

**YOUTH AND POLITICS IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA (1980-1989)**

by

Veronica Szabo

Bachelor of Arts, University of Bucharest, 1999

Masters' of Arts, University of Pittsburgh, 2003

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Science in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2012

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences

This dissertation was presented

by

Veronica Szabo

It was defended on

April 30, 2012

and approved by

Kathleen Blee, PhD, Distinguished Professor, Department of Sociology

Mohammed Bamyeh, PhD, Professor, Department of Sociology

Irina Livezeanu, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of History

Dissertation Advisor: John Markoff PhD, Distinguished University Professor, Department of

Sociology

Copyright © by Veronica Szabo

2012

## **YOUTH AND POLITICS IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA (1980-1989)**

Veronica Szabo, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2012

My research in Romania examines the presence of politics in the everyday lives of youth in the 1980s. While most research on youth's political opinions focuses on First World democracies, my work examines how political education took place in the tightly controlled, non-democratic context of communist Romania. I tried to understand how Romanian youth experienced politics in their everyday lives in the 1980s, under a "totalitarian-sultanistic" system. I try to answer this question by looking at three levels: the lived and remembered experience of students and their teachers, the "indoctrination" materials such textbooks and policy documents they were exposed to, and the social research from the 1980s aimed at assessing the effectiveness of their "indoctrination".

My findings show that ideological indoctrination of youth in 1980s Romania existed more as intent (Party policies) than as outcome, thus rendering the "totalitarian" frame as outdated for the analysis of everyday life. The education system and youth organizations that were supposed to do the "indoctrination work" did it in an inept and ambivalent fashion, and whatever they accomplished in schools was further deconstructed in autonomous spaces of expression within family and friendship circles. Furthermore, research commissioned by youth organizations and collected in the 1980s clearly shows evidence of their failing and awareness of it among members of the regime.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>1.0 POLITICS OF A GENERATION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>1.2 RESEARCHER IDENTITY.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>1.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>2.0 POLITICS, SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2.1 THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT AND EDUCATION UNDER COMMUNISM .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>2.2 TEACHER INTERVIEWS.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>2.3 SOCIAL SCIENCE TEXTBOOKS .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>3.0 THE EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCE OF ROMANIAN YOUTH: PARENTS, FAMILY, FRIENDS.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>3.1 LENS TRANSITION: A SLOW SHIFT FROM MACRO TO MICRO ANALYSIS ON SOCIALIST EASTERN EUROPE.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>3.2 EVERYDAY COMMUNISM IN ROMANIA .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>3.3 THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AS SEEN FROM THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE.....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>3.3.1 Preschool.....</b>	<b>67</b>

3.3.2	Grade school .....	67
3.3.3	High school .....	69
3.4	<b>REMEMBERING POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE 1980S .....</b>	<b>72</b>
3.4.1	The influence of parents .....	74
3.4.2	The influence of teachers and youth political organizations (the Pioneers and the Union of Communist Youth) .....	78
3.4.2.1	The Pioneer experience .....	84
3.4.2.2	The Union of Communist Youth experience .....	85
4.0	<b>YOUTH AS RESEARCH SUBJECT IN 1980 ROMANIA .....</b>	<b>88</b>
4.1	<b>ROMANIAN SOCIOLOGY UNDER COMMUNISM.....</b>	<b>88</b>
4.2	<b>THE YOUTH RESEARCH CENTER (CENTRUL DE CERCETARI PENTRU PROBLEMELE TINERETULUI) AND ITS RESEARCH ABOUT THE UNION OF COMMUNIST YOUTH.....</b>	<b>92</b>
4.3	<b>RESEARCH DATA FROM THE COMMUNIST ERA – ISSUES OF RELIABILITY .....</b>	<b>96</b>
4.4	<b>THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON YOUTH RESEARCH DATA .....</b>	<b>101</b>
5.0	<b>CONCLUSIONS .....</b>	<b>117</b>
	<b>APPENDIX A . RESEARCH TOPICS IN THE CENTER FOR YOUTH PROBLEMS REPORTS.....</b>	<b>126</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>133</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Dimensions of socialist patriotism.....	104
Table 2. The importance of loving ones' country I .....	105
Table 3. The importance of loving ones' country II .....	106
Table 4. The importance of loving ones' country III.....	107
Table 5. The importance of protecting socialist property .....	108
Table 6. The importance of being devoted to the socialist system .....	108
Table 7. Evaluation of the efficacy of the Union of Communist Youth activity .....	110
Table 8. Factors contributing to one's cultural education.....	111
Table 9. The effectiveness of propaganda among youth .....	112
Table 10. Deficiencies in the Union of Communist Youth leadership .....	114
Table 11. Research topics in the Center for Youth Problems Reports .....	126

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is based on research supported by a National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant (0326700), two University of Pittsburgh International Studies Fund grants, a University of Pittsburgh European Union Center Summer Pre-dissertation Fellowship and a Barbara Tomczyk research grant for research in Eastern Europe.

Many people have helped me along the way. First of all, I need to thank my advisor John Markoff whose incredibly broad interdisciplinary expertise inspired me to make so many interesting connections. His contagious enthusiasm and constant support kept me going. Kathleen Blee's scholarship and her well-pointed critical comments and insights improved my work and helped me become a better scholar and researcher. Irina Livezeanu was my wonderful "Romanian oasis" in Pittsburgh, a place where I always could take comfort and find an expert guide for navigating Romanian history. Mohammed Bamyeh, Shannon Woodcock, Arpad von Klimo and the members of Modern European History Workshop at Pitt (Ana Kladnik, Narcis Tulbure, Madalina Veres, Andrew Behrendt and Adelina Stefan) provided valuable comments on my drafts. Interesting suggestions and encouragement from Maria Bucur, Padraic Kenney, Daniel Chirot and Vladimir Tismaneanu helped me in various stages of research and writing.

