the cultural press	77
Conclusion	84
Appendices	92
Bibliography	103

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1970s, Nicolae Ceaușescu was in the process of consolidating his power. Although the leader decisively obtained political power inside the party, he needed to be recognized by the people as the supreme leader. In this process, the moment that was March 28, 1974 had the role of creating the persona of Nicolae Ceaușescu as President of the People.

The responses in the media and inside the party to this event were massive. Attendance at his election ranged from high ranking officials of the Communist Party, former members of the "illegalist" movement that were close to Ceaușescu (including Emil Bodnăraș, Ioan Gheorghe Maurer, Gheorghe Cioară, Lina Ciobanu, Constantin Drăgan, Manea Mănescu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Dumitru Popescu, Leonte Răutu, Ilie Verdeț, Gheorghe Pană etc.), members of the Central Committee, members of the State Council, of county organizations, Academy members, to people of science and culture, Romanian and foreign journalists, as well as diplomatic figures. The ceremony was sumptuous in nature and presence, exhibiting elements that belong to the leader cult propaganda: a sceptre being given to Ceaușescu as a symbol of power, his comparison with the "great leaders of Romanian history", the constant acclamations, praises, and discourses flattering in nature, the ceremony being given extensive credit at every level in Romanian society (newspapers, television, radio) etc.

The analysis of this thesis focuses on the construction of the leader cult by the communist press and the development of coverage in Romania's 1970s, while showing how the Election of Nicolae Ceaușescu as President contributed to shifts in press trends. I argue that it is through this political moment that Ceaușescu sought to legitimize his leader cult in front of Romanian society, by retaining the title of "Secretary General of the Party", and also becoming "President of the Romanian Socialist Republic". I provide an analysis of the

Romanian communist press, using the election of the leader as a tool for exploring the different paths which had been taken by the press in the decade that started in 1970. I reconstruct the trends in the official press, dealing with key moments of Ceaușescu's regime. By doing this, I intend to show the evolution of media representations of the leader (later, also his family) and how the cult evolved under the press' construction of it. Consequently, the main questions I am dealing with are: how did the press evolve in the 1970s in regard to reporting Ceaușescu's image? What were the press shifts and trends before and after 1974? What was the role of the press in constructing the leader cult insofar as its representations evolved during the 1970s? How did the main characteristics of Ceaușescu's cult evolve in the late 1960s and beginning of the new decade?

The arguments are based on the analysis of newspapers and accounts from within the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, in order to obtain a picture as to what the responses to this event were, and how the perceptions of Ceaușescu's leader cult changed after this moment. I am presenting these aspects in the broader context of how the press developed before the event, thus creating an analytical arc of the 1970s. More precisely, the thesis is a historical and, to a lesser extent, statistical study about how the press constructed Ceaușescu's cult, which elements it insisted upon, which characteristics were exaggerated and carefully nuanced in order to obtain a maximal public impact, and what role the press had in the expansion of the leader's public image. By disseminating articles in the newspapers and magazines, an overview of Ceaușescu's cult can be observed from within one of Romania's key areas.

The political history of the communist regime and its decisions that impacted the cultural life can be seen as the predisposing elements that triggered the cult of the leader. Nicolae Ceaușescu's visit to North Korea and China in the beginning of 1971 is seen by some scholars as triggering a response inside the leader's environment that wanted an expansion of

ideological methods of control by the party and a reorganization of the cultural life according to the Romanian definition of self-proclaimed Marxism-Leninism.¹ It is by these visits that Ceaușescu allegedly put forward the Asian examples of applied Marxist theory that would lead to the expansion of the role of leadership, increase the cultural presence of the Party and its key members, and stratify the Romanian cultural scene in accordance to ideological standards of interpretation.²

This MA Thesis is not intended to be a political history of the events which preceded the moment of 1974, nor is it intended as an exhaustive approach towards the history of the Romanian communist regime. It is rather a dissemination of coverage trends in the Romanian press, while also insisting on the responses and perceptions that came after the 1974 election. This is to be done by presenting the moment of 1974, while at the same time creating an overview of the decade's press in order to create the overarching approaches towards the media. It is very specific, both in analysis and research. In this sense, "The 1974 Moment" is more of a landmark than the event of in-depth analysis. The latter is rather focused on an overview of the 1970s and the gradual press construction of the cult, while the former serves as the defining moment which, continuing the 1971 July Theses, creates the image of Ceaușescu as the embodiment of national will and is developed as a pretext for expanding the leader cult. For proper identification of certain elements inside the cult, an understanding of key concepts and theoretical approaches towards the leader cult, both in general and in Romania, is needed. Identifying the theoretical elements on which Ceaușescu's cult was constructed is essential for this research.

¹ See Ion Mihai Pacepa, *Red Horizons: The True Story of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescus' Crimes, Lifestyle, and Corruption* (Washington DC: Regnery Gateway, 1987), Chapter 1, as well as Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 185-6, and Anneli Ute Gabanyi, *Cultul lui Ceaușescu* [The Ceaușescu Cult] (Iași: Polirom, 2003), Chapter 1.

² For more information regarding the cultural context and interpretation of the evolutionary stages of the leader cult, see the Theoretical framework, as well as Mary Ellen Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu: A Study in Political Leadership* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), and Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), Chapter 7.

All in all, the role of this MA Thesis is to expand the research on the leader cult in Communist Romania, to explore the political relationship between the media and the regime's administration, and to create an analysis of press coverage related to the leader and how it contributed to the expansion of his cult.

1. Literature and Theoretical Framework

The role of the communist press in constructing the leader cult in Romania can be viewed from multiple perspectives. Most importantly, my conceptual analysis lies within four theoretical *interrelated* frameworks.³ The concepts within these sections relate to one another to provide a broader spectre of the leader cult and press, but are also dealing with particular and specific elements of the Romanian case. In my thesis I use these concepts to relate the existing literature, while linking them to my own primary research.

One pattern of analysis deals with literature and theory relating *to the concept of leader cult in general*, insofar as specific to communist regimes. Klaus Heller asserts that the term appeared in the 19th Century, identifying it as a "genius cult", or "cult of genius", without any political inclination.⁴ This idea can be interpreted as being developed later by 20th century leaders, who were often referred to in extraordinary phrases and references. While the idea of the cult was later developed by communist countries, including, but no limited to Romania, the 20th century idea of the term has no or little relevance to the original ideas of the genius cult, since most of these cults had been embedded in the political discourse.

Furthermore, E. A. Rees discusses the different specificities and functions from within

³ I present these frameworks in the introduction in a certain order for the reader to better understand the complexity that ties them together. In the thesis, however, I deal with them in an order dictated by research, focusing on press history, leader cult literature, The 1974 Election, and primary sources on the role of the press for the leader cult.

⁴ Klaus Heller and Jan Plamper (ed.), *Personenkulte im Stalinismus. Personality Cults in Stalinism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 5-30.

the theory of the leader cult, as well as the preconditions to its inception. He also contextualizes the different comparisons between the cult in the USSR and Eastern European cases.⁵ This aspect is relevant because current literature explains the shift that happened between the Stalin cult and the so-called ‘exported cults’. Basically, the idea relies on the fact that while the Soviet Union's personality cult as envisioned by Stalin was the model for other countries, most of the states like Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and Romania developed their own, specific, and distinct personality cults. Also, the scholar differentiates between leader cults and “the glorification of political leaders in more open political systems.”⁶ In this sense, open societies cannot have leader cults because these are endemic to power manifestations specific to dictatorships. This happens because cults need what Rees calls “a siege mentality” to foster.⁷ Lastly, the scholar associates this tendency with revolutionary politics and their constant drive for a certain cause and/or vocation, as well as with the control over the channels of communication between the leader and his ‘followers’.⁸

While dealing with the specific case of Romania⁹, Mary Ellen Fischer explains the sources of leadership cults, mostly focusing on the transformation of the leader from revolutionary symbol to idol. The author insists on attempts to establish a basic legitimacy for the leader through specific elements inside their cults. Consequently, Fischer proposes as a model the enactment of the glorification of the leader, using also Max Weber's concepts of *charisma*.¹⁰ The author links her analysis to that presented by Nina Tumarkin, who claims that political imperatives generate revolutionary cults, insofar as political rituals are present to mobilize loyalty of the masses and claim legitimacy in the name of the regime.¹¹

⁵ E.A. Rees. “Leader Cults: Varieties, Preconditions and Functions” in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships*, ed. Balasz Apor et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 3-25.

⁶ Ibid, 8.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 8-9.

⁹ I focus on this on the relevant pattern of dealing with specific Romanian literature dealing with the leader cult.

¹⁰ Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 161-2.

¹¹ See Nina Tumarkin, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1-5, cited in in Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 161-3.

Consequently, Fischer entails research on the specificities of leadership cults in communist countries, creating the dichotomy between authentic and idolized leadership.¹² While these aspects are developed later in this part of the thesis, it is nonetheless important to mention their main characteristics.

Furthermore, on the construction of a leader cult in communist countries scholars have a general consensus, but not all elements have been agreed upon. Historians and political scientists' alike state in large majority that a leader cult is hardly just a created one deriving from power of the main political factors. Jan Plamper asserts that the driving force of any leader cult relating to this area has to be found in the external world, not in the personality cult itself.¹³ Sarah Davies claims that Stalin was a revolutionary who was preoccupied with the consolidation of power rather than creation of his own the cult, the latter being less explored than the former.¹⁴ Malte Rolf says that it is important to place the cult of Stalin within a spectrum of leader cults that transcends his own idea of a cult. While these had been heavily influenced by it, they nonetheless developed separately, yet all of them have to be viewed as interrelated.¹⁵ Regarding the Stalin cult, which served as a model (at least in the early stages) for most personality cults in East-Central Europe, Benno Ennker links the birth of cult in communist systems to the shifts inside the unique Party, claiming that the cult was not an invented pathological rhetoric, but a critical internal aspect of power in the USSR. He takes an external output, not naming Stalin as the main contributor to his own cult.¹⁶

¹² Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 162-5.

¹³ See Jan Plamper, "Modern Personality Cults" in *Personenkulte im Stalinismus*, ed. Klaus Heller and Jan Plamper 27-9. For further details on Plamper's view on leader cult theory see *The Stalin Cult: A Study in the Alchemy of Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), Chapters 1 and 2, and Jan Plamper, "Georgian Koba or Soviet 'Father of Peoples'? The Stalin Cult and Ethnicity" in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships*, ed. Balasz Apór et al., 123-40.

¹⁴ Sarah Davies, "Stalin and the Making of the Leader Cult in the 1930s", in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorship*, ed. Balázs Apór et al., 31-5.

¹⁵ Malte Rolf, "The Leader's Many Bodies: Leader Cults and Mass Festivals in Voronezh, Novosibirsk, and Kemerovo in the 1930s" in *Personenkulte im Stalinismus*, ed. Klaus Heller and Jan Plamper, 197-01. Also see Malte Rolf, "Working Towards the Centre: Leader Cults and Spatial Politics in Pre-War Stalinism" in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships*, ed. Balasz Apór et al., 141-60.

¹⁶ Benno Ennker, "The Stalin Cult, Bolshevik Rule and Kremlin Interaction in the 1930s" in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships*, ed. Balasz Apór et al., 84-95.

Another relevant pattern to the analysis is regarding *the leader cult in communist Romania*. As mentioned above, Fischer's analysis lies mostly on Romania, while the introduction is focused on specificities that are related to general concepts of the cult. Thus, the author claims that Ceaușescu's surge as cult figure is linked not so much to his past, but rather to the way in which he claimed to be the incorporation of the will of the nation.¹⁷ For doing this the author emphasizes the different aspects of the Romanian case in comparison with the cult of Mao and of Stalin, posing question regarding both the sources and constant development of Ceaușescu's cult.

On another tone, Romanian historian Adrian Cioroianu describes Nicolae Ceaușescu's national-communism by referring to the framework proposed by Graeme Gill. Extrapolating to the model of Leninist personality cults, the leader cult (i.e. personality cult) is not an imposed form and with a free rhetoric, but rather an instrument of political pragmatism. According to Gill's framework and supported also by the Cioroianu, the cult has the role of a signal delivered to all 'followers', masses or party members, a message with clearly states which political personality is the most powerful one. Thus, says Gill, the cult "becomes a weapon in the conflict between elites".¹⁸ During the years, Adrian Cioroianu has written extensively on the formation and mythology on the different paradigms of Ceaușescu's cult. As he points out, the Romanian version of the cult did not come to fruition by itself, nor did the Romanian leader "paint himself or dedicated poems to his own person".¹⁹

The Romanian historian traces the development of the cult to the actions of people

¹⁷ Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 165-78.

¹⁸ See Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx. O introducere în istoria comunismului românesc* [On the shoulders of Marx. An introduction to Romanian communism] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2005), 424-5. Also see Graeme Gill, "Personality Cult, Political Culture and Party Structure", *Studies in Comparative Communism*, XVII, Number 2 (1984): 116.

¹⁹ Adrian Cioroianu, "Acel Ceaușescu pe care l-am creat (despre o fascinantă – și păgubitoare – "industrie a elogiului")" [That Ceaușescu that we created (about a fascinating – and damaging – "industry of eulogy")], Available in Romanian on <https://geopolitikon.wordpress.com/2010/03/16/16mart2010-acel-ceausescu-pe-care-l-am-creat-despre-un-fascinant-si-pagubitor-cult-al-personalitatii-12/> and <https://geopolitikon.wordpress.com/tag/cultul-personalitatii/>

who, by constantly trying to please all pathological forms of Ceaușescu's personality for their own gain, exacerbated their misrepresented views of the leader, transforming the regime's relationship with the people on one based on servitude.²⁰ Altogether, this does not imply that the cult was constructed from below, but that its constant evolution was shaped by laudatory forms of the leader's assessment which prompted the leadership in adopting measures to constantly develop the cult.

Relating ideas to the ones presented in the general character of the personality cult, Vladimir Tismăneanu finds a contrasting comparison between the Stalin and Ceaușescu cults. He claims that while the Romanian leader distanced himself from the soviet model, he remained "a convinced Leninist, with Stalinist practices".²¹ This is an interesting dichotomy mainly because, as Tismăneanu insists, Nicolae Ceaușescu's usage of nationalism for the development of the personality cult created the impression of the unique leader with a unique cult.²² The struggle for legitimacy is one of the factors which motivated the constant usage of the nationalistic rhetoric and symbols. Dennis Deletant also makes usage of the nationalism in Ceaușescu's communism, claiming that the leader has used examples of Romania's troubled past in Transylvania and Bessarabia to appeal to national sentiments and to cultivate support for his regime.²³ Furthermore, the concept of *nationalism* under Ceaușescu is intensely debated, especially since it espouses what Tismăneanu has called "residual Marxist - Leninist" combined with elements of Romanian nationalism, mostly elements from far - right groups. In this instance, it can be discussed about the *fascization* of Ceaușescu's regime.²⁴

While these two segments deal with ideas relating to the leader cult, the other literature

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, Chapter 7.

²² Ibid.

²³ Dennis Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (London: Hurts & Company, 1995), 107-30, 151-64.

²⁴ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *The Devil in History: Communism, Fascism, and Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), X.

relevant for this study encompasses research regarding the communist press in Romania, how it contributed to the construction of the cult, and material regarding the 1974 election, which changed the perspective and solidification of the cult. While these three items are interrelated and are treated as such, the necessity for analysing them separately when it comes to literature emphasizes the need for a well-defined methodology.

The distinct pattern in the literature is the one regarding the 1974 event itself. While part of the literature on this topic is made up what might be considered as "primary material", mainly because most of the reflections are personal in nature and are direct responses to the event, there are points in the texts which can give insight into the theoretical study of the event, and thus the leader cult, which can also classify them as "secondary sources". For example, Ghiță Ionescu suggests that the relevance of Ceaușescu's 1974 election cannot be understood outside the Romanian context, looking from inside the Party.²⁵ He suggests looking at the relationship between Dej and Ceaușescu, mostly at the succession principles.

Relating to aspects of the political infrastructure inside the regime, Vladimir Tismăneanu points out that until 1974 Ceaușescu did not have the total support of the secret police (*Securitate*), but after the event the institution became one of the three main pillars of his cult, alongside with the Ministry of Propaganda and the Party.²⁶ Adam Burakowski links the event on March 28 with the social conditions in Communist Romania, emphasizing not only the role of the propaganda that proclaimed Ceaușescu as "The Genius of the Carpathians", but also the fact that Romania was considered one of the most liberal communist countries until the beginning of the 1970s, thus an event of such nature would not be met with disapproval from a population still under the spell of the last years from the previous decade.²⁷

²⁵ Ghiță Ionescu, *Comunismul în România [Communism in Romania]* (Bucharest: Editura Litera, 1994).

²⁶ For more information on the conceptual analysis of the Romanian political regime under Ceaușescu, see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, Chapter 7.

²⁷ Adam Burakowski, *Dictatura lui Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965 - 1989). Geniul Carpaților* [The Dictatorship of

Last but not least, another pattern in the conceptual interpretation of the thesis deals with *the role of the communist press in constructing different elements of the cult*. Moving the theory towards the particularities of the Romanian communist press, Emilia Șercan asserts the important role of the press under Ceaușescu as a double configuring agent, as both a link between the regime and its citizens, and the instrument of legitimacy as it was used by the political regime.²⁸ While Șercan does a structural analysis of the Romanian press, by focusing on the control mechanisms that have shaped the evolution of the printed press, she also takes into historical account the interactions between political power and the press, striving to identify, classify, and ultimately analyse the actions of political actors that were meant to subordinate publications during the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Emilia Șercan relates in an indirect way to the leader cult in terms of political leadership and in a direct way regarding the press construction of it. Although the analysis of the book takes the direction of analysing the "cult of the secret", it emphasizes much more on the internal structural formation and manipulation of the press than it does on the actual information that what provided for the construction of the cult. Thus, this thesis uses the framework provided by such scholarly material in order to link conceptual theory (the use of concepts and theories) to empirical material found in the archives and libraries. By doing this, it will make use of both theories that describe the political regime and its link to the press, and the primary source materials that will be compared and contrasted with these concepts in order to reconstruct and deconstruct the process involved in the creation and evolution of Ceaușescu's leader cult.

As a question of content, I include ideas on the role of the press in communist societies in general by discussing theories put forward by others such as Denis McQuail, who views

Nicolae Ceaușescu (1965-1989). *The Genius of the Charpathians* (Iasi: Polirom, 2011), Chapter 1.

²⁸ Emilia Șercan, *Cultul Secretului. Mecanismele cenzurii în presa comunistă* [Cult of the Secret. Mechanisms of censorship in the communist press] (Iași: Polirom, 2015), 13.

the role of press in closed societies as an instrument of total control and subordination. Furthermore, I extrapolate this aspect to the Romanian case study, using both of them in a comparative framework to establish the power and control relationships between political actors and press agents. Expanding on this comparative aspect, there is a short emphasis on the analysis of external agents which might have contributed to press and media action, such as minor attempts at exhibiting independent viewpoints and standings on issues that were outside the instruction of the party. These elements, however, have not been major as they were never allowed to develop, which can be shown as providing a short comparison with cases in the USSR and Poland, all in the context of press as an element inside controlled societies.²⁹

2. Conceptual methodology

For the methodological and quasi-practical part of my thesis I use the term *conceptual methodology*. I propose this approach as meaning an applied methodology that combines the use of concepts as described in previous presented literature with methods of empirical research such as archival work and primary-source material which are compared and contrasted with the concepts and ideas mentioned above.

My thesis is composed of chapters which use in the same time empirical results done by archival work and concepts of certain elements related to my research which were tested on an empirical basis. Since this is primarily a short research-based project, I create an overview of the Romanian press in the 1970s in order to deconstruct the process of the consolidation of the leader cult in this area. In other words, this research analyses certain selected press materials which directly show how Ceaușescu's cult had been projected in the

²⁹ See Tismăneanu, *The Devil in History*, X, and Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory* (London: Sage Publishing, 2010), 45, 245-60.

media, and what was the role of the latter in its evolution.

Since a complete analysis of the Romanian press in the 1970s decade would be a quixotic task, the focus of this research is based on a sample-choice method. In order to obtain the desired results I chose articles from relevant newspapers³⁰ which are based on reactions to certain events. Although the main event which this press research revolves around is the Election in 1974, this is more of a historical land-mark rather than an object of pure analysis by itself. Thus, other events such as the 1971 "July Theses", the laws on the press after 1974, and the reorganization of cultural life after 1975 are an important part of the current analysis. Furthermore, since it was determined by current research that the Romanian press had a transitional periodicity, meaning that it evolved in trends and periods rather than year by year, it is more feasible to create an analysis from different periods of the mentioned decade.

"Diversity" is one of the key words in this research regarding the choice of sources. Going beyond the periodical part of the empirical work, I am also looking in different places to find similar (or dissimilar) practices and content. In order to obtain a clear view of the media coverage in the 1970s, the analysis focuses on newspapers for different target populations, with different themes and motifs, and situating themselves on certain ideological high-grounds. The main newspapers and magazines I analysed are *Scînteia* (The Spark), the official publication of the Party, *România Liberă* (Free Romania), focusing on social and political issues, *Săptămâna culturală a capitalei* (The cultural week of the capital) dealing with social and entertainment factors, *Scînteia tineretului* (The Spark of Youth), focused on youth propaganda, *Flacăra* (The Flame), one of the most largest impact cultural and entertainment magazines in the country, *Munca* (Labour) in dealing with worker related content, and *Munca de Partid* (Party Labour), mostly focused on labour theory and class evolution. I also focused on local newspapers, other cultural magazines, and publications with

³⁰ My research deals mostly with the written press since the access is not constrained by access to sources and the reliability is higher than in other possible ones.

a more specific focus.

Certainly, not all of the aspects presented in these newspapers or others can be relevant. The focus is mostly on elements relating to the persona of Nicolae Ceaușescu and his family, and the constant development of his cult even in areas that were not linked in any relevant to his person per se, such as cultural issues, technical articles, gender-focused articles, or youth-related entertainment.

As a technical note, all of the press primary source material presented in this thesis have been researched at Central University Library, Bucharest (Biblioteca Central Universitară), and they are open to the public. In addition, material found elsewhere (like Open Society archives) can be found as presented in the footnotes and bibliography. Also, all translations of texts in this work are my own, unless stated otherwise. The editions of newspapers I have selected have been picked on the basis of clarity and significant contribution. Due to the large amount of work and limited space, I could not relate all examples in this work. Nonetheless, all of the works I have researched, are of public use and can be found in the relevant sources mentioned above.

As a matter of clarity, my thesis is structured in three main chapters. It ends with a short yet overarching conclusion which adds consistency to the research. In the first chapter I combine theories and concepts with empirical data on leader-related themes to create a historical overview of the Romanian press (with emphasis on the persona of Ceaușescu), with short and precise statistic tones. In the second one I discuss leader cult theory and how the interrelation between key moments of the late 1960s and in the 1970s, especially the landmark moment in 1974, contributed to the construction of Ceaușescu's cult. These first two chapters analyse the Romanian communist press in relation to concepts regarding the leader cult, specifically pointing out the methods of press construction. Conversely, the third chapter is based even more on empirical research and discusses the main topics present in 1970s press,

focusing on the themes and motifs that have been adopted to shift the trends in media coverage towards Ceaușescu's person. This last chapter is short adaptation of a critical framework which is based on seeking trends in press representation and matching them to the Romanian case.

Chapter 1. An overview of the Romanian Communist press and its role in leader cult development

In any society that regards itself as modern the role of the press is essential in spreading information, entertainment, culture, or propaganda. In communist societies, by definition, such a role is extrapolated to serve ideology, The Party, or specific leader. The methods of press distribution and information are extremely relevant in the construction of the leader cult insofar as the mechanisms involving it revolve around the connexion with the masses.

This chapter aims at tracing the historical development of the Romanian communist press and its later role in the gradual construction of Nicolae Ceaușescu's leader cult. In accordance, it focuses on two main structures: in the first part I present a brief historical and statistical overview of the Romanian press, focusing on the state-led agencies and newspapers' growth, history, and involvement with the regime; the second part draws on both theory and empirical evidence in order to show the role of the press in relation to Ceaușescu's person.

Analysing these two aspects together gives a clear picture of how elements within newspapers gradually contributed to the construction of Ceaușescu's leader cult. It also provides an understanding of how the press function worked in the communist period. The usage of theory will involve the dissemination of key concepts relating to the cult, while primary sources will be used in a comparative framework relating to the previous aspect.

1.1. The Communist Press at its beginning - the role of ideology

Stalin has insisted on the importance of the press as a link between The Party and masses, regarding it as one of the main instruments of the former. Denis McQuail, in his seminal book *Mass Communication Theory*, regards the soviet model of the press as

exhibiting the role of a militant agent. The scholar's work is focused on the press as being a mobilizer for the masses while putting into practice the objectives of the Communist Party. The interpretation sees the total subordination of the media as a tool for propaganda and ideological indoctrination of the masses.³¹ In 1948, Leonte Răutu³² declared that the role of the Romanian press was to relate to the direction set by the Central Committee of the Party, insisting on a "just division of labour" between all newspapers. Ilarion Țiu suggests that Răutu adopted Stalin's language regarding the press by naming the newspaper *Scânteia* as the most important instrument for the spreading of Party-related information.³³ This argument, however, is incomplete and not argued as the process of 'information' in the Romanian context involved the evolution of many newspapers and magazines that dealt with the spreading of news and culture in different ways, the role of *Scânteia* serving as one of many. Especially after the development of a complex system of newspapers, the role of main Party newspapers did not look as the "sole bearers" of regime narratives.

It is important to notice that the role of the press as pointed out by Răutu had been ideological from the very beginning. The propaganda chief had told his underlings that any number of ideology-related miscalculations will not be tolerated. Also, by insisting on errors that "led the newspapers astray from the hard line of our Party" and focusing on a labour divided structure of the press, Răutu was forging the identity of the media in the mirror of the Romanian Communist Party.³⁴ The construction of such an argument can be problematic if it raises the question of authority. For example, Lenin's self-description as a "journalist" highlights the link between authority and the press in this type of regime. Consequently, Marian Petcu views the communist newspaper not just as an agitator or propagandist, but also

³¹ McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory*, 247-53.

³² Leonte Răutu was the chief ideologist for the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) during the rule of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, occupying this position in office from 1948 to 1965.

³³ Ilarion Țiu, "Politici de ideologizare a mass-mediei în perioada regimului comunist" [Ideologization practices of the mass-media in the communist period], *Sfera Politicii* 173 (2013): 109-10.

³⁴ Țiu, 110.

as a political actor and collective organizer, stressing the importance of Party discipline.³⁵

The overview of beginnings of the press in the communist period in Romania is of related importance to the understanding of the political regime. The idea of influencing collective identity is vital for the survival of the Party, thus the introspection into political-related press institutions or agencies is important as well. Furthermore, the political entanglements with these press organizations gives a clear view over their role in the construction of elements inside a political regime (e.g. leader cult).

After the Second World War, the organization of the press has been disingenuous towards societal needs. The information required after the hot-tempered long World War could not be delivered by media agencies which were required to submit to political control. The Union of the Syndicates of Artists, Writers, and Journalists (*Uniunea Sindicatelor de Artiști, Scriitori și Ziariști*) is formed in August 1945, immediately eliminating all former ‘reactionary’ elements within it. By its second congress in 1947, the organization starts promoting socialist realism. In the Romanian understanding this entails large political mutilations of public discourse, literature, and culture. It is remarkable that such an organization had been confiscated by the Communist Party in a very brief period of time, being the first national press-institution that was ideology-oriented.³⁶ It is also important to remember that *Scînteia* had been the first newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party from 1931, when the Party being outlawed made the communist media go underground.

There is a critical difference, however, in the way the Union has created the image of state-control by the Party, while *Scînteia*³⁷ had been (until that point) a remarkable, but limited

³⁵ Marian Petcu, *Puterea și cultura: o istorie a cenzurii* [Power and culture: a history of censorship] (Iași: Polirom, 1999), 74-5.

³⁶ Marian Petcu, *Istoria presei române* [History of the Romanian Press] (Bucharest: University of Bucharest, 2008), 21-2.

³⁷ The spelling of the name as *Scînteia* had been adopted only starting with 1953, when the orthography change was adopted. *Scînteia* was the official newspaper of the Romanian Communist Party. More details on the coverage inclinations of the newspaper and other are offered in Chapter 3.

instrument. Although similar in practice to other Communist Parties, the Romanian one can be associated with what Vladimir Tismăneanu has identified in Ken Jovitt's work as the "syndrome of pariah communism".³⁸ This interpretation draws upon the association between the self-indulged uniqueness that the regime exhibited, mainly after 1965. It is, however, important to look at the beginnings of the regime to understand the role of the press in this *syndrome* in order to see whether we can identify or not the roots of such an alignment.

Stalin's death has triggered a series of changes not just to the perceived ideological responses in the media, but also to the structural organization of it. The negatively unique image of Romania inside the communist bloc convinced Leonte Răutu to act on structural changes of the press. As for press organizations, the importance of the creation of another institution is linked to the same attempt on controlling even the most faithful of newspapers. The Union of Journalists from the Popular Romanian Republic (*Uniunea Ziariștilor din Republica Populară Română*) had the same role as the one previously created, based on the concept of total Party control, mostly but not limited to political content.³⁹

1.2. Newspapers and press organization

When discussing standardization and organization of the press, identification with the so-called "robot-type structure" is essential. While maintaining ideology as a primary focus, there is a shift towards the concepts of *masses* and *political labour*. In this sense, the media begin focusing on particular ideas such as "the contribution of political labour to industrialization", "production, mass mobilization, the proper socialist behaviour, and fighting against enemy elements", and "promoting socialist leaders".⁴⁰ Most of these concepts based

³⁸ Vladimir Tismăneanu, "The Ambiguity of Romanian National Communism", *Telos* 60 (1984): 65-80. Also see <http://www.contributors.ro/politica-doctrine/stalinism-teroare-narcisism-despre-cultul-lui-ceausescu/> accessed in November 2015.

³⁹ Petcu, *Istoria presei române*, 22.

⁴⁰ Țiu, 113.

on ideology start after 1955, continuing mostly until the end of Gheorghiu-Dej's rule in 1965. Once they had been generalized across media platforms, newspapers of all varieties form under the direction of the Party.

Starting with the end of the war, the appearance of media outlets, especially newspapers, had been consciously developed. Newspapers such as *Scînteia*, *Libertatea* (Freedom), *România Liberă*, and *Tribuna* (The Tribune) had evolved as national editions of the utmost importance, mainly because they contained mostly political coverage (but not only). Later, cultural newspapers and magazines appeared, prompting names such as *România literară* (Literary Romania), *Luceafărul* (The Evening Star), *Săptămâna culturală*, *Contemporanul* (The Contemporary), *Cinema*, *Vatra* (The Home place), *Teatrul* (The Theatre), *Amfiteatru* (The Amphitheatre) etc. Also, the development of profile specific-based magazines such as *Munca*, *Sportul* (The Sport), and *Femeia* (The Woman) generated interest over a broader spectre. County newspapers were important as they were the regime's voice in the local communities. The most important were *Drum Nou* (New Road), *Dobrogea Nouă* (The New Dobrogea⁴¹), *Flacăra Roșie* (Red Flame), *Drapelul Roșu* (Red Standard), and *Crișana*⁴².

Referring to the media outlets, the presence of newspapers was fundamental, but not singular in importance. The history of the Romanian Society for Radio-television (*Societatea Română de Radioteleviziune*) is linked to the Communist Party starting with 1948 when it was nationalized. The problematic of this fact is not of high value for the research, however, there are elements within the Society that can be looked at. As an appropriate example, the decree numbers 473 and 474 from 1977 can be seen as central in organizing the institution under the control of the Party and its leadership.⁴³ The positioning of the Party, however,

⁴¹ Historical region in present-day Romania, with the important city of Constanța, close to the Black Sea shore.

⁴² Another historical region, in the West of Romania, close to the Western Carpathians, with the important multicultural city of Oradea (In Hungarian, *Nagyvarad*).

⁴³See <http://lege5.ro/en/Grauit/he2tqmzw/decretul-nr-473-1977-privind-organizarea-si-functionarea->

changed its dynamic, from institution oriented to Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult and ideology oriented. The first signs of this dynamic shift can be seen, as it is showed later in the thesis, especially after 1974.

The language still remains centred on the communist regime, movement, and party, however, introducing inherent language encompassing the leader, the later engulfing all the other elements. This idea can be built around Tismăneanu's concept of the Party as a "messianic sect" preoccupied with changing the social reality with its own passionate will;⁴⁴ thus, it is understandable why until the exacerbation of Ceaușescu's cult in the 1970s, the Party still held just as an important image *in the society* as the leader. The change in this decade had been created with the help of a complex bureaucratic apparatus, change in such laws as the ones mentioned, and a press orientation that followed political trends. Consequently, both decrees are extremely detailed, with definitions of everything from the role in society to judicial oversight by the state.

The importance of newspapers was constantly growing in all sections, regardless of the domain. Publications like *Munca*, *Libertatea*, *România Liberă*, or *Contemporanul* had gained importance especially after 1965. Unlike Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceaușescu had implicated himself into the construction of the media. This can be exemplified with Dej's speech in 1955, when he reiterated the ideological importance of the press, but never involved himself personally into organizing it:

*The press and radio must concentrate their efforts for the six year plan regulations, both at a general level, and the one regarding each branch of administration and each collective organization, must be well known by all of the working class; the press must mobilize large section of the masses for the achievement of economic expectations; it must militate for the expansion of everything that is advanced and valuable in the participants' experience in the socialist journey; it must combat routine and indolence, which stop everything that is novel.*⁴⁵

radioteleviziunii-romane/2, and <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/24202> accessed in November 2015.

⁴⁴ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 37-9.

⁴⁵ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, *Raport al CC al PMR cu privire la activitatea Partidului în perioada dintre*

Wanting a more probative and clear section of the press, Nicolae Ceaușescu had offered advice to journalist and media outlets in his Report from 1968:

The press, the radio, and the television have earned the admiration of the largest of masses. It is important to analyse in the pages of the press, in a critical manner, the flaws and misdirections that manifest themselves in different sections of our activities, for their cause to be revealed, pointing the way for their removal. Press debates must take place in a constructive manner, based on communist principles, aiming at a continuous improvement of labour [...]. Through the massive sphere that they can reach, radio and television have important tasks regarding the spreading of Party policies within the masses, in their education in the spirit socialist patriotism and internationalism, in the promotion of our national culture and its values, as well as the promotion of universal culture.⁴⁶

Predominantly during the early 1960s, even unlike the previous period, the national newspaper *Scînteia* was instrumental in locating resources for political propaganda. This would change with the beginning of a new decade. After the more radical shift after the July Theses in 1971, the newspaper maintained a strong position, but other profile publications emerged as critical, especially in the cultural and intellectual scenes. Over time, especially in the wake of Ceaușescu's new title as *President*, newspapers across section lines changed their focus publishing leader-related articles, the most striking ones on unrelated texts to the political.

The evolution of the communist press has been developed differently according to the audiences it targeted, the medium in which it was published, the political environment of a specific timeframe, as well as the internal dynamic of authors or newspapers. According to

Congresul al II-lea și Congresul al treilea al Partidului [Report of the CC of the Romanian Labour Party regarding the activity of the Party in the period between the Second and the Third Party Congress] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1955) 99-100.

⁴⁶ Nicolae Ceaușescu, "Raportul Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român cu privire la activitatea Partidului în perioada dintre Congresul al VIII-lea și Congresul al IX-lea al PCR" [The Report of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party on the activity of the Party in the period between the Eighth and Ninth Congress of the RCP] in Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul desăvârșirii construcției socialiste: rapoarte, cuvântări, articole*, vol. I [Romania on the path towards the perfection of the socialist construction: reports, discourses, articles, volume 1] (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1968), 73-5.

Antony Buzek, in state-socialist societies the territorial structure of publications shows a pyramidal composition of the press, similar to the one the Party is based on.⁴⁷ On this note, Emilia Șercan has conducted an impressive research endeavour that shows the main streamlines and numbers that are defining for press publications, circulation, and processes of social transmission. Based on her study of the documents from the Romanian Archives, when Nicolae Ceaușescu became the leader of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) there were 25 regional newspapers in Romania, with a circulation of almost 913000 copies, and eight regional papers, with approximately 65000 copies being distributed.⁴⁸ On a wider scale, the main 18 newspapers had, just before the territorial-administrative reform in 1968, a cumulated daily circulation of almost four million.⁴⁹

After 1968, the roles of local publications had been precise: propaganda, agitation, and organization, with also an emphasis on the special needs of the community. This is a prototype case for Eastern European Communist Societies.⁵⁰ In regard to national newspapers, the highest circulation was that of *Scînteia*, the largest Romanian newspaper and the correspondent of the Soviet *Pravda*, with a copy number of 940000 in 1973.⁵¹ *România Liberă*, one of the most important national papers, had a circulation of 325000 in 1973, with increasing from the end of the 1960s when it revolved around the number of 200000.⁵² Local newspapers had circulation numbers similar to one another, although some were more important than others in relating to the ideological tenets of the regime. Newspapers like those from Timișoara, Brașov, or Constanța, cities with a large population and high industrial capabilities had circulations over 50000. For example, *Drapelul Roșu*, *Drum Nou*, and

⁴⁷ Antony Buzek, *How the Communist Press Works* (London and New York: Pall Mall Press, 1964), 68-9.

⁴⁸ Șercan, *Cultul secretului*, 111.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Buzek, *How the Communist*, 72-4.

⁵¹ This number was fairly constant, with a small increase in back-to-back years, having a circulation of 818000 in 1966, and 850000 in 1967. For details, see Șercan, *Cultul secretului*, 112-4.

⁵² Ibid.

Dobrogea Nouă had a circulation around the number of 56000 copies.⁵³ Cities and counties with smaller population, with large number of minority populations, or lower economic potential had a circulation under 5000.⁵⁴

There are a few short conclusions that can be drawn based on these statistics. First, a high concentration of copies in the urban environment shows the importance of relating to the masses. The importance given to the main Party newspaper is more relevant when looked at it from a quantitative point of view. Second, from a qualitative perspective, the official newspaper did not have a significant general impact on changing paradigms within the communist regime. It had, indeed, the strong role of impacting the general population and stabilizing the themes that were of interest for the Leadership. It did not, however, serve as the main instrument of constructing the key elements of any form of Leadership cult. Rather, smaller newspapers in print circulation numbers such as local papers and cultural magazines were meant to have more impact on their targets as their lower print numbers made them more interesting for target populations that were not convinced by the flawed general rhetoric of *Scînteia* and similar newspapers. Third, the circulation numbers of big newspapers and thematic ones alike increase dramatically in the 1970s compared to 1965, keeping constant patterns of growth across newspaper lines. This suggests that no quantitative increase or decrease dramatically occurred during this decade when comparing magazines and newspapers. As the last chapter shows, the insistence was on the qualitative aspect of relating information.

There is a habitual link at the beginning of the 1970s between the written press and the constant development of Romanian television. The two aspects of the Romanian media world had been interconnected on how they relate to the regime, society, Party, and role of the leader, but also in how they link to each other in direct ways. In his book on the link

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

between television, society, and ideology in Socialist Romania, Alexandru Matei provides a short statistical outlook of the main link between television author chronicles and their publication in relevant newspapers. In this sense, the most important author for this section was Ecaterina Oproiu, whose articles in the magazine *Contemporanul* were focused on the “happiness” of adolescence in the period, insisting on youth themes of joy and transcendence.⁵⁵ These themes that had started being developed at the beginning of the ‘70s decade show an upward interest in developing motifs that can be tied to a diversity in society and leadership in the later part of the period. The same author produced for the magazine cultural writings that had been presented on television as literary shows with special guests (such as Sânziana Pop).⁵⁶ This kind of method implicated both television and newspapers in the editions that had the role of solidifying a common bond between the two giants of media report: the written press and television.

Other authors such as Iulian Neacșu from *Scînteia Tineretului* insisted on the importance of actors in the cultural scene and the artistic temperament of others; *Munca*’s Călin Căliman did the same kind of social illustrations with the variety of weekend thematic emphasis, while Ion Manițiu from *Tribuna* organized special reports, discussion, and social debates that fluctuated between creativity and the senseless lack of reality.⁵⁷ In the same way, other newspapers such *România literară* (Literary Romania), *România liberă*, and *Informația Bucureștiului* had their own TV authors for chronicles, especially focused on entertainment and news that were almost randomly created a link between television shows and articles and the mentioned papers.⁵⁸

All these aspects are important because they show a certain trend at the beginning of

⁵⁵ Alexandru Matei, *O tribună captivantă: Televiziune, ideologie, societate în România socialistă (1965 - 1983)* [A captivating tribune: Television, ideology, society in socialist Romania between 1965 and 1983] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2013), 69.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 69-70.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 68-71.

the 1970s in the relationship between the media, society, and the regime. Most of the content in both newspapers and television (with my special emphasis on the former) did not discuss news of political development or economic prosperity, except *Scînteia* and a few other thematic newspapers. This shows an interest for the ‘social-educative’ side of information. Towards the middle of the 1970s, however, this trend loses its momentum, as critical assessments of culture disappear and the constant appearance of more “objective” forms of press engagement begin to shape.⁵⁹ As Alexandru Matei also puts it, the general perspective becomes the “national” output, following the general trend that will become specific into the late 1970s: the elimination of all “subjectivity” that is contrary to the “objectivity” of state discourse, an element which becomes the exclusive domain of Nicolae Ceaușescu.⁶⁰

The short interrelated history of newspapers and television development gives a historical hint of the main processes that occurred during the late 1960’s and at the start of the new decade, which has gradually changed the perception on news and mass culture. One interesting paradigm can be seen in the relationship the regime had with its own newspapers, on the one hand, and with the foreign media, on the other. Starting with 1970-71, the number of banned newspapers from foreign countries started to increase dramatically in the country. If in 1970 the total number of publications completely prohibited was that of 87, by 1971 that same number had risen to 529. An even higher number, 829, had been classified in the Special Fond section, which was available only for political personnel and high ranking members, with a special degree of approval.⁶¹

Explaining this censorship of external sources relies on multiple political factors. As Emilia Șercan rightly points out, the 1971 ‘mini-cultural revolution’ represented by the July Theses had its role in expanding ‘national’ Romanian culture. Furthermore, the newspapers

⁵⁹ Ibid, 71.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 71-3.

⁶¹ Șercan, *Cultul secretului*, 159-60.

in question were constantly accused of having “the language of an enemy” because they started showing how Romanian culture became more introverted, under influence from the Chinese Cultural Revolution. On top of these aspects, other justifications for banning foreign publications can be found by looking at: the coverage that they gave to enemies of the Romanian regime such as Paul Goma or Nicolae Breban, who have criticized Ceaușescu intensely; the visits of Nicolae Ceaușescu in his Asian tour, the meetings of the Romanian leader with Yugoslav leader Tito; the constant threats of espionage by Romanian diplomats in favour of the USSR, as well as the regime’s new plan for economic systematization in the country.⁶²

I find these developments in foreign press censorship also linked to the lack of trust the so-called “liberalization” period instilled in Ceaușescu and his leadership group. The fact that all these publications were banned is much more revelatory when looked also at how the internal press structured its publication intentions and arguments. In 1969, the press had a little over 16000 pages of ideology related pages in newspapers. By 1970 and 1971 this number increased to almost 25000, and continued a steady increase almost each year into the 1970s, while in the same time seeing a decrease in the diversity of writers employed for this act.⁶³

These aspects show two main things: first, the beginning of the new decade is overwhelmingly centred on the importance of ideology, and how research has showed later in the thesis on ‘national ideology’, especially after 1974; second, the newspapers’ ideological representations and narratives become increasingly anonymous, being printed under the name of the editorial board, especially in the national mass newspapers and local worker-related magazines. This latter aspects shows the consolidation of a smaller group of writers and authors that use their influence to push certain aspects of press identity, in conformity with

⁶² Ibid, 160-2.