Mitchell Seligson, Robert Hayden, Ilya Prizel, Jonathan Harris, Irene Frieze, Lisa Brush, and Debbie Gould read my early proposal drafts and helped me improve my research design.

My fieldwork in Romania benefitted from the friendship and support of my undergraduate university advisor, Vintila Mihailescu. I also owe thanks to Marian Zulean, Doina-Olga Stefanescu, Cristian Vasile, Radu Malureanu, Sandra Bardan, and the researchers and staff at the former Center for Research on Youth (Sorin Mitulescu, Gina Anghelescu and Adrian Neacsu). I would also like to thank all former teachers, researcher and students and everyone else who was kept here anonymous for taking the time to kindly share their stories with me.

Many friends and colleagues have been by my side over the years, too many for this small section, but I am particularly grateful to Veronica Lifrieri, Bianca Botea-Coulaud, Ashley Currier, Maria-Jose Alvarez, and Kai Heidemann. A heartfelt thank you goes to my extremely supportive family, and especially my mother, Dragos and Erika Olea, who helped with logistics, and Maurice whose comments significantly improved the final version of this dissertation.

## 1.0 POLITICS OF A GENERATION

FLASH BACK / FLESH BACK

by Saviana Stanescu

1990 – I am revolutionary  
1989 – I am alive  
1988 – I am insane  
1987 – I am stuck  
1986 – I am a student  
1985 – I am graduating  
1984 – I am a poet  
1983 – I am in high school  
1982 – I am stuck  
1981 – I am a ‘young communist’  
1980 – I am 13  
1979 – I am a Pioneer  
1978 – I am stuck  
1977 – I am the best  
1976 – I am the worst  
1975 – I am declaiming poems with Ceausescu  
1974 – I am reading poems with Ceausescu  
1973 – I am taught poems with Ceausescu  
1972 – I am happy  
1971 – I am laughing  
1970 – I am playing  
1969 – I am talking  
1968 – I am walking  
1967 – I am born  
FLESH FORWARD

For many members of the successful New York playwright and poet’s Saviana Stanescu generation, it seems that as more time separated them from the past, the more salient the past became in how they made sense of their place in this world. They were the generation born in the years after Ceausescu’s rise to power (1965) that completed high school before Ceausescu’s fall in 1989. They were the last generation to be educated with the goal of serving the socialist

system and the first one to be thrust into adulthood, democracy, and market capitalism at the same time. Stanescu's reflections on her youth years are symptomatic for this generation as reflected in an increasing number of cultural productions. During the past decade, an unprecedented number of films were produced (often called the Romanian film "New Wave"), including documentaries like *Cold Waves*, *Children of the Decree* and also autobiographies, oral histories, plays, blogs, forums and social research emerged (described in detail in CHAPTER TWO), all drawing from everyday life experiences of the 1980s.

Aside from noting the uniqueness of this generation I belong to as well, I wondered about the political component of the experiences that bring them together as a generation and about the broader political context that structured these experiences. I sought to cast some light on the political upbringing of these young Romanians about whom little is known by way of research and who were only thought of as products of the "totalitarian communist regime". Although I find the totalitarian regime categorization useful for describing political regimes in broad, geopolitical terms, it offers little insight into the more micro level of everyday life experience. Furthermore, such broad categories speak more about the political regimes' intentions, propaganda and policies than about their non-organized, non-elite political subjects.

Perhaps a good way of understanding the aim of my work is to look at the most studied and controversial totalitarian regime in history, Nazi Germany, and the three distinct phases that marked the scholarship trying to understand this regime outlined by Eric Johnson.<sup>1</sup> The first phase was characterized by a top-down approach, influenced by Hannah Arendt<sup>2</sup>'s Orwellian-inspired work on totalitarianism, that emphasized the immense power of the Nazi regime and its

---

<sup>1</sup> Eric A Johnson, *Nazi Terror: the Gestapo, Jews, and ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 10–21.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1966).

secret service arm, the Gestapo over the German population. The second phase (1960-1980), based more on archival and social research, challenged the previous paradigm and ushered in a more nuanced view showing divisions, contradictions, resistance, and a lot more diversity within both the regime and the population.<sup>3</sup> The third and most recent phase took the focus on everyday life and ordinary citizens to a new level, showing they not only engaged in resistance activities but through their willing complicity, support, and voluntary aid sustained the Gestapo and Nazi regime activity. Johnson's research in the archives from Cologne uncovered similar "complicities," but at the same time he warned about the dangers of simplistic interpretations of such findings, such as downplaying the role of repression and the Gestapo and trivializing the role of the opposition. Most Germans, he argues, "[...] were motivated not by a willful intent to harm others, but by a mixture of cowardice, apathy, and a slavish obedience to authority."<sup>4</sup>

Research on the Ceausescu regime in Romania went through a similar first top-down phase and over the past ten years started moving in the direction of more nuanced and research grounded direction.<sup>5</sup> By introducing the everyday life accounts in my research I took on a similar task of uncovering the ways in which the experience of ordinary citizens complicates the totalitarian frame through resistance or complicity, without losing sight of the repressive context in which it occurred.

---

<sup>3</sup> See Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1996); Christopher R Browning, *OrdinaryMen: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Johnson, *NaziTerror*, 21.