⁶³ Ibid, 163-4.

the direct and official influence from the top. In this sense, the concepts used by Deletant show how *self-censorship* had just as major of a role as direct one, sometimes even more damaging to both the press and literary production.⁶⁴ Following this line of argument, it is hard to assess whether censorship was directly imposed from above in the second half of the 1970s or it was more a method of undeclared compliance with a regime policy everyone was familiar with. Many sources indicate the latter. As Edward Behr argues, intellectuals, Party members and some active parts of society like the press and writers found it easier to go along with the system. The author quotes Gabriela Adameşteanu as saying: “There were no clear-cut censorship rules. Much depended on the courage of the individual publisher, and the celebrity of the author. The better-known you were to the public, the more accommodating the people running the system would be”.⁶⁵

It would be wise, however, not to take such statements or interpretations at face value. While the idea of direct censorship is indeed problematic and many examples indicate that self-censorship and compliance with the system had an impact on the development of writing in the ‘70s, one must also take into account several other factors. These defining elements are internal Party control, the ubiquitous presence of the Securitate in dismantling all forms of dissent, and the fact that many of the engaged writers and intellectuals decided to “go along with the system” especially because they knew what kind of state response a strong contrary opinion to that of the ‘regime wave’ would entail. The example of Eugen Barbu was fresh on people’s minds. One of the regime’s favourite writers, he increasingly had problems in the 1950s with the publication of his novel *Groapa* (The Pit), which had been edited thirteen times and the author suffered from long discussions with Party agents regarding a possible

⁶⁴ For the impact of self-censorship in Romania’s 1970s, see Dennis Deletant, “Cheating the Censor: Romanian Writers under Communism”, *Central Europe*, Vol. 6, Number 2 (2008): 137-61.

⁶⁵ See Edward Behr, *‘Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite’: The Rise And Fall of the Ceausescus* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1991), 153.

rebirth of naturalism in his works.⁶⁶ Although the regime had changed since the period in the 1950s and early '60s, Ceaușescu's response to any form of possible dissent was clear whenever anybody came close to crossing the ideological borders that were set in place at the beginning of the 1970s decade. **There was no structural differentiation between direct censorship and self-censorship, as both were the result of the control from above that was placed on the media.** To quote Emilia Șercan from a recent interview she gave for an online platform: "Everything was controlled, everything was verified, just people's thoughts and, probably, their imagination were uncensored."⁶⁷

As such, it is important to state that although self-censorship was increasing in the period and had a large upheaval especially towards the 1980s, it is also a reflection of the leader's personality and his strong belief in the need to suppress all form of dissent that would endanger ideological stability and deny the 'important' role of 'political education'. Especially after the *official* elimination of censorship in 1977, with the disbandment of the General Direction of Press and Printing (*Direcția Generală a Presei și Tipăriturilor*), the idea of self-censorship received traction as a crucial element in the development of writers and intellectuals. The leadership felt that the society was ready (i.e. educated enough) for complete self-education. The historical evolution of Ceaușescu's regime puts this in doubt, in the sense that although self-censorship took lift after 1977, by the end of the decade and into the next there had been brutal and complete dismantling of any form of possible dissent.

Historically speaking, Romania did not witness any form of organized dissent. In the press, this meant a combination of a long period of direct censorship and another one of self-censorship, with a constant fear of returning to the former. By 1978, most newspapers had developed the so-called "*limbă de lemn*" (wooden language), a form of expression which

⁶⁶ Deletant, "Cheating the Censor", 130-1.

⁶⁷ Interview can be found, in Romanian, on <http://www.lapunkt.ro/2016/05/24/interviu-emilia-sercan-cum-era-cenzura-in-presa-comunista/>, accessed in May 2016.

entailed a combination of empty words and phrases meant to express single-minded thoughts, that were afterwards repeated on a regular basis. Self-censorship helped develop this form of communication, especially towards the end of the '70s decade.

1.3. Nicolae Ceaușescu and the press

The Romanian leader's relationship with the press has been mirrored in the former's entrancing development of political power. Not only was the leadership style of Ceaușescu uncovered in press manifestations of the period, but the written media was also directly influenced by the leader's *insight*. Mary Ellen Fischer has written that "no Romanian official could deliver a report or write an article without referring to President Ceaușescu's *personal insight* [my italics] and leadership as the major source of inspiration and guidance."⁶⁸

In 1972, the Press Section of the Central Committee of the RCP (*Secția de Presă a CC al PCR*) elaborated an informative notice on the development of press activities and so-called 'labour guidance'. This directive sheds light on the structural capabilities of control that the Central Committee had in imposing directives to the press in accordance to a certain set of guidelines. Out of the indications present in the informative notice there are two relevant for the upcoming involvement of Ceaușescu in the organization of the press. First, it is stipulated that the growing importance of promoting propaganda activities (*promovarea activităților de propagandă*) must be done by diversifying the coverage and developing an attractive and convincing style. Second, the directive stresses the importance of avoiding press uniformity by insisting on the development of a "press style" for every newspaper.⁶⁹

After the Romanian leader becomes President in 1974, the shift in Party ideology will

⁶⁸ Mary Ellen Fischer, "Idol or Leader? The origins and future of the Ceaușescu cult", in *Romania in the 1980s*, ed. Daniel N. Nelson (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1981), 118.

⁶⁹ Șercan, *Cultul secretului*, 129-30.

become evident⁷⁰ mostly in relation to the constant development of power. The two elements described above, however, are among the most important bearers of ideological press evolution even after 1974. The ‘educating role of propaganda’ and the diversification of press content are two of the major themes present in the post-1974 press. These elements also had a role in the development of nationalistic discourses for the regime, which were linked to a higher degree of involvement by the leader in press activities. The consolidation of myths regarding the Romanian leader began to take shape, a process which started at the beginning of the 1970s, and found its full expression on March 28, 1974.⁷¹

Taking into account the role of direct ‘advice’ towards the press, the personal involvement of the leader in the evolution of press orientation can be construed as being formed by two aspects: the indications offered by Ceaușescu whenever political events and meetings with newspaper directors were in place, as well as the approval of documents that were directly related to press activity.⁷² There are documents which show the themes proposed for press orientation that can be directly traced to Nicolae Ceaușescu’s involvement in the press, most of them bearing the signature of the leader. Out of them, a few are essential for analysing the leader and the press in the same framework: the political, ideological, and educative activities – showing the *leader* (my emphasis) role of the party and “positive evolution of the multilaterally developed socialist society”; “the development of socialist conscience and the creation of the *new man*”; the importance of international cooperation; “the creating spirit of Marxist-Leninism” – on theory and practical revolution; the development of the nation in socialism; “the dialectic unity between national and international in both socialist revolution and construction”; the promotion of new democratic relations with

⁷⁰ I discuss this aspect in the following chapters. For further details on the role of ideology and the role of the press on the development of the leader cult Ibid, 130-8.

⁷¹ For details on the role of myths in the construction of Ceaușescu’s leader cult see Adrian Cioroianu. *Ce Ceausescu qui hante les Roumains* (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2004).

⁷² Șercan, *Cultul secretului*, 130-1.

foreign countries; the growing importance of cooperation in and outside Europe.⁷³

Most of these themes stand at the basis of press development in the second half of the 1970s. By invoking *the leading role of the party* (i.e. rolul conducător al partidului), Ceaușescu would later promote himself as the sole bearer of Party leadership and ideology. Consequently, the association in the press between Leader, Party, and Nation would create the communist myth of Ceaușescu as the unique representative of the historical will of the Romanian people. Furthermore, the *creation of the new man* was a common theme during the late 1970s press, especially when dealing with the importance of Party ideology. In the same manner, the press would present articles on Marxist thought, revolutionary theory, and labour practice that are combined, or at least associated, with themes of national rebirth and exceptionalism. In addition, many of the themes presented above are related to foreign policy, in what Ceaușescu saw as one of the main instruments that will allow him to become not only the expression of esoteric ideological will inside the country, but a leader which would shape foreign relations on a global scale and put Romania (and thus, himself) on the map as one of the main powers within Europe. This trend in the press is specific to the second half of the 1970s, and most of the themes presented in this subchapter are interrelated.

In the last part of this chapter the focus goes to establishing a mildly general classification of the main chronology in the Romanian communist press in comparative framework to the leader. Selection of articles and concepts within them stands as the general rule for the classification, which is not fixed, but rather leading and intuitive. The scope is to notice the major shifts within media representation that can (or not) be linked to Nicolae Ceaușescu's construction as a cult figure.

The first period, which I put between 1965 and 1971, is linked to increased Party presence in the media. The end of the period is more or less marked by an increase in

⁷³ Ibid, 130-3.

Ceaușescu's presence. It is important to notice, however, that all of the marking in this periodization are also political (The July Theses in 1971, The Election of 1974 etc.). An article on political socialist theory published in 1971 exemplifies this trend described. Relating to the economy and Romanian national planning in an international context, the written piece is rather descriptive than analytical. Elements of theory are introduced in the content: “*the word 'planning' had not been introduced until a few decades ago*”. This usage is politicized in the same manner. Later in the article the author states that: “*planning is an economic matter, but also a social one, achieved through socialism.*”⁷⁴

As it can be seen, there is no reference to Ceaușescu in the previous sentences. In the long article, however, there is a transition where the leader is indeed mentioned, but briefly, in a descriptive manner. Phrases like “*our beloved Comrade Leader Nicolae Ceaușescu*” and “*our President and Secretary General of the Party*” cannot be constructed here as creating a certain public image.⁷⁵ Also, other articles relating to the same period and descriptive framework entail the same descriptive method as before, insisting on elements of socialist ideology, rather than leader-related aspects. As the transition goes into the 1970s, the leader association to ideology becomes more important. Thus, the construction of the cult by the press in this period, as with almost all of the 1970s, is not made by direct references to the leader in all instances, but by a careful association and combination of themes, motifs, and words that will come to be identified with the leader, as well as represented by him.

The second period between 1971 and 1974 can be considered a critical one because it fuses political propaganda with an increase in messages towards the leader. The difference from the previous period is in the movement towards personal leadership, rather than collective. In this sense, ideology, the nation, and historical legacy are not denied, but rather

⁷⁴ Maxim Berghianu, "Planificarea Socialistă Românească în contextul fenomenului mondial al planificării." [Romanian Socialist Planning in the context of the phenomena of planning.] *Probleme Economice* [Economic Issues] April edition (1971): 98 - 115.

⁷⁵ Berghianu, “Planificarea”, 105.

embodied with the leader. This can be explained more pertinently by looking at articles towards the end of the period. For example, in two of these in *România Liberă* from 1973, Boris Buzilă remarks on “*the role of the July Theses in the construction of socialism*”, “*the program elaborated by Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu will we set the tone for the next 15 years of development in our country*”, or “*Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu shows his gratitude for all the communist movements in the Socialist International*”.^{76 77} It is important to notice that these are political articles, referring to causes of socialism and communism, in which the leader's presence is not lauded, but described (descriptive character).⁷⁸ As such, “The July Theses” of 1971 stand as the marker for this period and the decade, and the 1974 Election stands as the continuing moment of the former, as its usage comes in developing the image of the leader in the mythological ‘nationalist’ direction.

The last period I focus on is the post-1974 one (1974-1980), marked by the Election of Ceaușescu as President. The presence of Ceaușescu quotes at the beginning of articles⁷⁹ was a familiar note of presenting press related articles in the second half of the 1970s. Furthermore, the articles that have no link to Ceaușescu or the Party start being linked to the leader, such as articles on Romanian movies and music, which state: “*I would like to begin with the fact that the meeting of our beloved comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu with the film lovers in our country should be taken as a serious token of appreciation by all of the public interested in the program of Romanian cinematography.*”⁸⁰ Furthermore, regarding music we can see that “*At the Congress of our Party, Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu congratulated the*

⁷⁶ Boris Buzilă, "Necesitatea creșterii rolului conducător al organizațiilor de partid în desfășurarea activității economice." [The necessity of increasing the leading role of Party organizations in economic activities.] *România Liberă*. February 20 (1973): 5.

⁷⁷ Boris Buzilă, "Forța revoluționară a conștiinței comuniste." [The revolutionary force of the communist consciousness.] *România Liberă*, March 15 (1974): 3.

⁷⁸ I insist on specific themes of newspapers and magazines in the third chapter of this thesis.

⁷⁹ "Dezvoltarea amplă a culturii noastre." [The ample development of our culture.] *Contemporanul*, December 13 (1974): 4.

⁸⁰ Cristian Eugen, "Filmul românesc - istorie vie a țării" [The Romanian film - a vivid history of our country] *Informația Bucureștiului* [Information of Bucharest], November 15 (1974): 10-1..

*constructive role our true composers in the exhibition of the role of music in society”.*⁸¹ As it can be observed, the role of the leader is exaggerated mainly because of the context of the article. The introduction of such phrases were meant to promote both ideological and personal discourse. As Cristina Petrescu discusses in her piece on the creation of Ceaușescu’s image as leader, the latter became associated with different myths of Romanian nationhood and society, being present in almost all instances of social life as a peculiar yet unique example (the first miner, the first constructor, the first farmer of the country etc.) Basically, the myth of “the multicompetent leader” was born in the 1970s, exemplified by Ceaușescu constant ‘work visits.’⁸² As such, the most important development after the Election is not so much purely political, as it is at image and cultural level. By becoming President and ‘inheriting greatness’, Ceaușescu creates the image of himself as a symbol, not just a political figure. The circle started in 1971 was complete.

One of the most important aspects in this period is that coverage must be analysed not so much quantitative as qualitative. In other words, the presence of a mass number of articles using Ceaușescu’s name or ideas would be irrelevant for the construction of the leader cult if the development of national ideas and Ceaușescu’s direct association with them did not exist. This point is critical to understanding the main trends in the press during the 1970s, as after 1974 the press not only used the leader’s name and endorsed his personal ‘contribution’ to the development of socialism, but also associated him with leadership skills that are essential for the construction of a great nation.

Lastly, by the end of the period, the incorporation of elements from the leader's family start to appear, in what Vladimir Tismăneanu has called “dynastic communism”. The

⁸¹ Eugen Comănescu, "Mesajul patriotic al muzicii" [The patriotic message of music] *Informația Bucureștiului*, December edition (1974): 7.

⁸² Cristina Petrescu, “Vizitele de lucru, un ritual al epocii de aur” [The works visits: a ritual of the “golden age”] in *Miturile comunismului românesc* [The myths of Romanian communism], ed. Lucian Boia (Bucharest: Editura Nemira, 1998), 235.

incorporation of elements of personal clarity to the Leader was an important part of the press campaigns in the late 1970s. Although this campaign mainly expanded in the 1980s, early elements can be seen in different articles which glorify “*the important contribution of Elena Ceaușescu to the fields of chemistry and socialist development*”.^{83 84}

By the end of the 1970s, Ceaușescu’s involvement with the press was no longer constructed just as a relationship based on a mutual cooperation between an entity in Romanian society and its leader. The incorporation of national ideas, the development of constant themes of association with and for the leader, as well as the constant presence of Ceaușescu in press debates were elements that show a symbiotic bond between the two, one that transcends state – society relations, and goes into the imposition of political will. As the editorial authorship at *Presa Noastră* (Our Press) summarizes it in the first number from 1985, in an article titled “Epoca Ceaușescu, pagină luminoasă în istoria presei românești” [The Ceaușescu Era, the bright page in the history of Romanian press], the role of Nicolae Ceaușescu has been unique in the press development of that time. This happened well after the establishment of press control and after surpassing the 1970s transition period:

The duties that belong to the press have been analysed in a unitary, modern, and mobilizing conception with profound thought and parent-like care, the secretary general of the party giving to us, every time, new paths and methods, objectives and principles, and we, the journalists are asked to make of the press a tribune of the glory of this epoch, a tribune of advanced experience, of the new in all areas of activity, a tribune of our labour and revolutionary democracy, of the man and his magnificent aspirations. [...] It has to be said that because of the conception with which our President of the Republic, Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, has guided the press in our country, it found its place and scope in all its diversity and variety – from the daily newspaper to the monthly one, from radio to television – in that unique framework: the ensemble of revolutionary democracy from inside the Romanian society.⁸⁵

⁸³“Chezășia înfiptuirii misiunii istorice a PCR” [The guarantee of the RCP’s historical mission] *Scînteia*, November 11 (1974): 3.

⁸⁴ All newspaper articles in this chapter found at at OSA Budapest, Fonds 300, Subfonds 60, Series 5, Containers 1-3.

⁸⁵ Șercan, *Cultul secretului*, 111.

Chapter 2. The leader cult's theoretical construction and its appliance in leadership

In the first chapter I presented an overview of the Romanian communist press and the methods through which Ceaușescu has tied its role to the development of his regime and person. Towards the end of the 1960s and beginning of the '70s, a leader cult (also defined as a personality cult in its later stages) emerged, being linked not only to press manifestations, but also to most elements in society. As a natural consequence, this chapter is intended on retracing the theoretical concepts on which the leader cult in Romania is based on, in order to fully grasp the nature of the regime in the 1970. Furthermore, an appropriation of terminology and theory helps structure the paradigm of press manifestations, making possible a conceptual understanding of the bond between leader cult elements and the media.

As such, this chapter is focused on three patterns. First, it explains the origins of the leader cult in Romania by resorting to a theoretical conceptualization in a broader context. In this sense, I discuss the current literature and concepts on the leader cult in general as linked to the case study of this thesis. Second, I explain the role and influence of Ceaușescu's 1974 Election as President of Romania by placing it in the political context of the country's 1970s. In this manner, I link normative concepts of leader cult theory with historical interpretations of events. Third, the chapter relates to the cultural and political responses that came in the second half of the 1970s, when, I argue, the leader cult establishes itself as a permanent construction of the regime. By doing this, I try and explain the role of "The 1974 Moment" in crystalizing the responses to Ceaușescu's cult, and the methods through which the regime established both a practical and theoretical grip on all normative aspects of relating to the leader.

2.1. The origins of Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult

The theoretical foundation of the leader cult within Romanian communism constitutes a sensitive endeavour since it makes use of both nuances of nationalism endemic to the Romanian case, as well as typologies which are familiar to general concepts of cults, either in or outside Europe. Because of this, a general understanding of Ceaușescu's cult can be appropriated by producing a comparative perspective between literature on the Romanian case and the elaboration of concepts within a broader framework.

One of the key elements that stand at the base of Romania's case study is its developed mythology. Vladimir Tismăneanu traces the founding myths of the Ceaușescu cult to the Ninth Congress of the RCP.⁸⁶ In this sense, we witness not only a general conceptualization of the leader's power, but also its institutionalization. Without the proper institutional framework that linked society, culture, the economy, and the nation to the leader's esoteric personal image, the Romanian leadership would not have withstood in the 1970s. Furthermore, Tismăneanu asserts that the Ninth Congress created the image (i.e. myth) of Ceaușescu as a political reformer and a reasonable man.⁸⁷ This formulation was meant to put the Romanian leader in an antagonist position to his predecessor, Gheorghiu-Dej. In this sense, any delimitation between the two would have been more than welcomed since Dej was later ironed by the regime as a Stalinist, practitioner of a personality cult, and condemned together with his manifestations.

Ironically enough, the reasons for which Ceaușescu condemned Dej were the same for which his own cult would develop. In the Romanian case, there is no delimitation between a period of "National stalinism" and one of "National communism", as the country never experienced the latter. While in theory the two are different, in the Romanian case this transition between Dej's rule and Ceaușescu's regime never happened. The continuity was

⁸⁶ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 197.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

assured after 1965, and it was Ceaușescu's regime that insisted on this distinction.⁸⁸ This insistence was forged by the condemnation of the previous regime's deferral from 'Marxist' norms, the apparent liberalization at the end of the 1960s, and Ceaușescu's exacerbation of nationalist discourse. However, once the consolidation of power and image-creation of the new leader have been completed, the Romanian leader reinforced his process of "re-stalinization" of the country.⁸⁹ As such, Ceaușescu created the image of himself as the unique Romanian leader which improved all versions of Romanian communism, correcting all mistakes of the past and embarking on a path for a new construction of Romania. This was yet another myth at the foundation of Ceaușescu's cult. As Tismăneanu rightly points out, the Ninth Congress of the RCP developed the thesis of the social and ethnic homogenization of the Romanian nation, a moment which clearly defined the most important ideological options of Ceaușescu.⁹⁰ By extrapolating Tismăneanu's concepts, one can conclude that the Ceaușescu cult was rooted in the Stalinist understanding of Marxist-Leninism, with a fusion of nationalism that was based on other similar factors, the most important of which, Byzantinism, I treat later in the chapter.

Romanian historian Adrian Cioroianu traces the roots of the Romanian cult to three main sources: first, "The national tradition", which was based on the King Carol II cult of personality. In this framework, Cioroianu asserts that all authoritarian regimes are a "fertile ground for personality cults". Furthermore, the Romanian mentality was one of willingly submitting to authority, shaping "a myth of the leader" (i.e. Conducător) which is not toxic by itself, but becomes socially and politically dangerous if the person is alive and asserts himself characteristics of national predestination.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Understanding National Stalinism: Romanian Communism in a Historical-Comparative Perspective", 1-13. Available on <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/OP%2025.pdf> accessed in May 2016.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 2.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 197-8.

⁹¹ Cioroianu, *Acel Ceaușescu*, <https://geopolitikon.wordpress.com/2010/03/16/16mart2010-acel-ceausescu-pe->

Second, “the Stalinist tradition” finds its origin in the will of Ceaușescu to legitimate himself within the country. Furthermore, the association with Stalin’s cult is also based on the social and spiritual conditions of the two countries, namely how the lack of promotion of a spiritual being (i.e. God) fed the development of the religious sentiment which held itself close to the only form of authority that was available. In addition, the political environment in the two countries was similar, giving away a sentiment of insecurity when relating to the ‘outer world’.⁹²

Third, “the Asian model” is seen as a marking pattern for the evolution of Ceaușescu own desires. The visits to China and North Korea are seen as a catalyser for the leader’s personality. Cioroianu disagrees with this interpretation, claiming that while the model can be of some inspiration for the cult, it does not have the immediate effect on the Romanian leader. He argues this point by referring to the fact that Ceaușescu created his own “cultural revolution” in 1968, when he took a staunch approach on foreign policy. Furthermore, none of the other communist leaders that had visited the Asian countries developed a cult of personality at the heights of the Romanian one.⁹³

If Ceaușescu’s finest hour was the July 1965 Congress of the Party, the years that followed amounted for the consolidation of his rule. The 1968 year was the moment that created all political and institutional instruments for the leader to obtain total internal party power, which he did by capitalizing on both his personal manoeuvres inside the party and the effectiveness of his closest group.⁹⁴ Ion Rațiu describes the accumulation of functions and offices as unique in the Romanian leader’s case, presenting his cult as having the basis in the personalization of official power.⁹⁵ Mary Ellen Fischer has a more structured view of the roots

[care-l-am-creat-despre-un-fascinant-si-pagubitor-cult-al-personalitatii-12/](#)

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ See Ibid, 191-8.

⁹⁵ See Ion Rațiu, *Contemporary Romania. Her Place in World Affairs* (Foreign Affairs Publishing: Richmond, England, 1975), 69-71.

regarding Ceaușescu's cult. Although stating that after 1969 (i.e. The Tenth Congress), in the five years until the Party's Eleventh Congress in 1974, Nicolae Ceaușescu became the "omnipotent and omniscient rule of his country and the object of a leadership cult", she claims that in 1969 the cult had not been yet developed. The dominance by Ceaușescu of the 1969 Tenth Congress was a symptom of total power, but its full emergence came only in the 1974 Election as the First President of Romania.⁹⁶

In her highly detailed and masterfully structured book, Fischer traces the sources of Ceaușescu's cult to three main factors: "the leader's strategies for internal economic development", his "independent foreign policy", and his personality. Also, she stresses that the endemic nature of the Romanian society which was receptive to such a cult made it easier for Ceaușescu to impose this kind of forced relationship on the Romanian people.⁹⁷ This kind of approach is similar to Lucian Boia's view that the Romanian society was a fertile ground for an above imposition of an all-powerful ruler, since the Romanian collective mentality has been shaped by communists especially in regard to the country's past, where social norms had been hierarchized to their utmost limits. In this sense, Boia states that communism took full advantage of a paternalist mentality, one which, in lack of a democratic understanding of norms, had always manifested a combination of fear and respect in front of authority.⁹⁸ Furthermore, Mary Ellen Fischer discusses the theoretical tenets of personality cults in communist states, claiming that Ceaușescu's cult had influences from both Stalin and Mao. At the same time, however, she claims that while Mao was a true revolutionary and at least at the beginning managed to create a bond with his followers, Stalin had a purely fabricated cult, one that he inherited from Lenin, not being able to institutionalize a direct link between him and his people. Within this framework, Ceaușescu develops a cult similar to both of them, but

⁹⁶ Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 160.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 161-2.

⁹⁸ Lucian Boia, *Romania: Borderland of Europe*, trans. James Christian Brown (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 112-4.

is rather close to Stalin's incapability of making his followers empathize with his desires.⁹⁹

Interpreting Ceaușescu's sources of power is one of the key paths through which the emergence of the cult can be understood. The institutionalized framework played an important role for the dominance that the leader would eventually have over party and society. In this sense, Dennis Deletant emphasizes the important political moments that led to Ceaușescu's emergence as an uncontested leader.¹⁰⁰ Although Deletant does not specifically discuss the political situation by naming the personality cult, the concepts discussed in his works can be construed as being essential to the development of it. Furthermore, Deletant traces Ceaușescu's monopoly on power within the context of the elimination of his enemies from inside the party, such as Alexandru Drăghici.¹⁰¹ An analysis of the British historian's work shows that Ceaușescu's emergence as an undisputed political leader was a planned process that was achieved in 1968, and consolidated in 1974 through the Election as President. Consequently, the subordination of to the leader of all entities within state and party created the proper institutional framework for Ceaușescu to seize control, thus creating the roots of his cult.

Going beyond the institutional framework while also transcending the internal specificities of the regime, Ellis Pleșa finds the foundations of Ceaușescu's cult in the development of the personality cult of his predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. In his new book, the scholar brings about a historical discussion on the roots of the Romanian cults of leaders, claiming that although the Dej's eccentricities were not as developed as Ceaușescu's, his cult nonetheless had an impact on the development of the former's.¹⁰² This kind of analysis displays the historical tendency of relating the two Romanian communist leaders through their

⁹⁹ Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 161-8.

¹⁰⁰ Deletant, *Ceaușescu and the Securitate*, 70-1.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 73-6.

¹⁰² Ellis Pleșa, *Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Cultul Personalității (1945 - 1965)* [Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. The Personality cult. (1945 - 1965)] (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2016), Introduction.

political affinities and common specificities. This framework is useful for discussing the initial phases of the Ceaușescu cult and the ‘national’ inheritance from one regime to another. Nonetheless, Nicolae Ceaușescu’s cult had both specific roots that were endemic to his own regime, and also traces of continuity from Dej’s rule, whose Stalinism he has never practically denied, continuing Romania’s own legacy of ‘national Stalinism’.¹⁰³ The affinities in cult development between the two was a syndrome of power in the political Romanian context.

Tracing the roots of Ceaușescu’s cult cannot be done without the proper understanding of the unique features of the Romanian case. In this sense, further explanations on the internal characteristics, political nature, social tendencies, and idol-related instances within the cult are necessary. Similarly, an examination of important events in Romania’s 1970s can shed light on the constant development of both Ceaușescu’s cult and his political regime.

2.2. The 1974 Election as President

On March 28, 1974 the leader of the Romanian Party ties the circle of power in a logical and personal manner by becoming the First President of Romania, says Adrian Cioroianu. The Romanian historian contends that the invention of this post (made specifically for Ceaușescu) through an amendment to the 1965 Constitution finalizes the process of transforming what was once natural and unique in the construction of power into a state ritual represented by the persona of the leader.¹⁰⁴ In this sense, Cioroianu sees the 1974 Election as representative of a process that began in 1965, with the Ninth Congress of the Party, and continued with the 1968 success in international affairs and power consolidation within the Party.

After 1968 the Romanian leader “would never be the same as before, the road from

¹⁰³ See Fischer *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 172-5, on Ceaușescu’s specific cult characteristics, I discuss these aspects in the following subchapters.

¹⁰⁴ Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx*, 411.

Hero to Idol being open to him.” With the backing of the party “Ceașescu becomes the substitute for Romania.”¹⁰⁵ Referring to Dumitru Popescu’s ideas, one of the main architects of Ceașescu image construction, Cioroianu finds that at the end of the 1960s the cult of personality takes shape. Consequently, Ceașescu’s destiny becomes a *historic* one, and his regime tends to become an *epoch* in itself. Gradually, he will no longer be just *one of the leaders* of Romania, he becomes *the only leader (Conducător)* of Romanians.¹⁰⁶ The 1974 Election completes the circle of power dominance for Ceașescu. This political development makes the Romanian case a unique one within the East – Central European context.¹⁰⁷

Another important aspect that is linked to this Election is the creating the image of the leader as a direct descendent of great heroes of the Romanian past.¹⁰⁸ After the forced retirement of Ion Gheorghe Maurer, who until that point served as Prime Minister, Ceașescu becomes the only person to control all political power in the country. Thus, in his position as President of the Republic he informally substitutes the powers of the Prime Minister, remains General Secretary of the Party and President of the State Council, while at the same time creating the image of the unique leader of the Romanian People. As Lucian Boia identifies in the Romanian collective mentality, Ceașescu had hoped that such a move would legitimize his personal rule and put him directly in the company of historic Romanian figures like Decebal, Stephen the Great, or Michael the Brave.¹⁰⁹

From a legislative point of view, Maurer’s retirement signified a shift in the jurisprudence sector because the legal framework at the time did not allow for such a hollow political move. Before the election, the Constitution had to be modified, as well as the internal

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 411-2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 438.

¹⁰⁹ For further details on the persistence of Romanian founding myths see Lucian Boia, “Cele două fețe ale mitologiei comuniste” [The two faces of communist mythology] in *Miturile romunismului românesc*, ed. Lucian Boia, 11-18. Also, see Boia, *Romania*, 111-16.

regulations of the Grand National Assembly (M.A.N.). The former would grant Ceaușescu new executive responsibilities and privileges, while the latter could facilitate a lighter transition of power, especially since the M.A.N had the political responsibility of electing Romania's new President. As such, the Constitution is modified with Article 7 (1-6), Title III which stipulates the attributes and responsibilities of the newly created Presidential position.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, from a legal standpoint the modification of the Constitution creates the opportune platform for Ceaușescu to renounce collective leadership, albeit in name it will still be maintained regarding the *role* of the party in society.

The mainstream written press of the time created a preparation for change starting with the second part of March, when it related political events that were to come which would be “a radically important moment in the history of the nation”.¹¹¹ The year 1974 as a whole created the proper framework for the expansion of protochronism in the country which in turn led to the expansion of national values and representation of Romania's ‘greatness’ in cultural life.¹¹² This was mainly achieved by the presentation of new directives by Ceaușescu at the party's Eleventh Congress in November. The presentation of national values, however, began earlier in the written press, being given priority after the 1974 Election.¹¹³

After the legal and political aspects of his election were handled, the image presentation of it had to be prepared. The event was prepared to its fullest details and was reminiscent of a coronation rather than a republican inauguration ceremony, including a sceptre which would remain printed in Romanian collective memory through its glorification as a symbol of power. The *mise-en-scene* was presented in newspapers, television, and had a stark impact

¹¹⁰ See Appendix 1.

¹¹¹ Scînteia, March 26 (1974): 1-3.

¹¹² Alice Carmen Rodica Mocănescu, *The leader cult in communist Romania 1965-1989: constructing Ceaușescu's uniqueness in painting*, (2007) Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/2571/>, 118. Also see Verdery, *National Ideology*, 167 – 210.

¹¹³ See Chapter 3.

on future visual representations of Ceaușescu as leader.¹¹⁴ According to sources, Ceaușescu himself oversaw the preparations of his election.¹¹⁵ Rodica Chelaru quotes Cornel Burtică (member of the Assembly present at the ceremony) by saying that:

The idea with the sceptre was Ceaușescu's and I remember that he inspired himself from history, if I am correct from Mihai Viteazul ['s example], the sceptre representing the symbol of power. The production of the sceptre was entrusted to the State Council and the Bureau of the Grand National Assembly, respectively to the president of the Grand National Assembly, Nicolae Giosan, [sic!]¹¹⁶ who actually handed it to Ceaușescu at the ceremony. Historians and specialists in heraldic were consulted.¹¹⁷

The regime's propensity regarding the reiteration of symbols was labelled by scholars as Byzantinism. It had been described as a method of moulding, interpreting, and exhibiting power in the country with the focus on the exacerbation of symbols and practices peculiar to the action of politics in the 20th century, being also often associated with 'dynastic communism'.¹¹⁸ "The 1974 Moment", as it is labelled in this thesis, stands as the starting point in expression of this tendency within the Romanian society, being the development of politics beyond its social boundaries, envisioning the imposition of the esoteric will of the leader.

Vladimir Tismăneanu writes that once the 'deification' (Romanian: *zeificare*) of Ceaușescu happened, "Byzantinism triumphed in the Romanian cultural politics": intrigues, the elimination of enemies through backstage conspiracies, encouraging double-standard thinking and parallel discourse, demagoguery as a national pathology, the supreme disregard for

¹¹⁴ See Appendix 2.

¹¹⁵ Mocănescu, *The leader cult*, 217.

¹¹⁶ Actually, it was Ștefan Voitec who handed the sceptre to Ceaușescu, as his last gesture as president of The Grand Assembly. See Appendix 3. Nicolae Giosan would become the new president of the Assembly on July 26, 1974.

¹¹⁷ Translation found and cited in Mocănescu, *The leader cult*, 217-8. The original source in Romanian is Rodica Chelaru, *Culpe care nu se uită. Convorbiri cu Cornel Burtică* [Faults which cannot be forgotten. Dialogues with Cornel Burtică] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2001), 204.

¹¹⁸ Vladimir Tismăneanu, "Byzantine Rites, Stalinist Follies: The Twilight of Dynastic Socialism in Romania." *Orbis*, Vol. 30, No.1 (1986): 65-89.

any ethical standards, and manipulation were all legacies of the Byzantine Empire in the region.¹¹⁹ At the same time, the scholar finds that it was Stalin that resurfaced all these elements, which in turn have been adopted by Ceaușescu and they found full expression in the latter's cult. Furthermore, party members were sometimes not pleased with the cult's excesses, however, they got benefits "from the psychological manifestations of the cult, including the elimination of all critical thought".¹²⁰ In this sense, Tismăneanu finds that in this way, political figures just had to follow Ceaușescu's orders and they would be able to keep their privileges, putting Romania in the category of countries heavily influenced by the Nomenklatura.¹²¹

Mary Ellen Fischer associates Byzantinism with the presence of religious symbolism, namely: "iconography, inspired scriptures, the infallible leader, and rituals of mass worship". She contends that 'icons' of Ceaușescu are found in all public places, while the 'scriptures' of the RCP have been published in immense numbers and found their mandatory ways in most public and private spaces.¹²² Furthermore, the scholar remarks that the leader is infallible being attributed all country successes, failures being represented by the faults of individuals and organizations, all of which did not respect his indications. Lastly, public appearances of the leader render mass crowds with singing rituals, being associated with the Country and the Party¹²³ (RCP – Romania, Ceaușescu, and Party).

As Adrian Cioroianu argues, the 1974 election represented the main turning point in the process-making of the Ceaușescu cult.¹²⁴ In addition, it represented a return to the visual

¹¹⁹ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 220. Also see, "Stalinism, teroare, narcisism: Despre cultul lui Ceaușescu" [Stalinism, terror, narcissism: On the Ceaușescu cult] on <http://www.contributors.ro/politica-doctrine/stalinism-teroare-narcisism-despre-cultul-lui-ceausescu/>, accessed in May 2016.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 160

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Adrian Cioroianu, "Cultul lui Ceaușescu: o surpriză?" [The Ceaușescu cult: A surprise?] *Dosarele Istoriei* [Files of History], Number 72 (2002): 7-8.

and ceremonial patterns of veneration that had been rooted in medieval tradition.¹²⁵ This is the main argumentative reason why the 1974 Moment has been displayed as the critical point of expression in the Ceaușescu leader cult, and this thesis follows up on such arguments, while also relating to press manifestations.

In the March 29 number of all newspapers, reports on the election find their way into the collective representations of the period. Furthermore, most of them are emulated on each other and represent a pattern of representation.¹²⁶ The article reads an excerpt from the speech of Emil Bodnăraș, vicepresident of the State Council:

For the election of President of the Republic, of the first President of the Romanian Socialist Republic, I propose to the Grand National Assembly, in the name of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party and of the National Council of the United Socialist Front, the candidacy of the man who has given so much to his nation and people, to the great cause of socialism, to the peaceful collaboration between peoples, to the progress of human civilization and peace – the secretary general of the Romanian Communist Party, Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu.¹²⁷

The association of terms in this short paragraph brings about all the elements that will shape the future of Ceaușescu's cult: nation, people, socialism, international peaceful collaboration, and human progress. All of these are the main elements which will contribute in the press to the expansion of the cult in second part of the 1970s. By highlighting certain parts of speeches held at the ceremony, the newspapers not only relate to events that happened, but also propose an ulterior framework on how to report to a leader, one which, like Tismăneanu has written, surpasses mainstream politics.¹²⁸ In addition, several articles by writers that will become in the upcoming decade bearers of expression for the Ceaușescu cult, like Dragoș Vrînceanu, whose article in the worker-related *Munca* newspaper titled “The wise

¹²⁵ Mocănescu, *The leader cult*, 217-8.

¹²⁶ See Appendix 4. Most newspapers deal with the election on template-like frameworks.

¹²⁷ *Scînteia*, March 29 (1974): 2.

¹²⁸ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 213-4.

and firm helmsman” reads:

This solemn event has been received with profound and emotional endorsement by our entire people, and it produced among all social strata an incomparable sentiment of solidarity and admiration towards the beloved leader of our country. It has marked an utmost important moment for our nation, putting in its deserved light the grand personality to whom we owe all the fundamental successes of the Romanian people.¹²⁹

This excerpt can be viewed as an example of the aforementioned framework proposed by Fischer, in what she called “the infallible leader”. In addition, it is an exemplification of the association between the upcoming expansion of connections between the leader, the nation, and the people. Ken Jovitt has described such tendencies of glorification as specific to an unsettling legacy left behind by communist regimes that ultimately lead on the path to their own extinction.¹³⁰

Furthermore, articles from *Scînteia* and other section newspapers and magazines present what has become in the collective memory of Romanians the supreme symbol and image of Ceaușescu’s power, his inauguration with the Romanian flag (*A tricolour over a heart*, how Adrian Păunescu has called the leader’s image¹³¹) and the sceptre. These representatives of the leader’s might embodied the will of the Romanian nation. *Scînteia* reports the words of Ștefan Voitec, who presents Ceaușescu with these items:

In these solemn moments of your election in the high function of President of the SRR and supreme commander of the armed forces, in the name of the Great Assembly, please receive the symbols of prestige, of the state power, of the sovereign authority of the Romanian people, of its will of developing free and independent, on to road to socialism and communism.¹³²

¹²⁹ Dragoș Vrînceanu, “Cîrmaciul înțelept și ferm.” [The wise and firm helmsman.] *Munca*, March 29 (1974): 2.

¹³⁰ See Ken Jovitt, *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 50-88.

¹³¹ I discuss this aspect in Chapter 3.

¹³² *Scînteia*, March 29 (1974): 2-3.

The quote from Voitec is very close to the framework Ceaușescu will follow in both his internal and international domains. The presentation of his accomplishments as the ‘will of the people’, combined with the leader’s role in developing Romania’s future are key elements of his cult. They will be present not only in official discourses and writings, but also in the press, for the masses, intellectuals, or otherwise.

Lastly, Nicolae Ceaușescu’s speech is present in all newspapers, magazines, journals, and profile magazines, together with visual representations.¹³³ The most unwavering picture is presented in *Flacăra*, a magazine for culture and educational life.¹³⁴ From that point on, the newspaper will dedicate in almost in all its editions certain sections to the upheaval of the President and its family. Also, this aspect was not a constant habit before the Election in major papers, as only the discourses of Ceaușescu from television and radio were constantly present in editorials.¹³⁵ ¹³⁶

The one-year anniversary of the Election stands out as a main focal point. Before the 1974 election, I could not find significant articles related to Ceaușescu’s personal appropriation of national symbols. In the aftermath, however, one can rarely relate to Ceaușescu without associating him with the Romanian Nation. In this sense, the emphasis is built on “national pride”, “Romanian Marxist-Leninism”, and “the symbol of the nation’s will”.¹³⁷ As such, the Election’s importance does not deny the construction of the press being linked to other events, such as the 1971 July Theses, but it rather complements them, as the Election was the necessary pretext for the regime to build in the myth/image of the leader as the embodiment of national symbols. The strong emphasis shown in most cited newspapers

¹³³ See Appendix 5.

¹³⁴ See Appendix 6.

¹³⁵ I have researched mostly numbers from January, 1972; All twelve numbers from 1974, and September – October 1976

¹³⁶ See Appendix 7.

¹³⁷ See *Scinteia*, November 11 (1974): 3-4, *Munca*, March 29 (1974): 2, and *Flacăra*, Number 1109, April (1976): 1-4.

on the importance of nation over class attests to this.

Nicolae Ceaușescu's Election as President of the country has represented the most significant symbolic moment in the consolidation of Ceaușescu's power. It was the moment that marked the leader's process of obtaining all political authority. At that moment, on March 28, there was nobody inside the Party or in Romania who could contradict his dominance over all aspects of social-political life. The leader cult had, at that moment and time, began its ascendance into the second half of the 1970s, one that will end only with the social disasters of the 1980s. At the same time, "The 1974 Moment" has mirrored this change in the press, which began to push on the cultivation of national values, most of them in congruence with the supreme leader. It was the public result of a process that began in 1971, when Ceaușescu's 'mini-cultural revolution' changed the Party's orientation in society.

2.3. The myths of Ceaușescu's cult

After the 1974 Election, Ceaușescu's cult power enhanced considerably beyond the internal environment of the Party. Although he had important attributes in all areas, until his election as President he could not impose his will arbitrarily on all sectors of society. After this moment, his openness in speeches became larger because "he was no longer the spokesman for the collective leadership, but a leader in his own right."¹³⁸ I refer to a permanency of Ceaușescu's cult as the development of it creates an impression on the Romanian society that is instilled with the image (i.e. myth) of the leader. More specifically, the Romanian personality cult becomes permanent once it gathers the image of Ceaușescu as the representative of national values, and once it develops its own unique style. Furthermore, the myth creation of history, and to some extent its falsification, have decisively contributed not only to Ceaușescu's image development, but also to what Vlad Georgescu described as

¹³⁸ Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 182.

antiscientific interpretations of Marxism, which are linked to the development of protochronism.¹³⁹

Ceaușescu's cult can be viewed in the broader context of leadership cults within communist societies. According to Mary Ellen Fischer, charismatic leadership has been used in communist parties, but they employ a different structural construction of the relationship with their followers. In this sense, in contrast to religious leaders which derive their infallibility from divine guidance, communist leaders derive it “from a ‘scientific’ belief, Marx’s philosophy of history.”¹⁴⁰ As such, in this case ‘charisma’ is a call based on ‘science’.