<sup>5</sup> See Ruxandra Ivan, Daniel Barbu, and Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România, *"Transformarea Socialista": Politici ale Regimului Comunist între Ideologie si Administratie* (Iasi: Polirom, 2009); Zoltán Rostás and Andrei Pippidi, *Chipurile Orasului: Istorii de Viata în Bucuresti: Secolul XX* (Iasi: Polirom, 2002); Zoltán Rostás and Sorin Stoica, *Istorie la Firul Ierbii: Documente Sociale Orale* (Bucuresti: Tritonic, 2003).

In one of the most complex and thorough regime classifications by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan<sup>6</sup> Romania is categorized as a “Totalitarian-cum-Sultanistic” regime, according to four comparative dimensions: pluralism, ideology, leadership and mobilization. It was a totalitarian regime because it has “eliminated almost all pre-existing political, economic, and social pluralism, had a unified, articulated, guiding, utopian ideology, intensive and extensive mobilization, and a leadership that rules, often charismatically, with undefined limits and great unpredictability and vulnerability for elites and nonelites alike”<sup>7</sup> and “sultanistic”<sup>8</sup> because it was ruled in a dynastic, highly personalized fashion by the Ceausescu family.

In terms of leadership and repressive policies Romania was similar to East Germany: they were both ruled by old and conservative communists, Nicolae Ceausescu, respectively, and Erich Honecker. Both Ceausescu and Honecker were very averse to attempts to reform the economy or the political system, and visibly opposed Gorbachev’s policy of openness and call for reform. In order to preserve their power they both set up the infamous secret services, “Securitate” and “Stasi”, whose main mission was to keep the population under extensive surveillance and fear.<sup>9</sup> The limited but significant political and economic pluralism placed Poland in the “authoritarian” category, while Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria shared the “post-totalitarian” categorization, due to their “limited responsible social and economic and institutional pluralism, no political pluralism, official guiding ideology but weakened

---

<sup>6</sup> Juan Linz, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>8</sup> “In sultanism the private and the public are fused, there is a strong tendency toward familial power and dynastic succession, there is no distinction between a state career and personal service to the ruler, there is a lack of rationalized impersonal ideology, economic success depends on a personal relationship to the ruler, and most of all, the ruler acts only according to his own unchecked discretion, with no larger impersonal goals” *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Oberschall. “Opportunities and Framing in The Eastern European Revolts of 1989” in Doug McAdam, John D McCarthy, and Mayer Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

commitment to it, routine state-sponsored mobilization, emphasis on personal security in leadership and internal democracy in the party”.<sup>10</sup>

Romania’s relationship with the Soviet Union was a tense one; since the early days of his twenty-five years in power Ceausescu took further his predecessor’s (Gheorghiu Dej) nationalist and populist drive for independence from Moscow. Romania gradually became the most independent country in the Eastern block - nicknamed the “communist maverick” in the west<sup>11</sup> and gained some precious sympathy and support among Romanians and Romanian intelligentsia<sup>12</sup> – who otherwise saw the communist party as an alien, illegitimate implant brought to Romania “on Russian tanks”<sup>13</sup>. Among the important gains of this rebellious game were the freedom to craft economic and development policies independently of the Soviet Union (whose initial plan was to have its allies’ economies develop in according to the Soviet needs), not having Soviet troops stationed in the country and great sympathy and support (including financial) from the West. The Western support waned in the 1980s: on the one hand Gorbachev’s push for political and economic reform in the Warsaw Pact eclipsed Romania’s “maverick” status, and on the other hand more and more reports of Ceausescu’s tyrannical leadership style were finding a sympathetic ear in Western Europe and the United States.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Linz, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 44–45.

<sup>11</sup> See Almond 1988, 1992, Shafir, 1996 for detailed discussions of Ceausescu’s relationship with the West

<sup>12</sup> This sympathy peaked in 1968 when Ceausescu condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia

<sup>13</sup> For an extensive discussion of the Romanian Communist Party’s history see Michael Shafir, *Romania: Politics, Economics and Society: Political Stagnation and Simulated Change* (London: Pinter, 1985); Dennis Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Understanding National Stalinism: a Comparative Approach to the History of Romanian Communism* (Washington D.C.: East European Program European Institute The Wilson Center, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> Mark Almond, *The Rise and Fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu* (London: Chapman, 1992).

While Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria<sup>15</sup> embraced more or less Gorbachev's direction, the Ceausescu regime in Romania took the opposite path, increasing its repression of dissent, tightening censorship, attempting to increase its control over the population while taking the glorification of the leader to extremes.<sup>16</sup> Its extensive secret service apparatus recruiting vast networks of informants kept the population under surveillance and brutally repressed any form of dissent.<sup>17</sup> Although there are several documented cases of protest, revolt, and dissidents, overall Romania had the least organized opposition, made up of mostly "fragmented, isolated individuals."<sup>18</sup>

Linz and Stepan's focus on political pluralism, ideology, leadership, and mobilization leaves us with little information about ordinary citizens, and is limited to the state and organized dissent as the main focus of analysis. Similar to researchers of Nazi Germany, scholars of Eastern Europe and the former Union noted the shortcomings of the totalitarian frame. One of the first scholars to discuss its limits was Sheila Fitzpatrick<sup>19</sup> who argued for the need of taking alternative paths, "unfamiliar angles," such as the examination of everyday life, for a more complete understanding of societies such as the former Soviet Union. James Scott's

---

<sup>15</sup> Bulgaria adopted more economic and less political reforms. Similarly to Ceausescu, Bulgarian leader Todor Zhivkov was also quite an authoritarian figure but his weak opposition is credited to a "conquer and divide" treatment of the intelligentsia, as opposed to Ceausescu's more repressive policies. See Gale Stokes, *The Walls came Tumbling down: the Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 51.

<sup>16</sup> Almond, *The Rise and Fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu*.

<sup>17</sup> See Marius Oprea and Dennis Deletant, *Banalitatea Raului: o Istorie a Securitatii in Documente 1949-1989* (Iasi: Polirom, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Linz, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, 353–354.

<sup>19</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Afterword: Revisionism Revisited," *Russian Review* 45, no. 4 (1986): 409–413., Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

geographically broader work on less visible forms of resistance of subordinated groups also influenced my approach<sup>20</sup>.

In this spirit, I wanted to understand the ways in which the lives of ordinary youths were affected by the Ceausescu regime. I wondered how did they come of age in such a political environment? How exactly did these policies unfold in the everyday lives of youth? Did they succeed in creating a subservient, adoring generation?

Several scholars<sup>21</sup> have discussed the legacies of communism in broad top-down geopolitical terms, pointing to the “paternalistic” legacy of the communist regimes. Others, like Laurentiu Luca<sup>22</sup> set out to describe in great detail how the regime attempted to transform Romanian youth through propaganda in schools in the 1970-1980s. Drawing exclusively on propaganda publications, textbooks and secondary sources, Luca concludes that “the experiment has been largely ‘successful’ (without a clear definition or assessment of success) and its results are still seen in today's Romania,”<sup>23</sup> and more specifically:

It is no surprise that the generations schooled during those years and who rose through the ideological ranks of the mass organizations still cling to the "black and white, good and bad" simplistic interpretation of life and history and to the collectivist view of the world. Their disregard for any value elite and their harboring of a paternalistic view of the state which should take care of all their needs and provide them with income and benefits disqualify large segments of the population from (re)adapting to a market based economy and to a free society.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> James C Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: a Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Kenneth Jowitt, *New World Disorder: the Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>22</sup> Laurentiu Luca, “Propaganda in the schools of Communist Romania” (MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, ii.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

The scholars writing the final report of the “Presidential Committee for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania”<sup>25</sup> (2006) included communist “propaganda” and “indoctrination” among the crimes of the communist regime in Romania. Based on this report, President Traian Basescu officially condemned communism in the Romanian parliament on December 18, 2006.

While it is important to document the propaganda efforts, all these accounts seem to conflate propaganda with the reception of propaganda, which is problematic. As Kathleen Blee’s work about organized racist groups suggests, propaganda and the experiences of those exposed to it are not necessarily the same thing:

It can be dangerously misleading to presume that we can understand the motives of racist activists by looking at the ideologies of their group. Nor can we understand racist groups by simply examining their propaganda. Rather, we must consider how members receive the cultural, political, and ideological messages projected by racist groups. Although racist groups display great similarity in their ideological messages and stylized pageantry, the members to whom these are directed are heterogeneous and their perception of these messages is uneven.<sup>26</sup>

I chose to research the last decade of communism in Romania, driven by the same sense of “glaring absence of scholarship in late communism” noted by Paulina Bren<sup>27</sup>. Romania’s case is very similar to her description of the Czechoslovak case, where the bulk of scholarly research focuses mostly on the early decades of communism and the very few scholars who tackle the last two decades of communism look at it mostly in terms of “dissidence” and civil society.

---

<sup>25</sup> Raportul Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, [http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT\\_FINAL\\_CPADCR.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Kathleen Blee, *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 5.

<sup>27</sup> Paulina Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV: the Culture of Communism After the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 2010), 3.

My goal here was to bridge state intervention, propaganda, and influence with individual accounts of how politics translated in the lives of ordinary youth, that is, to connect communist era records, research data and documents with the memories of my respondents. While the first are readily available and unchanged, the latter require a discussion of the concept of social memory. Here I am drawing on Maurice Halbwachs<sup>28</sup> argument that all memory is collective, because all individual memories form in a social context (milieu), they are prompted/recalled in a certain social context, or are forgotten in other social contexts (such as separation from a reference group), and from classical sociologists Cooley<sup>29</sup> and Mead<sup>30</sup> emphasizing that individual identity formation is essentially a product of social interaction (“self-looking glass”).<sup>31</sup> More recent works (Huysen<sup>32</sup> and Nora<sup>33</sup>) historically contextualize the discussion of memory, talking about a contemporary societal “obsession” with memory, manifested in the proliferation of museums, archives, and monuments. They attributed this “memory industry” to a crisis caused by the emergence of several critical “lenses” through which the traditional, linear, history is re-examined, contested, and re-written. What these new lenses have in common is the questioning of power (including state power) by post-modernists, multiculturalists, feminists, and hegemony theorists. This resulted in the emergence of alternative histories/memories of groups previously ignored or repressed, questioned historical linearity and notions of “truth” and

---

<sup>28</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>29</sup> Charles Horton Cooley, *Social Process*, (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1918).

<sup>30</sup> George Herbert Mead and Arthur Edward Murphy, *The Philosophy of the Present*, (Chicago; London: Open court Pub. Co., 1932).

<sup>31</sup> Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order*. (New York: Schocken Books, 1964).

<sup>32</sup> Andreas Huysen, *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>33</sup> Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

highlighted the strategic uses of memory and history, especially in the realm of national politics<sup>34</sup>.

My resorting to individual memories from the 1980s decade is not necessarily a “revisionist” alternative to the history of the Cold War, but rather an effort to bring in the everyday life perception of the youth living in those times, the voices that were not easily available to scholars of Romania under communism, and were not a research priority after 1989. In addition to cognitive dissonance and other memory processes, recounting the 1980s after more than twenty years raises the question of new factors that may be shaping these accounts, such as the experience of living in a post-communist, democratic society, the present socio-economic, status or current day political divides. In order to control for such factors, I chose to bring in accounts of participants with different roles in the process of political education: students, teachers, and researchers. Instead of a summary questionnaire I decided to use extensive life histories (childhood to present day), something that would allow me to better trace their trajectories and experiences. Also, I collected a wealth of information about their families, environment, peers, and schools. The highly standardized national education system and curricula of kindergartens and schools also made comparisons very feasible.