This kind of definition fits the Romanian contextual situation in the second half of the 1970s. The Romanian leader's infallibility is structured according to very strict guidelines of the Party's own interpretation of Marxism – Leninism. This interpretation can be found in what Lucian Boia discusses as the prevalence of ideology in Ceaușescu's decisions. According to the historian, the Romanian leader's ideas went hand in hand with Communist mythology and the Soviet Stalinist model. Most of his actions, from dressing, construction patterns, and visual representations to rituals of personal worship had been dominated by a very strict adherence to Marxist dogma.¹⁴¹ Tismăneanu has exemplified this tendency in Ceaușescu's personality by his inability to understand any form of revisionist Marxism. In this sense, the Romanian-American political scientist claims that the Romanian leader did not support Dubcek's 1968 revisionism, but went along with it because he wanted to oppose what he saw as ‘soviet imperialism.’¹⁴² In this sense, Tismăneanu claims that abandoning Leninism (and Stalinism) as the party's ideology “was not on the agenda in Bucharest”.¹⁴³ Following this

¹³⁹ Vlad Georgescu, *Politică și istorie: cazul comuniștilor români (1944-1977)* [Politics and history: the case of Romanian communists (1944-1977)] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2008), Introduction.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 162.

¹⁴¹ Boia, *Romania*, 134-9.

¹⁴² See Vladimir Tismăneanu, “The Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia, 45 Years Later” on <http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/201372/soviet-invasion-czechoslovakia-45-years-later-vladimir-tismaneanu>, accessed in May 2016.

¹⁴³ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 200-2.

line of argument, Romania's leader cult becomes a permanent factor in the social life once all obstacles for its full development have been completely eliminated.

Another factor which can be construed as contributing to the unique development of the Romanian cult was the parallel evolution of Elena Ceaușescu's cult, which by 1979 becomes merged with her husband's. By this period, she is not referred to as his wife, but as a '*genius*' scientist in her own right. This hoax was even more developed in the 1980s.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, Lucian Boia finds the origins of Elena's cult in her and Nicolae's poor background. Linking their personalities together, their backgrounds exacerbated their frustrations and transformed them into megalomania, "which they fed and stimulated in each other."¹⁴⁵ According to Boia, the couple's view was that "their Romania had to be *great*, it was not a question of just ruling to country". Everything from the Pharaonic style of buildings to the construction of cities that would complete replace 'backward' villages had been symptoms of the presidential couple's frustrations and their belief that history was somehow obligated to reward their bet.¹⁴⁶

As an example for the early characteristics of Elena Ceaușescu's cult, the January number of *Femeia* relates an article which reads:

Recently, how we have shown in our last editorial, the American Institute for Chemists has granted Comrade Elena Ceaușescu the most important of honorary diplomas, as an expression of gratitude for her activity as an eminent scientist, who is the leader of a strong group of researchers which dedicates its entire activity to the progress of Romanian science and chemistry, an example of the prestige that Romanian science and its followers have abroad.¹⁴⁷

Ironically, Boia is right when pointing out that 'Dynastic communism's' aberrations

¹⁴⁴ For details on the life of Elena Ceaușescu's in the 1970s and 1980s, see Edward Behr, '*Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite*', 158-65.

¹⁴⁵ Boia, *Romania*, 127-8.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid. 128-9.

¹⁴⁷ "Înalt omagiu științei românești." [High homage to Romanian science.] *Femeia*, January Number 1 (1974): 3-4.

represented the true rationale behind the system. It was one very close to the North Korean model, yet with its own specificities. Officially, communism puts the people, the masses, as the main actors in society. In reality, people are “represented by the party, and the party by its leaders”.¹⁴⁸ And its leaders were able to profit from “a paternalist mentality”. The latter helped the regime crush all structures of opposition.¹⁴⁹ Boia’s paradigm regarding the presidential couple can be summarized as follows: megalomaniac leaders pushed forward by their background pathology and sustained by the Romanian historical and cultural legacies of passivity.

There are elements, however, to suggest that the period of the 1970s which is discussed here is representative for such ideas described above inasmuch as it was one of a constant transition. The popular passivity and support manifested for the regime catalysed the internal structures of the regime, which by the 1980s had become to dominate completely the Romanian society. In this sense, the lack of opposition due to a form of passivity present in the late ‘60’s and 1970s cannot be explained by the same factors in the 1980s, when the Romanian people became prisoners of the regime. Ultimately, leading dysfunctions led to the violent overthrowing of Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1989. In this sense, the Romanian population cannot be completely blamed for the growth in regime power and lack of dissent. The 1980s period is witness to the growing control that the repressive Romanian state had on all forms of society, crushing all forms of opposition through manipulation and violence. Furthermore, the dominance by the local communist elites of all aspects relating to Romanian communist mythology prevented the general population from engaging directly with the formation of the leadership image. This lack of direct engagement has shaped even the post-communist Romanian society, inside which a shift of political normative behaviour never truly happened. In this sense, the legacy of Ceaușescu’s Romanian “national-communism” (which in this case

¹⁴⁸ Boia, *Romania*, 129-30

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 130.

study is not differentiated from national-stalinism) is based on the elements described earlier: social passivity, blunt submission to authority, and the historical creation of myths regarding Romanian nationalism.

The idea of ‘dynastic communism’ in the Romanian case draws attention to two additional factors that have to be considered. First, the presence of Nicu Ceaușescu, the youngest son of the Romanian leader, as the successor to the Romanian presidency. Such a characteristic has been described by scholars as a sign of “*inherited greatness*”, in a similar vein to the legacy of kings.¹⁵⁰ Second, the characterization of the Ceaușescu family as a *royal family* can be traced both to historical legacies in the Romanian past, as well as to the inner personality of the couple that has been described in this chapter previously.

By looking at the dynastic leadership cults the regime can be understood, and analysed to some extent, by even the most inconspicuous of eyes. Its exemplifications constitute a general trend within the Romanian society. A closer look, however, at the press can shed light on the internal specificities not only of Ceaușescu’s regime but, more importantly, of his cult. Mary Ellen Fischer finds that by the end of the 1970s, the Romanian press included Elena Ceaușescu in their writings almost as much as her husband. Poems were dedicated to the couple. One of them reads:

To the first woman of the country, the homage of the entire country,
As star stands beside star in the eternal arch of heaven,
Beside the Great Man (Marele Bărbat) she watches over
Romania’s path to glory.¹⁵¹

As I relate in the following chapter, there are plenty of examples regarding the cult of

¹⁵⁰ For further literature on the succession tendencies of Ceaușescu, see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 209-11, Boia, *Romania*, 128-30, and Gabanyi, *Cultul*, Chapter 2.

¹⁵¹ *Scînteia*, January 7 (1979): 3. Translation found in Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 171.

both Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife. The most significant of them can be found in the official newspapers, as presented above, or in cultural magazines. In the latter, however, the association of the leader is much more evident when it comes to the nation, national values, and the role of the country in the international context. In this way, the permanency of the cult is established not only through the mass number of articles published on certain subjects, but also by the insistence on these aspects in specially targeted newspapers for intellectuals and cultural circles, which in turn relate their position to the general population. As Thomas Keil writes, all the writings of Ceaușescu became mandatory readings as a method for the population to recognize the leader's 'genius', including required readings from the leader in all Romanian universities, regardless of subject, in recognition of "the intellectual giant" and "genius of the Carpathians".¹⁵²

In addition to these factual aspects, the permanency of the cult was established through language. When he became President of Romania, Ceaușescu became the "*Conducător*", an appellation which had been previously associated with General Ion Antonescu. This termed presented the leader in a more exalted status, "in the lines as *Il Duce*, *El Caudillo*, and *Der Fuhrer*."¹⁵³ This terminology shows the leader's importance for the nation, its embodiment as Supreme Leader, and its relationship with his people.¹⁵⁴ This interpretation can be associated to what Tismăneanu has labelled as the *fascization* of Romania's regime during the Ceaușescu era.¹⁵⁵ As such, the language, symbolism, and rhetoric of the Ceaușescu cult become a mixture of multiple nationalistic ingredients and Marxist interpretations. On a visual level, this tendency can be observed in Ceaușescu's presentation in official portraits and paintings, mostly focused on presenting the leader as a towering figure, where his aging characteristics

¹⁵² Thomas Keil, *Romania's Tortured Road toward Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 299-300.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 301.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Tismăneanu, *The Devil in History*, X.

are not visible. Furthermore, he is usually presented looking into the horizon, as if the leader was looking towards the future of his nation. Also, in magazines these visuals would be present with a poem or laudatory texts.¹⁵⁶ Some writers go to large extends to characterize the details in Ceaușescu's portraits and visual representations.¹⁵⁷

One can conclude that Ceaușescu used ideology and nationalism to expand his cult further. At the same time, however, others have compared the relationship of idolization between far-right groups and Ceaușescu's case, claiming that fascist leaders like Corneliu Zelea Codreanu or Horia Sima were praised because they were seen as representing the ideological embodiment of the Iron Guard, but Ceaușescu became praised for his existing persona, not an external representation of it.¹⁵⁸ Still, the role of ideology in Ceaușescu's cult is major, and such differences between ideological perceptions of the cult and the person as the cult itself are intrinsically linked insofar as it was Ceaușescu's own interpretation of ideology that led to the quasi-personalization of his cult.

Lastly, the personality cult developed under Ceaușescu as much on internal factors as it did on external ones, on the outward perception of it by the population and its expansion by the press. In this sense, the social responses to his cult do not show any sign of organized dissent. While in Poland, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia the press and culture were under control, they still had the creative liberty of engaging into subjects that would stimulate creativity and encourage cultural development. In the Romanian case, most responses to the cult became automatized and depersonalized, also because of what Tismăneanu has described as "a deep hostility on part of a regime for any nucleus of independent thought, a feature of totalitarianism", an instance which led to an output that can be called a *pavlovian* reaction on part of the society.¹⁵⁹ In addition, the mythological formation of the leadership image

¹⁵⁶ See Appendix 8.

¹⁵⁷ See Mocănescu, *The leader cult*, 69-75, and Edward Behr, 'Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite', 157-9.

¹⁵⁸ Mocănescu, *The leader cult*, 5-6.

¹⁵⁹ Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 212.

prevented the elitist existence of independent centres of thought.

Regarding the role of the press, its responses to the Ceașescu cult were multiple and layered. Research shows that it is hard to establish whether the press was fully engaged into direct content indications by the regime during the entire decade of the 1970s. Rather, it is more plausible that the emergence of symbols and signals on part of the regime, thus a consolidation of ideological representations, have influenced the press into creating the image of Ceașescu. **This process is not one constructed from below, since most of these reactions have been cultivated by the regime in order to please the desired form of ideology.** Furthermore, any disobedience or stray from the regime guidelines would end up severely punished. In this sense, the lack of *official* direct censorship did not mean the lack of censorship. Censorship became internalized, personalized through fear. Auto-censorship was just a symptom of censorship based on primal instincts, making the Romanian system one in which the regime *de facto* controlled all media. As the following chapter shows, the written press has been developed as a tool for addressing parts of society in different ways, by responding in an original way to imposed standards.

Chapter 3. Themes around Nicolae Ceaușescu's leader cult and their press construction

The most important analysis regarding the leader cult is created through primary source research work. As the previous chapters have showed, the leader cult in Romania has been created in two primary ways: directly by the regime insofar as the press has been receptive to signals received from the Party and a ubiquitous bureaucratic apparatus; and indirectly (also by the pressure coming from the regime), from an underlying desire on part of the political elite and dominant society figures to please the Romanian's leader and develop endemic forms of power manifestations. This latter indirect construction does not contradict the former, it rather complements it. These processes, however, have been fairly complex and non-linear, as the action of addressing the population was structured in accordance to different factors, including but not limited to education, social background, political aspirations, and cultural interests.

The goal of this chapter is to create an image of how the media focused on different aspects of Ceaușescu's persona during the 1970 decade, by looking at target audiences and themes used to approach them. As stated before, it would be a quixotic endeavour to try and analyse the communist press in its fullness. For this reason, the analysis is divided in parts regarding the specific audiences that it addressed. In this sense, writing for a newspaper with mass reach would entail different styles and motifs than doing the same for a newspaper focused on intellectuals, cultural figures, or workers. Accordingly, I employ a sample-choice method by linking events and landmarks in the Romanian society and/or Party changes to shifts in media coverage of the leadership.

This chapter analyses four main type of listings: **main party newspapers** (*Scinteia, România Liberă, Crișana, Dobrogea nouă, Drum nou*), which emphasise common themes

that were predominant for the masses and their perceptions of leadership; **cultural magazines** (*Flacăra, Luceafărul, Săptămâna culturală a capitalei, Pentru patrie, Femeia*); **newspapers dedicated to unions and workers represented by them** (*Munca, Flacăra roșie*); and **magazines dedicated to intellectuals** that have a larger scale impact (*Munca de partid, Flacăra, Săptămâna culturală*).

I use the role of journalists, themes, and cultural motifs to try and identify how press coverage evolved during the 1970s decade in regard to Nicolae Ceaușescu's leadership. A few questions of research worth mentioning are: Were the main themes present in the Romanian communist press predominant regardless of social background or were they conspicuously absent from certain editorials? How did the press approach the link between the leader and the Party? Can it be construed that certain journalists and writers spearheaded the process of leadership propaganda and thus created a thematic wave of press coverage? In which way certain themes dominant in the intellectual spheres like the idea of 'nation', socialist development, and cultural upheaval have been related by the media in different ways according to each social category? I answer these questions (and more) by bringing together research done in over two years of academic work and focusing on the common elements that nevertheless shed light on the systematic construction of the leader cult by the press.

Last but not least, my thesis is that the election of Nicolae Ceaușescu in 1974 as President created a coverage shift in the Romanian press that started focusing on the intellectual concepts mentioned above, especially the ones regarding national supremacy and cultural uniqueness, that changed the internal dynamic of the leadership image. Factually, this transition to more concrete themes relating to the idea of 'Nation' is linked to a lesser presence of themes relating to the Party and a much higher presence of the 'Conducător' motifs. Whenever the Party was present, however, the association would usually be with Ceaușescu as the person totally identifying with it. Consequently, I try to show that after the leader's

election in March 1974, the press started using nationalist symbols, thus creating an image of him as the reflection of the unequivocal will expression of the people, continuing the process started in 1971, and hence the dichotomy Party and Leader slowly lost its momentum. Rather, these two elements became engulfed together with the Nation in a person whom a prominent party writer has called "The Shepard of Light."¹⁶⁰

3.1. The leader cult and the masses

The largest impact directly on the population was exhibited by the Official newspapers. *Scînteia* spearheaded the quantitative process of written press in the 1970s, mostly because it had the largest distribution and it came under direct Party supervision, being edited and put forward by Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (*Comitetul Central al Partidului Comunist Român*). Its circulation of nearly one million copies in the mid-1970s made it available in all possible locations in the country. It was also an expanded newspaper addressed to the masses, a point which I mean to sustain in the upcoming arguments. My analysis is focused on the main themes that have been developed in this short period of time and how they changed and interacted with each other.

Research has showed that there was a variety of themes which had been extrapolated in the newspapers, mostly focusing on simple schematic choices of words and stylistic social developments. Thus, it is hard to assess based on this evidence that this type of newspapers had authors that led the print 'revolution' which had an impact on Ceaușescu's cult. Rather, the idea of a consensus of themes and motifs 'suggested' (i.e. imposed) from above seems more plausible since there the common denominators of this media track were present on a large scale. While the approaches had been developed mostly under the umbrella of Party or

¹⁶⁰ See the poem Dumitru Ion, "Pastorul de raze" [The Shepard of Light]. *Săptămâna Culturală a Capitalei* [Cultural Week of the Capital], Friday, August 30 (1974): 4.

regime policy, there is enough evidence to conclude that a growing interest in some themes and constant presence of others in the period post-1974 had contributed to the expansion of cult-related editorials that had a lasting impact on public opinion.

Before 1970 and immediate after Ceaușescu's 'mini-cultural revolution' of 1971, research shows that most of the themes present in mass newspapers have been focused three main pillars: the role of the Party in developing the socialist society, the historical importance of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and the role of Romania in an international context and collaboration with other 'friend countries' (țări prietene).¹⁶¹ The two most important newspapers that are relevant for an analysis based on showing the general trends in press coverage are *Scînteia* and *Scînteia Tineretului*.¹⁶² A specificity, however, can be observed when dealing with a variety of numbers and years from the two papers: mass newspapers tend to revolve around themes that are much less clearly defined in terms of political influence, but have a better defined perspective when dealing with specific subjects like "the Leader" (*Liderul, Conducatorul*), "the Party" (*Partidul*), "socialist unity" (*unitate socialistă*), or "revolutionary education" (*educație revoluționară*).

Most of these themes are highly present in editorials and articles ranging from 1968 to 1973.¹⁶³ While the specificity of them can be traced by looking at a few numbers, a more conspicuous analysis of the entire collection shows a high degree of narration (and less information) during and after important events, like for example the July Theses in 1971, which can go on for several months post event, albeit less presumptive (See the September and November editions of the aforementioned newspapers, as presented in the footnotes).

¹⁶¹ The most relevant articles on the general dissemination of press trends, motifs, and themes are the *Scînteia* numbers ranging from 1968 to 1971, and *Scînteia Tineretului*, mostly in January 1970.

¹⁶² For matters of keeping this a realistic project, I use here only the most relevant material that I deemed as necessary for constructing the image of the Leader (and Party where necessary). All the material can be found in the relevant sources as mentioned in the Introduction, all of them being public sources.

¹⁶³ From the newspapers I researched, the most relevant numbers that deal with these issues are *Scînteia* - January 8, 10, as well as June 12, 18 (1968); August 18, 26 (1970), and September 15, 22 (1971), as well as November 24 and 30 (1971). In *Scînteia Tineretului*, the most relevant editorial numbers for these themes are April 17, 22 (1969) and December 11 (1969), as well as July 13, 16 (1973), and December 20 and 24 (1973).

Until 1974, most of these themes have been either developed by narration techniques during important events, or by incorporating elements of them into mainstream Party and society news. There was no successful attempt at this point of incorporating the leadership into these motifs or somewhat involuntary (or voluntary) constructing elements specific to a clearly-defined leader cult.

There is a shift in press coverage, however, once the political agenda starts blending into the social sphere. As explained in the previous chapters, the election of Nicolae Ceaușescu as President of Romania had the role of legitimizing the leader in front of Romanian people. It becomes clear at the beginning of the 1970s that Ceaușescu has control over the Party and all the political mechanisms are subdued to a well-organized form of personal dictatorship.¹⁶⁴ The press responded to the election by introducing new themes which were so well-organized and symmetrically converged that it shows a long-term preparation for the overhaul of social positions on part of the media, as well as a mutual influence on the part of newspaper writers, which constantly developed each other's ideas.

As for the changing nature of press coverage elements within the press after 1974, I exemplify them with excerpts from one of the most relevant areas in the 1970s, after the end of 1975, when the political and social environments have already been acquainted with the new image of Ceaușescu as supreme leader.¹⁶⁵ In a number from *Scînteia* in March 1976, an article by Florica Dinulescu called "The responsibility of communists for the revolutionary-*patriotic* education of pioneers" (my emphasis) reads:

First, a fact with importance: for the first time after the measures established by the Leadership in regard to increasing the role of pioneers in the development of the politico-educative activities of their organization, the

¹⁶⁴ For further details on the political developments during the early years of the Ceaușescu regime see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*: 187-99, and Behr, *Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite*, 118-33.

¹⁶⁵ In this sense, I use interchangeably in my exemplifications texts from different years after 1974 as they show a certain consistency in subjects that is not necessary linear, but rather show an abundance of themes that debuted after the 1974 Election and were present in a non-linear manner until the end of the decade. As such, the presence of certain elements like 'The Nation' have been present immediately after 1974 just as much as they were in 1979, as my examples will show.

children have gathered together with their commanding-instructive teachers in an important plenary at the Meeting (Adunare) which is consecrated to the analysis of how the children from our country bring to life the important duties that are bound to the ideological program of the Party.[...]Beyond the obvious elements of emotions regarding leadership and the program, elements have been remarked like the seriousness and maturity exhibited by the pioneers proudly wearing red-yellow-blue ribbons while relating to positive experiences.¹⁶⁶

These introductory aspects from the newspapers had the role of mixing together elements of nationhood that had been widely present in the media of the time (the significance of one's country, the insistence on the colours of Romania's flag, the politico-educative elements that were always tied to duties of the country) with a Romanian version form (self-professed as truthful in every way) of interpretation of Marxist-Leninist dogma (ideology put forward by the Leadership, converging to the platform imposed by the ideological program). Research has showed that most political articles on 'education' in this period begin with this kind of draw-in texts, that shift from the previous concept of “revolutionary political education” to the new “revolutionary-patriotic education”, which creates a normative framework for the interpretation of the regime's Marxist-Leninist ideology.¹⁶⁷

The continuation of the same article shows the main method of leader-cult construction characteristic to the middle of the 1970s, beyond specific years, in articles dealing with mass political education. The presence of the Leader is emphasized as the synthesiser for Party ideology, his discourses becoming the program itself, not just a mere representation of them, transcending the orthodox Party platform of collective leadership presented in the 1960s.¹⁶⁸ As the article from 1976 reads on:

¹⁶⁶ Florica Dinulescu, "Răspunderea comuniștilor pentru educarea revoluționar-patriotică a pionierilor." [The responsibility of communists for the revolutionary-patriotic education of pioneers.] *Scînteia*, number 10459, Wednesday, April 6 (1976): 3.

¹⁶⁷ As such, the examples used here, as the one presented, have the role of serving as a meaningful example for the general trend in press coverage present at the time in certain editorial areas.

¹⁶⁸ See Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, 160-83.