My own experience of two years of high school in 1980s communist Romania (my student informants were two to eight years older than I) coupled with a “fresh” look at archival materials and publications constituted more of an asset than a liability in my research, and allowed me to establish rapport easily and to be more specific in my questions.

I was interested in what was remembered and how it was remembered, as well as connecting the state and non-state political socialization experiences to which this generation

---

<sup>34</sup> Barry Schwartz, “Introduction: The Expanding Past,” *Qualitative Sociology*. 19, no. 3 (1996): 275–282.

was exposed. In order to construct as complete a picture as possible, I decided to define politics and political experiences in a very broad sense, from the very obvious political education courses and textbooks in schools to memories of childhood, parents, friends, and leisure time. This broad definition was influenced by the way the Ceausescu regime itself sought to infuse its politics into all aspects of social life, as witnessed and ethnographically documented by Katherine Verdery<sup>35</sup> and Gail Kligman<sup>36</sup>.

I decided to narrow down my focus geographically to the capital city of Romania, Bucharest, for several reasons. One of them was the relative scarcity of urban research on Eastern Europe as opposed to rural ethnographies, as noted by Chris Hann<sup>37</sup>. Another favorable factor was its population: its size (approx. 2 mil.) made recruitment of informants easier (which proved to be very useful in the case of the teachers who were very difficult to track) and the fact that it attracted rather than lost population after 1989 which made it easier to find locally-schooled informants. Furthermore, since all written sources I needed to collect were located in archives and libraries in the city, it allowed me to easily alternate archival/library research with interviews and follow-ups when my informants were available.

In order to collect accounts of the presence of politics in the everyday lives of my subject generation I conducted life-history interviews with four women and six men born between 1965 and 1975 who completed their education in Bucharest. We talked loosely about their childhood, school experiences, material conditions, parents, friends and leisure activities.

---

<sup>35</sup> Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Berkeley/Calif. [u.a.]: Univ. of California Press, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Gail Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

<sup>37</sup> Chris Hann, *Postsocialism Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

To reconstitute the state political education efforts I analyzed the curriculum and textbooks used to teach politically-related subjects, as well as interviewed six former teachers who taught these subjects. In addition, I collected various guides and periodical articles related to education and teaching in the 1980s.

A very useful way to control for the inevitable pitfalls and biases that the use of oral retrospective accounts carries were the 1980s survey-based research reports found in the archives of the Center for Youth Research. These allowed me to compare interview data with findings based on large sample surveys.

## **1.1 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

I conducted fieldwork in Bucharest, Romania over one year and three months (September 2004 – December 2005) and for eight weeks during the summer of 2006. I collected several types of data I needed in order to provide an account of how the last generation of youth that completed high school under communism formed their political views: life history interviews with former high school students, interviews with social science teachers, interviews with social scientists, interviews with former party activists in charge of education, a review of publications for teachers, textbooks, publications about youth in the 1980s, and a great number of research articles on youth under communism from the archives of the former Center for Research of Youth Problems. The sequence of my research carefully planned in my initial proposal was adapted to the local conditions, with the goal of advancing in whatever direction was possible. I started by initiating contact with sociologists and a broader network of acquaintances in order to recruit former students and teachers for interviews, while collecting data that was readily available in archives and libraries.

A serendipitous encounter with college friend Adrian Neacsu led me to an unexpected and impressive data source: The Center for Youth Research. Here, Sorin Mitulescu graciously made their archive available, having two large boxes of research reports about youth spanning from 1968 to 1989 rescued from a basement where they had been reportedly abandoned for years. The Center published four yearly reports covering the findings of research projects carried on by the center, articles about methodological issues or new theoretical developments,

summaries of policy directives of the party, as well as collections of papers presented at the conferences organized by the center. The range of topics covered in the center's publications was very wide, and most research articles' more consistent research core was wrapped up in the official communist and nationalist rhetoric. Beyond use of such rhetoric, researchers touched on issues that otherwise were taboo in the public sphere, such as youth deviance or religious beliefs. The circulation of these publications was limited to a specialized audience made up of scholars, away from the larger public. Most research articles I selected for my research covered issues that touched on the civic/moral/political education of youth as well as cultural consumption. I also included a few articles on other topics (such as deviance and physical development) in order to better understand and contextualize the activity of the Center.

### **Textbooks**

In order to understand the formal education component of the political socialization of my informants I had to look at political education in schools. Education in Romania was completely controlled by the state and all schools followed a single curriculum, so the most useful sources were the textbooks. I analyzed the four textbooks used for teaching "social sciences" in Romanian high schools during the eighties. These were Economics (9<sup>th</sup> grade), Social and Political Education (10<sup>th</sup> grade), Political Economy (11<sup>th</sup> grade) and Philosophy (12<sup>th</sup> grade). In my analysis I looked at both content and the form of delivery.

### **Interviews**

To help make better sense of the data I collected from the Youth research Center I interviewed four researchers who worked at the Center before 1989. These interviews ranged from one to three hours and were conducted in cafes or offices between November 2004 and June 2006. They helped me learn a lot more about the validity of data from their reports, how the

center worked, how the research topics were chosen, how research was carried out, what type of constraints or pressures they were facing, and what impact their research findings had among the upper levels in the Party.