In the local country plenary of pioneer organizations, the communist educators instituted by the Party, by our socialist society of growing and forming the youngest generation in revolutionary Marxist-Leninist spirit, in the heightening sentiment of love for the nation, for the people, for the party, it has been put forward that the Ideological Platform of our Party, that is the discourse of our beloved Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu at the young forum last autumn, these norms representing the main theoretical support for the of the politico-educative activities done by our children.¹⁶⁹

As with the previous short excerpt, there is a combination of ideological interpretations of norms with political aspects of leadership. This time, however, the transition shifts from the Party to the person of Ceaușescu as representing its educative message. The article continues in a similar form, hinting at the role of personal leadership as superior to the collective platform exhibited in the years before. Furthermore, in the second half of the 1970s the emphasis on Ceaușescu and his wife was put on associating them with the Romanian collective identity, an aspect which was also expressed in paintings and visual representations.¹⁷⁰

As research shows at this point, mass newspapers did not use in this period overtly expansive language to refer to the leader, contributing to the development of cult-like themes by an emphasis on social norms, the role of the leader in education, and representativeness of the main ideology by one person. In this sense, one can relate to Emilia Șercan's formulation of Ceaușescu as an inspiratory figure for indirect censorship mechanisms.¹⁷¹ Still, the large presence of these themes on a regular basis constitutes the key note of the press. Quantitative measuring shows that almost all of the sources analysed on political education for the mass exhibited this form of personal representation towards the leader, with just a few emphasizing the role of the Party as the main instrument for political awareness. The fact that the Party is still present in press coverage is not surprising because it establishes the constant norm of

¹⁶⁹ Florica Dinulescu, "Răspunderea..." *Scînteia*, April 6 (1976): 3.

¹⁷⁰ See Appendix 9.

¹⁷¹ See Șercan, *Cultul secretului*, 120-1, 129-33.

engagement for motifs revolving around the leader. In mass newspapers, emphasis is specifically addressed on issues of a constant reinforcement of the relationship between Leader and Party, this changing only after 1980.

The development of mass newspapers has also been brought to a local level as political centralization became more obvious. The analysis of newspapers that had been edited at local level show mostly the same tendency. A specificity, however, is that while editorials in these papers claim to be focused more on regional coverage, their output is overwhelmingly national (i.e. central). Their main articles are focused on political and social events that are related to the Bucharest scene, reserving the local parts of editorials for social news or basic information. This analysis has been focused mostly on the newspapers *Crișana* from Oradea (Bihar County), *Drum nou* (New Road) in Brașov, *Dobrogea nouă* (The New Dobrogea) in Constanța, and *Flacăra Roșie* (Red Flame) from Arad. Having been edited by the County Committee of the Party and Popular Council from each county, they are a continuation of the mass Bucharest papers with targeted audience for people that did want to rely more on local press correspondence. The first three are clearly-defined mass newspapers in the same fashion as *Scînteia*. The last one is more focused on local news, dealing with themes from the centre only when certain important events deem it necessary. Their print circulations around 50000 was an indicator that although they produced recurrent themes, their print run would not engage in direct (or indirect) competition with mass national editorials.

There is an eloquent parallel that can be drawn from writings in these newspapers from different parallels. In the period of 1972, they dealt mostly with Party influence, the role of Nicolae Ceaușescu being that of representative emerging from the Party, not an entity standing by itself. Although the referrals to the leader are somewhat common, they happen only in the context of Party events and messages. Brașov County newspaper *Drum Nou* in an article from the middle of July, 1972 states:

The Party, in decades, has been imposing itself, and it still is doing the same thing today, through its thought and action, as the vital centre of the contemporary Romanian society, gaining a tremendous influence. [...] The socialist order progresses, developing itself at superior scales, under the conscious action, which is transformative at social level for the working class, and on political level for its Marxist-Leninist party.¹⁷²

The emphasis on the role of the Party was nothing new for the period, as the role of Ceaușescu had been gaining momentum slowly after 1971 and towards 1974. Conversely, in an article from August 1974 the same newspaper adapts its discourse to more national themes and more focused on the role of the leader. Although the titles of articles remain focused also on the Party, the focus shifts on national representation of Leadership. The article signed by the editorial board reads:

The immense joy for the epochal victories obtained on the road towards August 23, the confidence in the communist future of our nation, the full love for the Romanian Communist Party, for the leader secretary general, President of The Romanian Socialist Republic, Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, have blossomed on the days of the great festive celebration.[...]People gathered in the name of patriotic socialism.[...](They) celebrated while chanting "Long live the Romanian Communist Party, especially first with its leader - Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu."¹⁷³

Once this kind of writings have been present on dominant newspapers on such important days for the regime, that have transcended the normative aspects of press engagement that had been dominant until that point, intensely developing outside the framework of big party celebrations. The remarkable output is the celebratory remarks that were specific to the Celebration of August 23rd, May 1st, or May 9th.¹⁷⁴ Research has showed that in previous years, mass newspapers have covered the Event by emphasizing Party unity and socialist development without resorting to nation-based themes. In later articles, these

¹⁷²*Drum nou*, number 8561, Wednesday, July 19 (1972): 3.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, number 9211, Sunday, August 25 (1974): 1

¹⁷⁴ See Appendix 10.

motifs are mostly identified with the Leader and its leadership, thus my basis for the analysis of this specific event-coverage.

In a similar fashion, other regional newspapers have emulated the central model and started adopting positions regarding the nation as a basis for the development of cult-related themes. In an article from February 1975, the Constanța newspaper *Dobrogea nouă* emphasizes indirectly the symbiosis of Party and Leader, assimilating it to the concept of 'people':

At this point of the discussions Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu took the initiative of speaking. The Executive Political Bureau has joined together fully with the arguments presented by our party secretary general. The things that have been enunciated were the importance success stories obtained in the political-economic life of the country, in the upheaval of the people.¹⁷⁵

The total identification between Leadersip and Party was a recurrent theme for the mass communist press, evolving insofar as it represented the symbiosis between politics (represented by the Party, albeit in name only) and society i.e. The Romanian People (represented by Ceaușescu). In similar fashion, dealing with adjacent themes was another common element of cult construction. Mainly, the incorporation of Ceaușescu's messages in all mass newspapers (which was done on an enormous scale) had the role of not only exhibiting the Leader's ideas, but proposing him as the ultimate truth teller for the Romanian present, extrapolated to international context. An article from the same newspaper reads:

The major changes that had taken place on the balance of forces on the global arena, the intensified battle for the independent development of each nation, more complex problems - including those or economic statute - of international life make the role of worlds peoples grow even more important than before, the same as for public opinion as well as the parliaments that represent them.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁵ *Dobrogea Nouă*, number 8228, Friday, February 7 (1975): 1.

¹⁷⁶ Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech as presented in *Dobrogea Nouă*, Friday, May 30 (1975): 1.

The practice of incorporating the leader's speeches on every newspaper of the time, contributing sometimes to entire editions of the papers themselves created the development of the *cult from within*, a form of personal insistence on the leader that included two elements: presentation of important themes constantly by the President (especially regarding the role of the Romanian nation - many times implied and not specific, and the role of socialism in every country according to its needs), and the confirmation of these themes by a highly educated self-declared 'propaganda educator' section which pushed constantly for the emancipation of people only under the strict guidelines of the leader. By the end of the 1970s, the press has received mostly the messages of the myth of Ceaușescu from the leadership and started writing in a different fashion specific for the 1980s decade.

One key aspect which is present in mass newspapers and other types of publications is the anonymous writing of articles, under the imprint of the editorial board. As I remark later, authors that used their names in certain articles, mostly political-educative ones, tended to act as opinion creators. At the same time, most of the articles on strong usages of nationhood, relating to the leader, or news that or linked in some way or another to the previous two aspects were conspicuously without a named author. This fact suggests that they were meant for an audience that was intended on being delivered the news from a superior external source, as if the regime (i.e. party or leader) was speaking to the audience directly. This can be interpreted on what Lucian Boia has described as the creation of mythology in communist regimes.¹⁷⁷

While the workload on research is much higher, these examples are proper standards of the general trends in mass coverage press. As discovered by research in a bizarre fashion, most of the newspapers in the 1970s have constructed the leader cult by insisting on specific recurrent themes. In this sense, the approach of the press towards Nicolae Ceaușescu's persona

¹⁷⁷ Boia, *Romania*, 111-20, and Boia, *Cele două fețe*, Introduction.

has been both quantitative by employing large numbers of motifs and repeating them on a daily basis, as well as qualitative, by emphasizing specific concepts put forward by the leadership and thus reinforcing political norms as for them to fit into the social sphere.

3.2. The leader cult and the workers

While mass newspapers had the role of converging political messages into social actions, newspapers focused on workers approach mostly the same themes, but with a different tonality, emphasizing the organizational benefits of labour under the guidance of ideology, the Party, and the Leader. For reasons of media effectiveness, many of the newspapers that deal with mass propaganda incorporate workers-related themes in their editorials. Research has showed that they do this by creating specific articles which deal with labour progress and theme-based news on union development. Still, specific newspapers like *Munca* (Labour) are the most relevant to analyse within this framework, if not only for the reason that, in this case, the thematic approach is more closely related directly to workers organization, these papers having been edited by Union Councils.

The relation to Ceaușescu's cult is somewhat similar in this case to the development of mass newspapers. At the beginning of the 1970s, the general trend is focused on the Party, while after the election of 1974, the approach towards the leader takes a shift, in some articles more abruptly than in mass newspapers.¹⁷⁸ Research indicates that after 1977, the worker-related themes present in this kind of papers are entwined with mass newspaper coverage, exhibiting a strong devotion to ideological presentation, but an even stronger emphasis on the importance of the leader as the “main incorporation of will emanating from the nation, the

¹⁷⁸ This could be motivated by the fact that workers and intellectuals were the main targets of press coverage since these two categories could be engaged towards emphasizing the importance of the leader much better than other ones. In this sense, see Mary Ellen Fischer, and the next subchapter from this work.

people, and its leading working class.”¹⁷⁹

The image of representation for Ceaușescu is different in this kind of papers because the editorials are more interested in engaging its target readers with the emphasis that the leader is the reason for the success of the leading proletariat. The target audience is reduced but the message is exacerbated. Messages in *Munca*, for example, are more powerfully driven towards the leader, especially after 1974-5, than mass newspapers. The lower distribution of the newspaper than the official ones, below 100000, is representative for national editorial works targeted in the rural environment.¹⁸⁰ Before the election, the general trend was on emphasizing the dual relationship between the Party and the Union as the main symbol for the workers. After March 28, the two elements gradually lost their ‘historical significance’ and had been replaced by Nicolae Ceaușescu's unification of all forces in Romanian society.¹⁸¹ Because after 1973 *Munca* ceased being printed daily and became a weekly newspaper, the tonality was easier to adapt to pleasing the leader-related themes of Ceaușescu inasmuch as there was no extra needed “fill in” to be added.

In order to fully grasp the extent to which the newspapers related to Ceaușescu post-1974, it is necessary a look at titles, contents, and themes as they had constantly been developed. In an article in *Munca* from November 1974, the text reads:

The XI Congress of the Romanian Communist Party, in the name and will of the entire people, has decided: on the old patriotic land of the nation we will create the multilaterally developed socialist society - communism. [Also] invests in the leader, Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, the high responsiveness of leading, further on, the process of guiding our nation through greatness in the future.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ *Munca*, December 13 (1974): 4.

¹⁸⁰ For details on the distribution and numbers of newspapers see Șercan, *Cultul secretului*, Chapter 2.

¹⁸¹ For the most relevant numbers for the period before 1974, see *Munca*, August (1972), as well as September to December (1973).

¹⁸² *Munca*, number 8257, November 29 (1974): 1

This excerpt resonates almost entirely with the thematic base approach that was characteristic for the newspapers at the time: the leader as the essential bearer of the goodwill of people, the expansion of the society towards communism in the “Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society” (Ceașescu's idea embedded in his transformation of society), the direct relationship between the people and its leader. Furthermore, the presentation of such texts was done in conjunction with photos of the leader and short excerpts of articles on themes such as “history”, “Romanian destiny”, or mass political events. These elements had the role of identifying the leader with Romanian consciousness, and were used as a classical pattern. In an article in the same newspapers from March 28 1975, it reads:

From the deep bond with the land and the woods, from the extreme love for our nation as old as the mountains and waters on which have lived and sacrificed so many generations, with honour and pride, with faith in the truth, with the manly and strong protection of the countries land, this is how it was born, over the ages, the commitment of the Romanian. The Commitment with the land (*glia*), the country, the brothers, [...] people living in the historical settlements of Burebista, Decebal, and Ulpian Traianus. This bond has been sanctified with the heart and deed, forged with the sword, with the word, and blood of our nation.¹⁸³

This form of representation was massive at the one-year anniversary of the Election of Nicolae Ceașescu as the first President of Romania. Newspapers and magazines across the identity spectrum flourished with remarks of ‘gratitude’, ‘joy’, and ‘fulfilment’ at this landmark of regime celebration. The workers-related papers, however, are more abundant in themes of such nature, most probably because of the ‘privileged’ role of the working class during the period. Furthermore, in 1975 the myth of the nation as a historical and continuous entity that is constantly moving through time was an essential part of Ceașescu's cult. Consequently, the presence of historical figures like Burebista, Decebal and Trajan (as

¹⁸³ Ion Moja, “Legământul cu glia și neamul.” [The Commitment to the land and nation.] *Munca*, number 8274, March 28 (1975): 1, 6-7.

presented in the article), alongside other like Michael the Brave or Stephen the Great (present in many others) served as models of identification for the Romanian leader. In other words, research shows that a dissemination of articles points towards the inclusion of Ceaușescu as the direct descendent of the great names in Romanian history.¹⁸⁴

In an article from July 1975, with a large picture of Ceaușescu on the front page (this had become a habit for the related press in this period), there is an expansion into the social and economic aspects of the leader's 'fulfilling work':¹⁸⁵

It is offered attributes of greatness in the evolution of our country to our leader, as presented in the extraordinary expose presented by Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, a synthesis of a forceful document over the social and economic evolution in the years of the five-year plan (Cincinal) which we will soon finish, also offering a clear, precise direction of what we have to work for in the year between 1976-1980 in the development of the grandiose act of creating (făurire) the multilaterally developed socialist society and the movement forward towards communism.¹⁸⁶

This combination of social-political development and nationalism was specific for the Ceaușescu regime in the second part of the 1970s, and research points towards the one-year anniversary of Ceaușescu's election as a moment of exacerbation of this tendency, which had been set out in motion after 1974, but not clearly-defined in the press up until that moment.

Finally, I want to point out the combination specific to this kind of development by citing an article from the same newspaper, dated February 1977. The title is revealing and the text offers insight into an even more developed expansion of the cult by insisting on specific themes: *Today the world knows us: They Say Romanian, They Say Brave*.¹⁸⁷ The line, which comes from a poem at the end of the article, is short but revealing in terms of the main trends

¹⁸⁴ Edward Behr suggests that Ceaușescu's regime expanded this criteria of assessment to incredible heights, even proposing that descendants of the Romanian historical figures had been related to Scornicești, Ceaușescu's birthplace. For further details, see Behr, 'Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite', 24-42, 135-42.

¹⁸⁵ See Appendix 11.

¹⁸⁶ "Pentru progresul țării și bunăstarea poporului." [For the progress of the country and the well-being of our people.] *Munca*, number 8291, Friday, July 25 (1975): 1-2.

¹⁸⁷ *Munca*, number 8376, February 25 (1977): 1.

in the pages of the paper. The article creates an association between the braveness of the Romanian nation, from ancient times, and its current leader as the sole bearer of that greatness. It is a form of Romanian endemic exceptionalism, by means of an association between ‘the great historical past’ and the ‘great current leadership’.

The same article, however, shows another characteristic of the regime's approaches to social backgrounds. The association between workers and peasants is made in order to fully represent categories that otherwise could not be engaged. The piece is riddled with references to the historical legacy of Romanian peasants and their development. This was a common feature for newspapers addressed to workers, emphasizing the greatness and national awakening of Romanian peasants. The most probable reason for his endeavour is the fact that most people in the Romanian countryside, who lacked even the slightest educational background, did not read the press. The correction to this problem had been found in constructing the image of the leader for them the same as for workers, engulfing them in the category of ‘the proletariat’.

3.3. The leader cult and intellectuals

One of the categories that had to be engaged in a resounding way was that of intellectuals. The problem of creating a category of representation for the intelligentsia relies on historical factors which have been discussed in previous chapters, but also on the overlapping themes with culturally based magazines. Still, there was enough of a distinction in the research to develop a structure for this category.

The intellectual elite had been part of Ceaușescu’s plan of creating a new intelligentsia that could contribute decisively to the expansion of a Romanian brand of socialism. In this sense, the array addressed to them had to be widen in order to debate a large number of subjects. The easiest way for this research to disseminate this kind of message was to look at

language, often poised with terms that could not be understood in context without a certain ‘socialist’ education. One of the most important of these pieces was the monthly magazine *Munca de Partid* [Labour of the Party].¹⁸⁸ The title shows the importance of labour, but in a different way than the *Munca* addressed to workers. *Labour* in this case is related to the philosophical theories developed under Romanian state socialism of how the relation between state, party, and leader should developed in tandem with the problems of society.

The most important themes of the magazine were the political education of people by those that have the ability to do so, and the insistence on the importance of a developed socialist intelligentsia. The magazine had a supplement called *În ajutorul propagandiștilor* [For the help of propagandists]. It was a short manual of how people should resort to ‘political and educative propaganda’.

The thematic development and evolution of the magazine have been linked to political events, but their coverage is more linear. It is not completely so because there is a shift, however, the shift is not as abrupt as in the case of mass newspapers or workers-related editorials. Articles after 1974 change in tonality and style, but many of the themes are also present before the Election of Ceaușescu as President. This does not mean that the coverage after 1974 was less aggressive on specific themes than the worker newspapers. The post-election period had been abundant in nation and leader themes in all newspapers and magazines. This does show, however, that before 1974 there was an expectation at the intellectual elite for political themes to talk a more aggressive vibe in the near future. Especially after the 1971 ‘mini-cultural revolution’, the intelligentsia perceived the change and developed differently in this kind of magazines, probably because their access to education permitted them to have such knowledge. As such, the 1974 Election can be construed as representing a pretext for the regime, the shift towards nationalism in the press finding the

¹⁸⁸ Between 1972 and 1973, the magazine was printed twice a month.

proper catalyser to justify Ceaușescu's image. The symbols of power are proof of that, just as the lack of nationalism in the written press before 1974. The election of March 28 was the natural continuation of the 1971 July Theses, its completion. The relation created by the press between the visual style and the dogmatic interpretation of theory by the regime condones this fact.

For example, in an article from November 1972, the focus on the importance of the development of a social and political conscience is important for the author, which names the article "*The more organic integration of the Romanian Communist Party in the process of constructing the multilaterally developed socialist society*".¹⁸⁹ This "organic integration" meant that the role of the leader as the representative of the party grows constantly in the near future. Also, by using the term coined by Ceaușescu, 'multilaterally developed socialist society', the author introduces in the article shades of the increasing role of leadership in the social development of the country. Most of the articles in the number deal with "*the expression of maturity and exigence of communists*", "*the importance of studying courses on socialist economic policy*", "*courses for the study of party and labour principles*", "*Historical and scientific materialism and the scientific view on world and life*", "*the ethic profile of the communist*" etc.¹⁹⁰ These are both general and abstract themes that deal directly and indirectly with leader-cult elements, having both an educative role and a political one. Furthermore, other relevant numbers deal with Marxist philosophy and the importance of atheism, the importance of guidelines given by party leadership for proper social development, and about the sanctions for those going astray from the party ideological boundaries.¹⁹¹

Following on, in a number from September 1973, insistence is put upon 'the moral

¹⁸⁹ Emilia Damian, "Integrarea tot mai organică a Partidului Comunist Român în procesul construcției societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate." [The more organic integration of the Romanian Communist Party in the process of constructing the multilaterally developed socialist society.] *Munca de Partid*, Number 13, November (1972): 1, 6.

¹⁹⁰ *Munca de Partid*, Number 13, November (1972): 4.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, Number 14, November (1972): 1.

values of socialism and their appliance in daily life, while also combating the bourgeois morals and way of life'.¹⁹² In the same time, there is discussion in the same number about “travelling to Popular Poland”, with an emphasis on personal experience that is also related to party and, mostly, leader exemplification.¹⁹³ The association between experience and party-leader related themes was a key marker of construction of elements belonging to the cult for the intellectual press, even before 1974. These elements were not obvious but nonetheless present.

After 1974, the elements on the leader are expanded, especially in reference to national elements and incorporation of elements that were meant to reinterpret certain norms of engagement towards the view on the nation, the party, the leader, and the intellectual circles. These aspects are mostly developed by touching upon themes like the example of Nicolae Ceaușescu as the unique exemplification of society and Party desires, insistence on the uniqueness of the Romanian socialist case as exhibited by its leader, and the increasing insistence on the role of Ceaușescu as President rather than secretary general.¹⁹⁴ In this sense, while there was a gradual construction of the cult in the 1970s, the number of articles after 1974 shows that the Election had a clear-defining role in changing press rhetoric. Out of over 20 specific articles, more than half had items of directly identifying the leader with the nation, which had not been presented in articles before 1974.

¹⁹² Ibid, Number 18, September, (1973): 5.

¹⁹³ Gheorghe Zamfir "Însemnări de călătorie în Polonia populară." [Notes on travelling in Popular Poland.] *Munca de Partid*, Number 18, September (1973): 4.

¹⁹⁴ For the most relevant of these themes see *Munca de Partid*, April, November (1974), December (1975), as well as June, July (1977), and November (1978), especially in its supplement for propaganda.