Between March and June 2005 I also conducted six in-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews with teachers who taught these subjects in the 1980s. Getting hold of these teachers was quite a difficult task, because many of them changed careers after 1989 or retired, and did not keep in touch with their former schools or colleagues. First I got in touch with two retired college professors who taught social sciences, hoping that they would be able to put me in touch with high school teachers. Although unsuccessful in tracking down teachers, they gave me useful information about publications I should look at, books, periodicals and the way they experienced the system and teaching under communism. Initially, they seemed reluctant to talk to me about their experiences; throughout our conversations they were very keen to point out that they are not “being interviewed,” they are not my “subjects” but they are professors and who help me, a student, with my research. They gave me advice about research methods and design, and one of them even offered to write some dissertation chapters for me. Fortunately, another academic contact introduced me to a University professor who used to teach in high schools before 1989. She was extremely nice, and since she was advising masters and doctoral students herself she was much more open to my questions and research in general. I interviewed her, and she warmly introduced me to five of her former colleagues for interviews. Her introduction helped a great deal and I was able to establish a very good rapport with them. The interviews were much shorter compared to the student interviews, mainly because of the busy schedules of the teachers. They ranged from one hour to one hour and a half, and they were conducted mostly inside their current high schools. One of them was conducted on a park bench outside the high school and another

one was split among the teacher's car, the insurance office where she needed to file some claims, and finally, the high school where she was teaching.

After I interviewed the other teachers I realized that they all were much more connected than I initially realized. They were all women, close in age (born between 1954 and 1958), knew each other from college and formed a group of very active, enthusiastic teachers. Aside from their friendship ties the gender composition of the group also reflects the feminization of education in Romania under communism. After 1989 almost all of them got involved in a wide range of civic education activities within or outside their schools, and formed connections with organizations in Romania and abroad. I worried about these similarities, but after carefully transcribing the interviews I realized that they taught in a very wide range of schools and had considerably different experiences. The fact that they seemed to be very gifted teachers posed an interesting issue: on one hand I had the accounts of self-described, well-prepared, and popular teachers, and on the other hand the other, "less good", teachers were impossible to track down. During the interviews (which were more structured than the student interviews) I asked them about their own college experiences, about choosing a teaching career, getting a job, teaching in the 1980s and specifically about the "social science" subjects they taught. I was interested in their teaching methods, how they felt about the curricula, textbooks, perception of students, their relations with students, other teachers and administrators, and their political views during and after the 1980s.

Between June and December 2005 I also conducted in-depth, loosely structured life history interviews with 10 former high school students in Bucharest, members of my subject generation. Using snowball sampling (recruiting respondents through already interviewed respondents) and chain sampling (different starting points that ensure a diverse sample) I

recruited 4 women and 6 men. They varied in terms of place of residence at time of schooling, the prestige of the school they attended, and their family background. They did not vary very much in terms of education level, all but one having graduated from college, and the non-graduating one being a college drop-out. They were interviewed by using a life-story approach (Creswell, 1998). I started by asking about where they grew up, their parents, their schools, peers, leisure time, within the overarching question about the presence of politics in their lives and how it manifested. Chronologically, we ended the detailed life-story in the first few years after 1989 and their present view of politics. One of the advantages of using a loosely structured interview was the discovery of the importance of grandparents in their political education. Having put together my research design physically and mentally in the American academic mindset, I overlooked the major role that the extended family played in raising children in Romania in the 1980s.

As Kathleen Blee<sup>38</sup> pointed out, the use of oral history in the feminist and “bottom-up” tradition of emphasizing empathy, reciprocity and authenticity poses particular difficulties in contexts where the informants are not necessarily a subordinated or voiceless group. In her work about women’s participation in organized racist groups, she called out the “romantic assumptions” of the oral history method, reminding us that the contextual nature of the informants’ accounts, often “laced with deceptive information, disingenuous denials of culpability, and dubious assertions about their political motivation.”<sup>39</sup> During my interviews and analysis, I tried to keep in mind her cautionary note and carefully scrutinize informant accounts by comparing student and teacher interviews, comparing oral history accounts with publications

---

<sup>38</sup> Kathleen M Blee, “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan,” *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 2 (1993): 596–606.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 597.

and quantitative research data from the Center for Research for Youth. My triangulation of sources did not yield any flagrant or significant discrepancies. Teacher, student and researcher interviews were confidential and the names used here are pseudonyms. The interview with Ion Iliescu is quoted with true name.

## **1.2 RESEARCHER IDENTITY**

This dissertation was an academic endeavor as much as a travel back to my past, my country, my memories and the memories of a generation slightly ahead of me. Being Romanian made my research much easier in terms of language and culture. Having been born in 1973, I am two years younger than the youngest of my informants, so we had a great deal of experiences in common. Being educated in Romania through college added another layer of common experiences. All these were beneficial when I planned and carried out my research, but could become a potential pitfall in several ways. One danger was of letting my own account, my own experiences become a standard for comparison, or becoming blinded by my own preconceptions. Another possible problem, that the use of life-history and loosely structured interview methods helped avoid, was concentrating on the common experiences and excluding other potentially interesting ones. Focusing on the informants' own story, allowing them to put the timeline together, gave me a much more complex and rich perspective than having an interview structured and limited by my (subjective) familiarity with the period. This also helped me avoid leading questions or "correcting" them, or involuntarily setting the parameters for their story. For example, this allowed one of the teachers interviewed to use an incorrect name for one of the subjects she taught for years – this slip and the way she handled it reflected one more time the disgust she

expressed regarding having to teach a course about the policies of the Romanian Communist Party.

My own experiences came in handy when interviews reached a gap, sometimes caused by my informants' assumption that because we were close in age I might "know all about it" and there's nothing new she or he could add. At these points I recounted how things were done in my school, or in my family, and my own story helped the informants relate and recount their own experience by discovering points of convergence or pointing out differences.