3.4. The development of the cultural press

The Romanian cultural scene has been one of the most impacted areas in terms of shifts that occurred within it. After Nicolae Ceaușescu's July Theses in 1971, a practical and theoretical revolution took place within the framework of cultural representations. Regarding the newspapers and magazines, their development have been highly important for the development of the leader cult, not only because it helped at its construction, but also because it influenced many parts of the socio-political life. In this sense, the audience is divided: one the one had there are the people of culture, the artists, and the writers, who had been impacted directly by the constant mutations within their field that had been constantly pushed for ideological change; on the other hand, people from other areas not directly involved with the dissemination of cultural messages were impacted as they were the receivers of magazines and newspapers that had a massive circulation.

Probably the most important impact of any cultural and political magazine was exhibited by the weekly magazine *Flacăra* (The Flame). Engineered as a social, political, and cultural circle, it influenced young people, cultural icons, and artists, while creating a movement that was preoccupied with the expansion and interpretation of cultural norms. The magazine became popular with the intellectual and general public alike, having a circulation number of almost half a million at the end of the 1970s, its printing numbers being limited by the regime afterwards.¹⁹⁵ This suggests a fear on part of the authorities in the development of too strong niche sector within the press, one on the cultural sections. The magazine was also interested, however, in shifting and interpreting the ideological paradigms as the regime was constantly modelling the cultural scene, as well as promoting a strong regime support by means of cultural readjustment. The material on *Flacăra* that could be researched is enormous

¹⁹⁵ See Mihai Voinea “Moartea revistei Flacăra. Povestea celor 100 de ani” [The death of the Flacăra magazine. The story of 100 years], available in Romanian on http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/moartea-revistei-flac-ra-povestea-celor-100-ani, accessed in May 2016.

and not all of it is the object of analysis for this chapter, for practical considerations. Its founder and main director, Adrian Păunescu, was an influential figure that the careers of a large number of artists and writers. He also was a fierce supporter of the regime as it started showing increasing signs of leader-related articles.

In the number of *Flacăra* from the last week of March, 1974, it reads on the first page: “The Oath of President Nicolae Ceaușescu”, accompanied by the picture of the leader with the three colours of the Romanian flag near him. The related article reads: *The unforgettable week in which Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu became the first President of Romania.*¹⁹⁶

The article goes on and the authors write:

In the moment in which Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu said at the Plenary tribune that: **“The law of retribution must mirror the revolutionary changes that have taken place in our country, to reflect the new quality of the working people, that of owners, and at the same time, that of producers of all material goods”**¹⁹⁷, the entire human history marched in front of us. [...] Our society does not create privileged people.¹⁹⁸

This theme of associating the leader with historical significance of events was to become a common theme in the magazine, and would also create a trend. After articles of this kind in the following months, the press started adopting motifs that were remarkable similar. In this sense, it is safe to say that *Flacăra* served as a trend-setter for the rest of the written press and artistry, beyond boundaries dealing with the background of audiences. In the previous years, this kind of association did not exist in the magazine's articles, the main subjects related to politics or ideological education being associated with the Party.¹⁹⁹

Continuing the article, it reads:

¹⁹⁶ Adrian Dohotaru and Coman Șova, “Neuitata săptămână în care tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu a devenit întâiul Președinte al României.” [The unforgettable week in which Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu became the first President of Romania.] *Flacăra*, Number 982, March 30 (1974): 2-4.

¹⁹⁷ My emphasis.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ For more detailed information on these trends before 1974, see *Almanah Flacăra* [Flacăra Almanac] 1972 and 1973. Also, *Flacăra*, November (1971), April (1972) and December (1973).

This cheerful election adopted unanimously mirrors the will of the entire nation (popor), who knows that putting the leadership of its destiny in the hands of its most important son, comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu, the man who has always known how to serve and represent it (the nation/the people), it makes a favour for itself.²⁰⁰

This excerpt shows almost all the elements that predominated in the following period. It is this language that had an enormous impact on the press representations of Ceaușescu. Almost all cultural newspapers had taken the example. Research shows that after articles of this kind, presented mostly in *Flacăra*, the media started using slogans that are similar. The element that transcends language is the identification of the leader with the will of the entire nation. This element is dominant in the discourse based in the leader-cult, having two proper branches: first, it expands the inner development of Ceaușescu's image, presenting him as one with the people; second, it is an expression of the regime's nationalistic tendencies that will explode at the end of the decade and the beginning of the 1980s. For these reasons, the magazine's articles have had a powerful impact going beyond culture, entering the political and social spheres.

Articles of this type conspicuously appear in the years after the election, as well as in the close proximity of it, things which happen with all newspapers, but these latter writings did not have the impact that *Flacăra* magazine had. In the same number, another article is self-explanatory as to how the cult of Ceaușescu will be dealt on from this point forward. Its title is "Tricolour over a heart". It is signed by Adrian Păunescu and reads:

What has happened this week in Romania belongs - it is not something new, all newspapers have said it! - to history. It seems important to me to see and understand why, all of a sudden political actions (by their intensity, by the results they have) are applicable in the sphere of concrete labour, why the Plenary of a party is such a practical action, for both the eye to see and the mind to perceive.[...] The nation has known how to absorb in itself, in her pure and dominating soul, all events, naming them as actions of national history and, at the same time, giving them - as moral and spiritual

²⁰⁰ Dohotaru, "Neuitata Săptămână", 3-4.

ingredients - to those that work. And it was a true festive day, the day that Nicolae Ceaușescu has become the President of Romania, its first President! In that spring morning, In the Romanian Parliament, President Ceaușescu, grizzled from the love he holds for his country, taken aback by emotions [...] has received what he has deserved since the first sign of his ambition in front of all dangers, since the first moment of his decision to serve all the life his life the Romanian people, since the very first moment when the national helm vibrated under his safe hands, not frightened by the coldness of any threat, has received the tricolour. So here he is: The President of Romania has embraced the flag of its nation. Here he is grizzled by work and care, glowing the same overwhelming vital energy. A tricolour over a heart! For him to defend it! Because it is defending him! A man who sits at the top of the authority of his people! It is like he cannot stand anymore, in his devoted love of country, that the flag of his country to wave far away from his being, he lets history tie him to that flag, he embraces that flag. A tricolour over a heart!²⁰¹

All the elements in Păunescu's article are completely relevant for the expansion of the leader cult in the Romanian case.²⁰² These will be taken by newspapers and magazine and, as research has showed, will be expanded according to each category's standards. Furthermore, as it can be observed, the constant national remarks combined with the insistence on the personal qualities of Ceaușescu, reinforce my idea that nationalism in the regime after 1974 was tied to the development of the leader cult, including in the written press.

Another magazine which had an impact on the intellectual sphere of society was *Săptămâna culturală a capitalei* [Cultural week of the capital]. Its director was Eugen Barbu, a famous regime writer, poet, and cultural icon who had an important role of increasing the image of Ceaușescu as a representative for the nation and Romanian people.

Barbu's legacy was rooted in the expansion of protochronism. His magazine was a clear instrument of propagating this movement.²⁰³ An analysis of primary sources shows the methods that were used for such goals. I have analysed the magazine "The Cultural Week of

²⁰¹ Adrian Păunescu, "Un tricolor peste o inimă." [A tricolour over a heart.] *Flacăra*, Number 982, March 30 (1974): 3.

²⁰² Also, see Appendix 6.

²⁰³ See Verdery, *National Ideology*, 185-6.

the Capital" in the broader context of trying to extrapolate tendencies in the press regarding the main motifs of cultural expression. Safe to say, the middle of the 1970s see a shift in the main areas focused in the publication. The numbers from January to March 1974 reveal mostly an interest in the recurring importance of the Romanian language, on the trips of Nicolae Ceaușescu abroad, and the reassessment of political themes such as the importance of communist politics.²⁰⁴ After the election of Ceaușescu as President, however, elements of national rebirth start to dramatically increase in the pages of the publication. The articles of people such as Aurel Zamfirescu, Ion Mihail Popescu, and Dumitru Constantin start to appear as front page editorials that deal with political ideas that emphasize the important role of the leader, the nation, Romanian history, and on interpretations of literature that should follow ideological party guidance.²⁰⁵ Starting with 1978, also important first page articles from Corneliu Vadim Tudor appear, dealing mostly with cultural politics and leader-related news that were put in the context of ideological dominance on the political sphere.

In the number from March 29, 1974, the articles dealt mostly with the election of Ceaușescu as in the case of *Flacăra*. Titled "Președintele României Socialiste" [The President of Socialist Romania], the article insists on themes of national unity and love towards the "elected" leader.²⁰⁶ As the article reads:

Like in other major events, but today more than ever in our history, the man invested with supreme and difficult responsibility as President of a socialist country - bringing to superior level the capacity of being leader of his country's communist party - has thought about his people and his country, has addressed the Romanian socialist nation being confident in the their unity, dedication, and qualities.²⁰⁷

The themes of national unity and specific emphasis on the qualities of the Romanian

²⁰⁴ *Săptămâna culturală a capitalei*, February 2 (1974): 2-5.

²⁰⁵ The most significant articles that I have done research on are from the magazine numbers of September 6, November 22, and December 20 (1974).

²⁰⁶ Dumitru Constantin, "Președintele României Socialiste." [President of Socialist Romania.] *Săptămâna culturală a capitalei*, Number 173, Friday, March 29 (1974): 1, 4-5.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

people as being represented by the President was a constant theme throughout the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu. Worth mentioning, the magazine before this point was in its majority focused on themes of culture and some Party news that were related to the social sphere. After March 28, the focus shifts on the persona of Ceaușescu. This trend is mostly visible in the numbers from 1978, when the leader's qualitative leadership was being exposed as much as possible. Like mentioned before, Corneliu Vadim Tudor's front-page editorials dealt mostly with this kind of thematic, having an impact on writers and being intend on guiding the ideological expansion of the regime. As an article reads:

We have felt -we say it from the beginning - a deep emotion knowing details about every moment from the peace and cooperation mission that Romania's President, comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu together with comrade Elena Ceaușescu have carried on the faraway lands of the United States of America.[...] In all this time, comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu was received with the honours which are due for a great personality which not only stand as guiding beacons for their nations, but also have the rare capability of writing, thorough all of their actions and words, a piece in the history of events that remain in the memory of history.²⁰⁸

It is in this period when Elena Ceaușescu's name starts to accompany that of her husband's. Their relationship will become symbiotic for the press by the 1980s, prompting historians and political scientists to refer to the second part of Ceaușescu's rule as “dynastic communism”.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, it can be seen that there is an expansion of the themes presented earlier, which the articles related even further. In accordance, most of Vadim Tudor's pieces in the weekly magazine rely on the same structure. In this particular case, it can be seen that Ceaușescu's leadership is put in international and global context, while in the same time being tied to the nation. The rebirth of a novel form of Romanian nationalism was in its bloom.

Overall, Barbu's weekly magazine had mostly an impact on the cultural and social

²⁰⁸ Corneliu Vadim Tudor, "O nouă solie de pace." [A new peace mission.] *Săptămâna culturală a capitalei*, Number 385, Friday, April 21 (1978): 1.

²⁰⁹ For further details on the idea of dynastic communism see Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 187-232, and Boia, *Romania*, 126-30.

environments. If *Flacăra* was the main instrument addressed to young people and also to the generations that had an impact on Romanian's social and political lives, *Săptămâna culturală* impacted mostly artists and writers that had been already key figures in the development of the regime as a power factor within the cultural sphere.

All in all, the written press across section lines have contributed to the expansion of Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult. In the 1980s, it would rather become labelled as a 'personality cult', mainly because of the extreme heights to which the personalities of the Presidential couple would come to be represented. In this sense, the 1970s patterns in press representations have been trendsetters, acting like catalysers for a period which was a more 'light' version of the more expansive development of the cult that would come in the following decade.

Conclusion

The multi-layered perspectives on the development of Nicolae Ceaușescu's leader cult are treated with a high degree of polarization in the current historiographical framework. Even more so, the involvement of the press in this construction is not less controversial since many of the figures collaborating with the communist authorities have had an impact in the post-communist society after 1989. Furthermore, the different ideas on the roots, evolution, and gradual construction of the cult do not demonstrate by themselves their intended goals, but rather do so in a cross-section analysis that involves both a high degree of research and an unfettered theoretical analysis.

The goal of this short study was to create a historical link between the main theoretical boundaries of Romania's leader cult and the role of the press in advancing its main narratives in the 1970s. In this sense, the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis derives its tenets from the main analysis, which uses the sources and current literature to deconstruct not only the historical factors that were involved in the bond between the press and political regime, but also the political and social entanglements between different spheres of Romanian society. Both practically and theoretically, it is hard to state that the construction of the leader cult was a one-method process. Rather, I insist that Ceaușescu's personality cult in Romania was a two-fold transformative process.

On the one hand, the main signals sent by the regime and received by both the press and society were picked up by the latter two and transformed into discourses of leadership praise. This long and gradual operation was supervised by a strictly ideological regime, which contributed to all actions with its insistence on strict Romanian interpretations of Marxist-Leninist dogma, which emphasized a strong nation rather than a strong class factor. The validity of these statements is mostly proved in the late 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, the

ubiquitous presence of the *Securitate* had the role of creating and maintaining fear rather than implementing terror. As such, the constant stress placed on the population formed the dominance of a ruling elite, which imposed its will on society by a constant dictatorial harassment motivated through the lens of power. Within this perspective, Nicolae Ceaușescu's rise was the result of the system's flawed logic, as well as the fact that his total control over power in the 1970s derived from the leader's insistence on controlling the interior tenets of the Party.

On the other hand, elements within society, including press directors and writers, political elites, and dominant social figures collaborated with the regime in the constant creation of myths regarding the Romanian leader. Political moments such as the Ninth, Tenth, and Eleven Congress, and mostly Ceaușescu's Election as President consolidated the leader's inner party power and exacerbated his 'qualities' to the point in which his image became mythologized. The leader became the unique expression of people's desires, of the nation's embodiment of will, and not to mention the historical transcendence of great Romanian leaders. All of this images were carved into collective memory by a regime that expressed its ideological interpretations, and the aforementioned groups from the society who accepted and modelled them. In this combination of politics and dogmatic dismissal of history, the Romanian population was trapped by the dominance of collective representations of ideas, which were more times than not forced on most social lives. The influence of political and social elites created social norms of engagement with authority inside the Romanian society, exerting the creation of a social mentality that has its repercussions into the post-communist political order. Content in newspapers was strictly controlled. This control, in turn, led to the development of self-censorship, to the point in which direct control became equated with the press. This mainly happened because there were no journalists that could challenge what was dictated to the press. The latter had become dominated by internal fear which prevented any

independent thought. In this sense, this two-way process presented above was the indicator of a common thing: the complete dominance of the press by the regime led to both content being dictated from above, and authors coming out with their own themes, which were in no way contradictory of regime policy. Over half of the numbers research show that authors which spearheaded the creating process developed even stronger old party themes. The large majority of these authors came from the cultural area.

The Romanian communist press had its role as one of the main instruments in society, controlled in its totality by the Party. Its responses to the regime had become personalized. If in the first half of the '70s the press responded to the ideological control of the Party by adhering to strict guidelines, in the second half of the decade the press relied mostly on self-censorship and pavlovian responses. In this way, Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult was constructed sinuously by a press that pushed forward the images and myths of the Romanian leader, which would eventually transform its persona of leadership into one of idolatry. The involvement of the regime with the press was stark. Ceaușescu himself participated in meetings with press directors, offered instructions to the press, and formed the ideological framework for its function. The attitude of benevolence on part of the press was also the product of a myth, one that placed the Romanian leader as the leading example of knowledge and trustworthiness within the country.

On March 28, 1974, Nicolae Ceaușescu became the first President of Romania. Besides representing the leader's inner consolidation of power, the election pushed forward the image of Ceaușescu as the supreme ruler of the country. The entire ceremony of inauguration was a manifestation of power. The symbols of supreme rule such as the sceptre and the sumptuous scene preparations were just elements that contributed to the creation of Ceaușescu as the living representation of the Romanian people. Moreover, the event triggered press responses based on national values which would shift media representations in the

direction of a personified ideology. Not only was national mythology presented as the main element which constitutes Romanian Marxist identity, but the leader also became their unique physical embodiment. In this sense, the Party, the Nation, the People, the Workers, together with all other elements of society, became one with the Leader. The former would represent them all. It is this image that the 1974 Election decisively contributed in forming, especially referring to the press manifestations of this myth. As such, “The 1974 Moment” stands as one of the key examples of regime and press manifestations, as well as it creates the opportune moment for the Romanian leader to finally exhibit his peculiar yet strong ideological perceptions on the wholeness of Romania’s society, which he defined with the July Theses of 1971.

More importantly, a major research conclusion is that after 1974 the leader cult became a permanent feature of social and political life. At Ceaușescu’s beginnings, the leader conspicuously combined inner Party politics with the advantages of an apparent liberalization period. On the other hand, in the second half of the 1970s, Ceaușescu’s image has been enhanced to such level that his glorification as leader became an element of the social life itself, no longer just a feature of leadership. This was done by the constant presence of elements in the press and leadership manifestations that treated Ceaușescu’s image based on the myths of his greatness. The second half of the decade signifies the passage from a Romanian society where the leader had a major impact, to a social atmosphere that came to be represented by the leader himself. The entire image of the cult changed, engraving the Romanian leadership (i.e. Ceaușescu) into the regular manifestations of daily life, dictating its permanency. These aspects have been determined empirically by observance of the perpetuation of myths in the press narratives, especially in newspapers and magazines that deal with intellectual themes and culture.

Empirical evidence gathered through research confirms that the press was not

appealing to the population in a general way. Because of its pyramidal structure, the messages of newspapers and magazines were structured in accordance to social background and education. In other words, audiences targeted had been approach by methods that were intrinsically different. In this sense, research shows that mass newspapers like *Scînteia* and *România Liberă* were mainly dealing with quantitative descriptions, pushing forward the main themes and motifs that were directed towards the general public. They we're not, however, offering deep analysis of theoretical concepts relating to the Romanian version of Marxism-Leninism. When these existed, they were usually part of a bigger narrative dealing with Party and/or leadership propaganda. This suggest that these newspapers were the dominance bearers of the regime, poised with the role of presenting the positive aspects of Romanian society to the general public, insisting with the same themes, such as “role of the Party”, “historical destiny of the nation”, “unicity of the leader”, and “the example that is Nicolae Ceaușescu”. Empirically discussing, these editorials left the analysis of such ideas to other newspapers, more specific-based. Although these were less present by numbers of circulation, they were nonetheless impactful on intellectual and cultural elites of society, which had a voice towards the general population and were given the role of pushing ideas forward.

In accordance, newspapers dedicated to workers had their own, specific, method of engaging the public. Research shows that these newspapers had been more aggressive than mass editorials in relating to worker themes, such as “the importance of the working class” or “the link between the proletariat and the nation”. *Munca* stood out during research for its constant comparison between Ceaușescu and the members of the working class. The leader's roots were extrapolated to great heights, his achievements somehow related to all aspects of ‘proletariat life’, and his presence as an example for all workers developed especially in numbers after 1975, mostly after the one-year anniversary of the Election from 1974. This

implies that labour newspapers (but not only) acted on impressing one of the largest parts of the population directly, since this shift was clearly seen after 1975. This is also suggested by the increase in number of members with working class backgrounds in the 1980s.

As much as mass and labour newspapers were attribute the role of large massagers for the Party, my empirical work has revealed that the strongest ideological themes were present in intellectual and cultural newspapers and magazines. Like emphasized earlier, the difference between these and the former being that the latter ones had an impact at an elite level, which in turn related to the public. This suggests that the regime was fairly preoccupied with its ‘unique’ interpretations of Marxist theory. These editorials were the main artisans of protochronism, the cultural exacerbation of Romania’s history. *Flacăra* and *Săptămîna culturală* were two of the most impactful newspapers listings. Their directors and editors, mainly Adrian Păunescu and Eugen Barbu, promoted a cultural style based on the party’s interpretation of history. The sections in these editorials that did not deal with political culture started to diminish in the second half of the 1970s. Research indicated that the large majority of these magazines designated large portions of their space to Nicolae Ceaușescu. Looking at trends in the archives, this was not a common occurrence in the late 1960s or early ’70s. Empirical findings suggest that these were the main contributors to the leader cult, mostly by emphasizing and analysing themes of political (i.e. ideological) nature through a cultural lens. Albeit incompatible in many regards, the insistence on qualitative analysis rather than quantitative created a link between Romanian national culture and Party political legacy, the latter’s representative being Ceaușescu himself. Furthermore, towards the end of the 1970s, the Party loses its momentum in appearance, articles being dedicated to the personal ‘great achievements’ of the Romanian leader.

As such, the main empirical findings of this thesis rely on how the press was structured to spread the Party messages to different target audiences. Many times, however, research

showed that authors like Păunescu, Barbu, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, Aurel Zamfirescu, or Dumitru Constantin promoted themes that were not present in other publications. This indicates that the regime did not always forced authors to publish or insist on certain themes, but they did it nonetheless, most probably motivated by personal and career gains, developing themes that the regime generally encouraged. Furthermore, other newspapers started attributing these themes to their authors, and took them over in their presentation. This aspect is critical because it shows how a certain brand of authors spearheaded the public presentation of themes and stood as opinion creators. In this sense, empirical evidence suggests that censorship in the later part of the decade was implemented when authors crossed party ideological lines. However, authors writing for intellectual magazines developed their own motifs of praising the leader. This suggests both a direct control of the press by the regime, which verified what was to be accepted for printing, and an indirect control as authors, under pressure from the regime, started developing their own themes which were in turn expanded in other newspapers.

The work of this thesis was based on the academic belief that the entwined analysis of leader cult theory and the examination of press manifestations would result in the historical research of a phenomenon which has decisively shaped Romanian collective identity. The Romanian case of Nicolae Ceaușescu's leader cult can be examined most firmly through the analysis of the relationship between the press and the regime. Together, the 1974 Election and the press are two of the main ingredients from the consolidation of Ceaușescu's power. There is, however, enormous possibility for further research, most importantly on the relationship between the regime and the 'inner censorship' present at the editors of newspapers. Once censorship had become internalized, any form of dissent would become a more facile target for a regime bent on ideological dominance. Any larger research on the subject of press manifestations could play a role in the development of theories as to how the regime in

Romania managed to connect to its press in contrast to other countries, an elements which this thesis has presented but intentionally not insisted upon. Furthermore, intense scholarly work on the aforementioned subject could bring into discussion the comparison regarding the personalization of power in communist regimes, and whether this function is one key element of power construction in state-socialist Eastern Europe, or a result of it.