A particular personal difficulty related to being so close to the era I researched arose when I had to analyze the "social science" high school textbooks and some of the official propaganda publications. I had to study two of the textbooks in high school, and I remembered them with revulsion, a feeling that was eased by seeing again how poorly they were written and by reminding myself that this time I was not going to be tested and I did not have to memorize them.

### **1.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

In CHAPTER TWO I am exploring the area of formal education controlled by the state. I am describing the Romanian education system, its history, structure and specifics in the 1980s, with a special focus on the teaching of civics and "social sciences" in high schools. Since communist youth organizations were deeply tied to and functioned within public schools I also included here a section devoted to these organizations. This chapter was based on analysis of textbooks, publications and archival research as well as interviews with former high school teachers of these

subjects. Student interviews used in chapter one were triangulated<sup>40</sup> with the teachers' accounts, textbooks, and official publications.

In CHAPTER THREE I am moving the focus to the home environment of my informants and how the socio-political environment of communist Romania filtered down inside the family, schools and peer circles. This chapter is based on life-history interviews with members of my target generation. Here, I am exploring the role parents and peers played in the development of their early understanding of politics, as well as how this understanding intersected with the influence of schools and teachers.

In CHAPTER FOUR I am looking at my target generation as seen through the lens of Romanian sociological research in the 1980s. Although communist-era sociological research was severely restricted and especially scarce in the 1980s<sup>41</sup>, I was able to find interesting and trustworthy research data about youth, collected between 1968 and 1989 at the Center for Youth Research in Bucharest. After a short discussion of the politics of sociological research during the last two decades of the Ceausescu regime I focus on the research data about youth in the 1980s. Here I found national data confirming some of my small scale interview findings (for example the role of parents and the generalized learned duplicity in teaching the communist party doctrine), as well as some surprisingly critical survey data about the activity of the Communist Party Youth Organization. This chapter was based on research in the archives of the Center for Youth Research, interviews with former researchers employed by the Center, and official publications.

---

<sup>40</sup> “The use of multiple methods [...] as an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding”, Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, *The Landscape of Qualitative research: Theories and Issues* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998), 4.

<sup>41</sup> Maria Larionescu, *Istoria Sociologiei Românești* (București: Ed. Univ., 2007).

CHAPTER FIVE offers a summary of my findings and a discussion of the common thread the theme of duplicity among former students, parents, high school teachers and university professors. I am discussing duplicity in the context of other scholars' work on the same phenomena, such as Czeslaw Milosz's<sup>42</sup> concept of Ketman and Gail Kligman's<sup>43</sup> work on reproductive policies in Romania. I also offer some theoretical reflections on how my findings highlight shortcomings in the totalitarian frame.

---

<sup>42</sup> Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Knopf, 1953).

<sup>43</sup> Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity*.

## **2.0 POLITICS, SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS**

This chapter outlines the state-controlled dimension of youths' political education in the 1980s. It contains a historical overview, the description of the communist regime in Romania and its educational policy, the analysis of interviews with former social science teachers about their experiences in the 1980s, and an examination of high school social science textbooks.

### **2.1 THE ROMANIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT AND EDUCATION UNDER COMMUNISM**

The post World War II Romanian Communist Party's (RCP) ascent to power was accompanied by a specific interest with the role of education. As Vasile<sup>44</sup> notes, a special committee within the party closely watched and even interfered with the activity of the Ministry of Education, led between 1945 and 1947 by Stefan Voitec, member of the Social Democrat Party, a political ally that was absorbed by the RCP in 1947. The Committee was paving the road to the complete takeover of education by the RCP by recruiting teachers into the party, mobilizing students, monitoring alternative youth organizations such as the local YMCA organizations or Jewish schools, and by restricting the circulations of books and publications that were not approved by

---

<sup>44</sup> Cristian Vasile, *Literatura si Artele în România Comunista: 1948 - 1953* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2010).

the Party.<sup>45</sup> In addition to such activities, the Commission also commissioned the writing of a new, pro-Soviet history textbook by Mihai Roller that was introduced in 1947, and started a campaign against illiteracy which was estimated to be 29 percent in the population over seven years old.<sup>46</sup>

The abdication of Romania's King in 1947 marked the complete takeover of government by the Romanian Communist Party, and was quickly followed by the adoption of a new constitution in April 1948. The new constitution called for the nationalization of education, and:

[...] the communist education of youth, a strict control of primary, secondary and college education, the abandonment of academic independence, and an expansion of education at all levels that would fulfill the needs of industrial development.<sup>47</sup>

The education reform resulted in the elimination of the “abstract and metaphysical” disciplines in secondary education, and a reduction or elimination of courses on classics, Western languages, religion and sociology, accompanied by a rise in the number required ideological, Marxist-Leninist courses.

The nationalized education was to be atheistic and to promote Marxist-Leninist principles, and its purpose was to serve the needs of the planned economy<sup>48</sup>. It also introduced four years of mandatory schooling, and a system of seven years of elementary school (and after 1960 eight) and four years of high school or vocational school. The law had special provisions intended to “shake up” the existing class system. It would eradicate illiteracy and foster

---

<sup>45</sup> Bogdan Murgescu, *România si Europa: Acumularea Decalajelor Economice: 1500--2010* (Iași: Polirom, 2010), 386.

<sup>46</sup> Vasile, *Literatura si Artele în România Comunista*, 261–263.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>48</sup> Randolph L Braham, *Education in Romania: a Decade of Change*, ([Washington: U.S. Office of Education, Institute of International Studies; [for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1972), 10.

“democratization” by setting up special tracks and “Workers’ Universities” where workers and peasants could get a degree in two years.<sup>49</sup>

In 1955, as Romania chose the path of development through industrialization, the education curriculum was adjusted to provide more industrial training, as well as increased teaching of social sciences and ideological education at all levels<sup>50</sup>.