Appendices

List of appendices:

Appendix 1 - *Legea numărul 1/1974* [Law Nr.1/1974] in effect under the amended 1965 Constitution.

Appendix 2 - Nicolae Ceaușescu with the Presidential sceptre.

Appendix 3 - Ștefan Voitec presenting Ceaușescu with the symbols of power.

Appendix 4 - Pictures of Ceaușescu from *Săptămîna culturală*, *Femeia*, and *Munca*.

Appendix 5 - Ceaușescu's speech in *Scînteia*, March 29, 1974.

Appendix 6 - Picture and article on Ceaușescu in *Flacăra*, April, 1974.

Appendix 7 - Nicolae Ceaușescu's speech on New Year's Eve. *Munca*, January 3, 1974.

Appendix 8 - Portrait and poem on Ceaușescu in *Pentru patrie* (For the homeland), November, 1975.

Appendix 9 - Elena and Nicolae Ceaușescu in a popular visual representation (painting).

Appendix 10 – Celebratory *Scînteia* newspaper on May 9, 1975, and May 1, 1976. Also, *Munca*, August 23, 1975.

Appendix 11 - Front page with the Romanian leader in *Munca*, July 25, 1975.

Appendix 1

Subject: *Legea numărul 1/1974* [Law Nr.1/1974] in effect under the amended 1965 Constitutional framework. Text in Romanian.

Source: <http://legislatie.resurse-pentru-democratie.org/constitutie/constitutia-republicii-socialiste-romania-1965.php>

Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania

Art. 71.

Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania este seful statului si reprezinta puterea de stat in relatiile interne si internationale ale Republicii Socialiste Romania.

Art. 72.

Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania este ales de Marea Adunare Nationala pe durata legislaturii, in prima sesiune a acesteia, si ramane in functie pana la alegerea presedintelui in legislatura urmatoare.

Art. 73.

La alegerea sa, Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania depune in fata Marii Adunari Nationale urmatorul jurament:

"Jur sa slujesc cu credinta patria, sa actionez cu fermitate pentru apararea independentei, suveranitatii si integritatii tarii, pentru bunastarea si fericirea intregului popor, pentru edificarea socialismului si comunismului in Republica Socialista Romania!

Jur sa respect si sa apar Constitutia si legile tarii, sa fac totul pentru aplicarea consecventa a principiilor democratiei socialiste, pentru afirmarea in viata societatii a normelor eticii si echitatii socialiste!

Jur sa promovez neabatut politica externa de prietenie si alianta cu toate tarile socialiste, de colaborare cu toate natiunile lumii, fara deosebire de orinduire sociala, pe baza deplinei egalitati in drepturi, de solidaritate cu fortele revolutionare, progresiste, de pretutindeni, de pace si prietenie intre popoare!

Jur ca imi voi face intotdeauna datoria cu cinste si devotament pentru stralucirea si maretia natiunii noastre socialiste, a Republicii Socialiste Romania!"

Art. 74.

Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania este comandantul suprem al fortelor armate si presedintele Consiliului Apararii Republicii Socialiste Romania.

Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania indeplineste, in conformitate cu Constitutia si cu legile, urmatoarele atributii principale:

1. Prezideaza Consiliul de Stat;
 2. Prezideaza sedintele Consiliului de Ministri atunci cind apare necesar;
 3. Stabileste masurile de importanta deosebita ce privesc interese supreme ale tarii, care urmeaza a fi supuse de catre Marea Adunare Nationala spre consultare poporului, prin referendum;
 4. Numeste si revoca, la propunerea primului-ministru, pe viceprim-ministrii, ministrii si presedintii altor organe centrale ale administratiei de stat, care fac parte din Consiliul de Ministri; numeste si revoca pe conducatorii organelor centrale de stat, care nu fac parte din Consiliul de Ministri; numeste si revoca pe membrii Tribunalului Suprem;
 5. In timpul in care Marea Adunare Nationala nu este intrunita in plenul sau, numeste si revoca pe presedintele Tribunalului Suprem si pe procurorul general;
 6. Acorda gradele de general, amiral si maresal;
 7. Confera decoratiile si titlurile de onoare; autoriza purtarea decoratiilor conferite de alte state;
 8. Acorda gratierea;
 9. Acorda cetatenia, aproba renuntarea la cetatenie si retrage cetatenia romana; aproba stabilirea domiciliului in Romania pentru cetatenii altor state;
 10. Acorda dreptul de azil;
 11. Stabileste rangurile misiunilor diplomatice, acrediteaza si recheama reprezentantii diplomatici ai Republicii Socialiste Romania;
 12. Primeste scrisorile de acreditare si de rechemare ale reprezentantilor diplomatici ai altor state;
 13. Incheie tratate internationale in numele Republicii Socialiste Romania; poate da imputerniciri, in acest scop, primului-ministru ori unor membri ai Consiliului de Ministri sau unor reprezentanti diplomatici;
 14. In interesul apararii Republicii Socialiste Romania, al asigurarii ordinii publice sau securitatii statului, proclama, in caz de urgenta, in unele localitati sau pe intreg teritoriul tarii, starea de necesitate.
- In indeplinirea atributiilor sale, Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania emite decrete prezidentiale si decizii.

Art. 76.

Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania este raspunzator fata de Marea Adunare Nationala pentru intreaga sa activitate. Presedintele Republicii Socialiste Romania prezinta periodic Marii Adunari Nationale dari de seama asupra exercitarii atributiilor sale si asupra dezvoltarii statului.

Appendix 2

Subject: Nicolae Ceaușescu with the presidential sceptre in a popular image of the leader.

Source: Picture by adevarul.ro, found on

<http://s2.ziareromania.ro/?mmid=604711e1e82e092719>



Appendix 3.

Subject: Nicolae Ceaușescu at the moment of receiving the presidential sceptre from Ștefan Voitec. One of the most representative pictures of the Romanian leader.

Source:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ceaurescu_receiving_the_presidential_sceptre_1974.jpg



Appendix 4

Subject: Pictures from magazines and newspapers across sections relating the Election of Nicolae Ceaușescu as President.

Source: Biblioteca Central Universitară [Central University Library], Bucharest.



First page, *Săptămîna culturală a capitalei*.



First page on *Femeia*, April, 1974.



Pattern of reporting that was present after the Election in all major newspapers. Taken from *Munca*, March 29, 1974, page 3.

Appendix 5

Subject: Pattern of Ceaușescu's speech present in all major newspapers. Taken from *Scînteia*, March 29, 1974.

Source: Central University Library, Bucharest

FUNCȚIA DE PREȘEDINTE PUBLICII SOCIALISTE ROMÂNIA *Cuvîntarea tovarășului NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU*

Stimate tovarășe și
Stimați tovarăși deputați,

Doresc să încep prin a vă mulțumi dumneavoastră, aleșilor națiunii, pentru încrederea ce mi-ați acordat-o alegându-mă în cea mai înaltă și de răspundere funcție în stat — aceea de președinte al Republicii Socialiste România.

Este foarte greu să găsec cele mai potrivite cuvinte pentru a da glas sentimentelor de care sînt cuprins în acest moment. Știu că încrederea pe care mi-ați acordat-o dumneavoastră, ca și încrederea și dragostea pe care mi le arată întregul popor, se datoresc faptului că din momentul în care am intrat în mișcarea revoluționară și am devenit membru al Partidului Comunist Român, am slujit fără preget cauza eliberării sociale și naționale a poporului, cauza socialismului și comunismului. De mai mulți ani partidul și poporul mi-au încredințat cele mai înalte răspunderi în partid și în stat. Am făcut totul pentru a le duce la îndeplinire în cele mai bune condițiuni, pentru îndeplinirea neabătută a politicii partidului nostru.

De la Congresul al IX-lea, patria noastră socialistă a parcurs o importantă etapă istorică pe calea dezvoltării sale economico-sociale, a ridicării bunăstării și fericirii poporului. În toți acești ani, am acționat cu hotărîre neabătută pentru a uni energiile partidului, ale întregului popor în vederea îndeplinirii programului de dezvoltare

în aceste împrejurări solemne, doresc să reafirm că toate mărețele îndepliniri din acești ani — ca de altfel tot ceea ce am realizat în epoca construcției socialiste — prezintă opera eroicei noastre clase muncitoare, care își îndeplinește cu cinste misiunea de clasă conducătoare a societății, a harnicei și minunatei țărâni muncitoare, care în strînsă alianță cu clasa muncitoare constituie temelia de granit a orînduirii noastre socialiste, a talentatei intelectualități, care în colaborare cu muncitorimea și țărînimea aduce o contribuție de preț la îndeplinirea programului de dezvoltare a țării noastre, opera tuturor oamenilor muncii, fără deosebire de naționalitate. Iată de ce doresc să adresez, de la această înaltă tribună, cele mai calde mulțumiri poporului pentru încrederea ce mi-a acordat-o, pentru încrederea manifestată în partid, pentru abnegația și devotamentul cu care a îndeplinit și îndeplinește politica Partidului Comunist Român — expresie fidelă a intereselor sale supreme. (Aplauze puternice, prelungite).

Doresc, de asemenea, să subliniez și cu acest prilej că toate marile realizări dobîndite de poporul nostru demonstrează convingător justetea liniei politice generale marxist-leniniste a Partidului Comunist Român. Ele atestă cu tărie că partidul nostru a știut și știe să aplice, în mod creator, legitățile generale ale socialismului la condițiile concrete din țara noastră.

trivite căi de dezvoltare a forțelor de producție, de organizare a societății, de edificare a noli orînduirii sociale. Succesele poporului român pe calea zidirii societății socialiste se datoresc faptului că partidul nostru s-a călăuzit și se călăuzește neabătut, în întreaga sa activitate, de concepția revoluționară despre lume a proletariatului — materialismului dialectic și istoric.

Am acționat întotdeauna pentru întărirea partidului, a unității sale politice, organizatorice, și ideologice, pentru creșterea rolului politic conducător al partidului în toate domeniile de activitate, considerînd că aceasta este garanția realizării cu succes a liniei sale generale, a programului său.

Pornind de la faptul că în țara noastră, locuiesc, de veacuri, și cetățeni de altă naționalitate, am militat neabătut pentru realizarea în cadrul societății a deplinei egalități în drepturi și a frăției în muncă și luptă a tuturor oamenilor muncii, fără deosebire de naționalitate. Am avut permanent în minte învătămintele istoriei, care a testat cu putere de lege că numai în strînsă unitate, în condiții de deplină egalitate în drepturi, oamenii muncii pot înfrînge exploatarea și pot cuceri libertatea și independența patriei, pot înfrînge orice greutăți, pot asigura progresul societății, pot da viață idealului de libertate și dreptate socială, pot înălța edificiul socialismului în patria noastră. (Aplauze puternice).

Am acționat neabătut pentru întărirea conducerii și muncii colective în toate sectoarele activității. Îndeplinirea convenită a principiilor conducerii și muncii colective, a permis participarea activă a tuturor cadrelor de partid și în stat, a maselor largi populare, la elaborarea și îndeplinirea politicii interne și externe a partidului.

Tochmai faptul că organele de partid și de stat au acționat în strînsă unitate, au de bătit larg problemele de voltărie țării, a permis găsirea celor mai potrivite mijlocuri pentru progresul societății noastre. Iată de ce sînt pe deplin conștient că marile sarcini care stau în fața partidului și poporului nostru nu pot fi îndeplinite decât aplicînd neabătut principiile conducerii și muncii colective, unind eforturile maselor populare, valorificînd înțelepciunea poporului nostru. Aceasta asigură victoria în fărîmarea societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate, a comunismului în România! (Aplauze puternice).

Nu trebuie uitată nici un moment necesitatea întăririi statului, a creșterii rolului său de organizator în toate domeniile de activitate, necesitatea de a veghea necontenit la întărirea forțelor noastre armate, la ridicarea capacității de apărare a patriei, de a acorda atenție întăririi organelor de stat, ale Ministerului de Interne și Justiție, pentru a-și putea îndeplini îndatoririle față de patrie și popor în conformitate cu Constituția și legile țării.

Am considerat că are o importanță de prim ordin apărarea hotărîtă a intereselor poporului muncitor, respectarea

Appendix 6

Subject: Article and presentation of Ceaușescu in Flacăra. The article from the magazines is signed by Adrian Păunescu and it is titled: *A tricolour over a heart*.

Source: Central University Library, Bucharest



un tricolor peste o inimă

Ceea ce s-a petrecut săptămîna aceasta în România aparține — nu e o noutate, au spus-o toate ziarele! — istoriei. Mi se pare însă interesant să remarcăm și să înțelegem și de ce niște fapte politice se înscriu dintr-o dată (prin intensitatea consecințelor pe care le generează, în colectivitatea în care se petrec) în domeniul muncii concrete, de ce o plenară a unui partid este o activitate tot atât de practică, de la îndemîna ochiului și minții, cum ar fi ridicarea unei uzine, de ce sesiunea unui parlament, prin dinamismul și radicalitatea deciziilor pe care le ia, seamănă atât de izbitor cu un cîmp de griu în primăvară, cu o realitate adică, o realitate a muncii și a roadelor muncii.

Unul din secretele politicii României de azi, unul din acele puncte care dau diferența specifică a politicii acestui partid al nostru, este că politica nu e înțeleasă ca un scop în sine, ci ca un mijloc prin care omul să ajungă mai repede, cît mai repede — pe un drum încetinit de atîtea neazuri și handicapi — la merita lui fericire, care de prea multe ori i-a fost promisă pentru viitor, ca într-un joc de-a orizontul, de care, cu cît te apropii, cu atît se depărtează. Politica noastră nu e un joc de-a cuvintele, nu e o indeletnicire de sine și pentru sine, politica noastră, așa cum o spunem deseori prin cei ce ne reprezintă, e o politică pusă în slujba. În slujba unui popor, în slujba unui ideal, în slujba omului, în slujba unor țeluri concrete. Săptămîna aceasta, la care mă refer, una din săptămînile-cheie ale calendarului politic românesc, a fost asimilată repede în datele ei esențiale de viața normală a țării, deși nu s-au petrecut lucruri care se petrec în fiecare zi. Națiunea a știut să resoarbă în ea, în suflul ei pur și dominator, toate evenimentele, brevetîndu-le ca acte ale istoriei naționale și, totodată, dîndu-le — ca pe niște alimente morale și spirituale întăritoare — celor ce muncesc.

Și a fost o sărbătoare, a fost marea clipă în care Nicolae Ceaușescu devenea președintele României, întîiul ei președinte! În acea dimineață de primăvară, în Parlamentul României, președintele Ceaușescu, cărunt de grija permanentă a țării, cu ochii aprinși de o emoție, care nu-mi amintesc să-l mai fi cuprins din momentul în care, sărbătorit la 55 de ani, și-a evocat părinții, a primit ceea ce i se cuvenea încă din prima clipă a dirzeniei sale în fața tuturor primejdiilor, încă din prima clipă a hotărîrii sale de a sluji toată viața poporului român, încă din prima clipă în care cîrma națională a vibrat sub mîinile sale sigure, nesperiare de gerul nici unei amenințări cu forța, a primit tricolorul, lată-l deci: președintele României îmbrățișat de steagul patriei sale! lată-l deci încărunțit de muncă și de grijă, iradiind aceeași copleșitoare energie vitală! Un drapel peste o inimă! Ca s-o opere! Pentru că ea îl apără! Un bărbat aflat pe culmea cea mai de sus a autorității obștei sale! Parcă nemaisuportînd, în deoranta sa dragoste de patrie, ca steagul patriei să fluture departe de ființa lui, el lasă istoria să-l lege de acel steag, el se înconjoară de acel steag. Un tricolor peste o inimă!

Adrian PĂUNESCU

Source: Central University Library, Bucharest



Appendix 8

Subject: Portret of Nicolae Ceaușescu present in *Pentru patrie* (For the homeland) magazine. It is associated with a poem by Victor Tulbure titled: *The hearts say: Ceaușescu*. One of the most clear defined representations of the leader cult in the press.

Source: Central University Library, Bucharest.



Victor TULBURE

Appendix 9

Subject: Elena and Nicolae Ceaușescu in one of the most popular visual representations of the second half of the 1970s. The motif of the ruling family that is surrounded by children and the Romanian flag was instrumental in creating the image/myth of the leader as the embodiment of the nation. Furthermore, it is an exemplification of the development Elena Ceaușescu's own cult.

Source: <http://www.contributors.ro/politica-doctrine/stalinism-teroare-narcisism-despre-cultul-lui-ceausescu/>



Appendix 10

Subject: Press representations of specific Party events

Source: Central University Library, Bucharest



On the left, *Scînteia* newspaper on May 9, 1975, with special praises to Nicolae Ceaușescu. On the right, same newspaper number from May 1, 1976, with special labour celebrations.



Munca newspaper on August 23, 1975. Specific for the period, presentation of the symbols of Romanian communism, a poem dedicated to leadership and party, plus a main article.

Appendix 11

Subject: Nicolae Ceaușescu on the front page of *Munca* newspaper, edition from July 25, 1975. This would become a habit for newspapers of the time, emulating this kind of representation. As such, the picture, discourse, and quote from the leader would accompany an increasing numbers of front-page editorials.

Source: Central University Library, Bucharest

Proletari din toate țările, uniți-vă!

MUNCA

ORGAN AL CONSILIULUI CENTRAL AL UNIUNII GENERALE A SINDICATELOR DIN ROMÂNIA

Anul XXXI nr. 8291 • Vineri 25 iulie 1975 • 8 pagini 50 bani

A apărut volumul:

PENTRU PRIETENIE, ÎNTELEGERE ȘI COLABORARE

O prezentare a vizitei oficiale a președintelui Nicolae Ceaușescu și a tovarăsei Elena Ceaușescu în Japonia, Filipine, Pakistan, Iordania și Tunisia, precum și a vizitelor președintelui Republicii Socialiste România în Republica Arabă Siriană și Republica Arabă Egipt.

EDITURA POLITICĂ

„Transpunerea în viață a obiectivelor mărețe înscrise în planul cincinal 1976-1980 cere din partea tuturor o activitate intensă, susținută, muncă disciplinată, spirit de răspundere, o preocupare de zi cu zi pentru organizarea superioară a muncii, măsuri ferme pentru punerea cât mai largă în valoare a rezervelor și posibilităților existente în fiecare județ, în fiecare oraș și comună, în fiecare întreprindere și loc de muncă.”

NICOLAE CEAUȘESCU



Pentru progresul țării și bunăstarea poporului

Între momentele de referință, pentru continuarea în ritm înalt a creșterii potențialului economic al țării, a progresului calitativ, armonios al tuturor ramurilor și sectoarelor de activitate și ridicarea nivelului de trai al poporului, în conformitate cu Programul partidului, cu hotărârile Congresului al XI-lea, recenta Plenară comună a Comitetului Central al Partidului și Consiliului Suprem al Dezvoltării Economice și Sociale a României, se constituie ca un eveniment de o deosebită rezonanță.

Îl conferă atribute de anvergură hotărâtoare în evoluția țării ample, magistrale expuneri a secretarului general al partidului, tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu, sinteză cu forță de document asupra evoluției economico-sociale în anii cincinalului pe care îl încheiem curînd și direcționare clară, precisă a ceea ce avem de făcut în anii 1976-1980 în desfășurarea grandioasei opere de făurire a societății socialiste multilaterale dezvoltate și înaintare a țării spre comunism.

Orientările spre parametrii de vîrf sau superiori celor din Directivele Congresului al XI-lea pentru cincinalul 1976-1980, sarcinile expres stabilite pentru fiecare domeniu de activitate ilustrează o dată mai mult capacitatea de analiză și provizorie a conducătorului ales de partid și țară în fruntea sa, bazată pe cunoașterea nemijlocită a realității, pe încrederea neîmurmurată în forța de creație, în abnegația și înaltul patriotism al poporului, în resursele materiale și umane ale țării, așezate pe temelii socialiste.

Tot ce s-a făcut în acest an în patria noastră, tot ceea ce înseamnă progresul economic — miraculos în opinea celor ce nu ne cunosc — tot ce înseamnă bogăția de astăzi a țării, trairul de fiecare zi al oamenilor ei, indiferent de naționalitate, trairi ce cunoscute an de an noi trepte și împliniri de bunăstare materială și înăvuiare spirituală își are izvorul în politica Partidului Comunist Român, pe care poporul întreg și-a înșușit-o și o înfăptuiește cu pe cel mai scump crez al său.

De la tribuna acestei plinări cu priviri luminoase, luminate de mindria poporului pentru ceea ce s-a înfăptuit sub conducerea partidului, tovarășul Nicolae Ceaușescu, în tălășă perspectiva anilor noului cincinal cu tot ceea ce va însemna el pentru progresul economic al țării, pentru bunăstarea poporului.

(Continuare în pag. 2-a)

PRODUCȚIA GLOBALĂ INDUSTRIALĂ

Indicator	Valoare
Prevederi în Directivele Congresului al XI-lea al P.C.R.	9-10 %
Propunerii în proiectul planului cincinal 1976-1980	11,2 %

CHELTUIELI SOCIAL — CULTURALE PE O FAMILIE (în medie)

An	Valoare (Lei)
1975	7500
1980	10.900

- MUNCĂ AVÎNTATĂ PENTRU RECUPERAREA PAGUBELOR, DEPĂȘIREA PLANULUI ȘI ANGAJAMENTELOR PE 1975 (pag. 3-a)
- OMUL ȘI LEGEA
- La intervenția gazetei „MUNCA” (pag. 5-a)
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