Some argue that the Soviet-inspired changes led to a deterioration of the quality of Romanian education, a significant regress compared to the system before 1948, which used to require a minimum of seven years of public education.<sup>51</sup> Others point to growth of enrollment in post-secondary education, improved training of the teaching staff, better equipment and facilities, and significant growth in higher education (a growth of the student body from 71,989 in 1960 to 141,589 in 1967)<sup>52</sup>.

Things changed again in 1965 when Nicolae Ceausescu was elected as the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party. He took further and expanded his predecessor’s (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej) gradual distancing from the Soviet Union and fashioned himself as the “maverick” of the Soviet bloc, opening up to the West economically and diplomatically.<sup>53</sup> This political environment coupled with criticism of the failure of the educational system to

---

<sup>49</sup> Cristian Vasile, “Educație si Ideologie in România 1948–1953,” *Revista Istorică* XV, no. 5–6 (2004): 121–140., Mariana Momanu, *Educație si Ideologie: o Analiză Pedagogică a Sistemului Totalitar Comunist* (Iași: Ed. Univ. “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2005).

<sup>50</sup> Braham, *Education in Romania*, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Dan Constantin Radulescu, “Învățământul Românesc 1948–1989 – Între Derivă si Recuperare Instituțional - Funcțională,” *Calitatea Vieții* XVII, no. 3–4 (2006): 307–318, also Momanu *Educație si Ideologie: o Analiză Pedagogică a Sistemului Totalitar Comunist*, Vasile Educație si Ideologie in România 1948–1953.

<sup>52</sup> Braham, *Education in Romania*, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Jowitt, *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development the Case of Romania, 1944-1965*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Kenneth Jowitt, *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation* (Berkeley: University of California; Institute of international studies, 1978); Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley/Calif. [u.a.]: Univ. of California Press, 1995).

satisfy the needs of economic growth, produced new education legislation<sup>54</sup> in 1968, which called for distancing from the Soviet model and “renewed the pre-1948 traditions and aspirations for a national and European education”<sup>55</sup>. The main goals of the new legislation were to:

Impart a general culture and the knowledge required for the successful performance of a socially useful job, to advance the dialectical-materialist conception of society and nature, to promote the intellectual, moral, esthetic and physical development of its citizens and to cultivate citizens’ love for the nation and the State and the ideals of peace and social progress.<sup>56</sup>

The main responsibility for carrying out these objectives was assigned to the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Union of Communist Youth, the Union of Communist Students and the Pioneers’ Organization. The new legislation also declared education free at all levels, including funding for boarding, meals and scholarships and overall more funding was allocated to support the overstretched educational system. Most of the previously banned disciplines were reintroduced, including the social sciences.<sup>57</sup>

Several years after Ceausescu's rise to power, and at the same time as building its reputation as the “maverick” of the Soviet bloc through the condemnation of the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia<sup>58</sup>, a new take on ideology started to take shape in Romania. One of the first signs was the 1967 creation of a “Commission on Ideology,” and after a visit to North Korea in July 1971, a more crystallized version came out in the form of two speeches (later referred to as the “July theses”) by Nicolae Ceausescu where he presented his new priorities: more focus on ideological education (which in his view was lagging behind other communist

---

<sup>54</sup> Legea privind învățământul din RSR, 1968, București

<sup>55</sup> Constantin 2006, *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Braham, *Education in Romania*, 17.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>58</sup> Daniel N Nelson, *Romania after Tyranny* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992).

countries), less tolerance towards foreign influence, especially Western influence<sup>59</sup>, and more emphasis on Romanian nationalism. The early Soviet influence was followed by a brief period of “openness” and later replaced with a discourse that blended Marxism and Leninism with nationalist values.<sup>60</sup> In this newly revised “ideological-symbolic mode of control” argues Verdery<sup>61</sup>, “national ideology gained pride of place.” For the next decades, the mission of the Communist Party and of the education system as its tool was the formation of the socialist “New Man” in the spirit of Romanian nationalism and Ceausescu's interpretation of communism.

These changes were reflected in the new 1978 “Education Law” which tightened state control of both schools and universities even more<sup>62</sup>. Throughout the 1970s, Murgescu<sup>63</sup> notes the replacement of the more competent “technocrats” leading the Ministry of Education with less knowledgeable loyal party cadre whose priorities were the implementing of Ceausescu’s ideological requirement and the introduction of more and more “production”<sup>64</sup> activities in the curriculum. Consequently, the number of humanities-track high schools was drastically reduced in favor of the “industrial” track high schools. The number of students educated in the humanities high schools dropped from 390,455 in 1968 to 55,988 in 1989<sup>65</sup>.

Overall, and aside from the quality decline of the early decades some historians have noted, the communist reform of the education system and its emphasis on enrolling as many students as possible was a success. Illiteracy was almost eradicated, and from 1945 to 1989

---

<sup>59</sup> Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, 101.

<sup>60</sup> Robert King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Stanford Calif.: Hoover Institution Press Stanford University, 1980)., Verdery 1991 *ibid*.

<sup>61</sup> Verdery, *ibid*: 101

<sup>62</sup> Constantin *ibid*:6

<sup>63</sup> Murgescu, *România si Europa*, 388.

<sup>64</sup> “Production activities” generally meant student participation in industrial or agricultural work, most of it during the school year.

<sup>65</sup> N. N Constantinescu, *Istoria Economica a României* (Bucuresti: Editura Economica, 2000). In Murgescu, *România si Europa*, 389.

Romania's student population grew from 13.9 percent of the total population to 24.1 percent. The average number of years of schooling per person in the total population grew from 3.5 in 1950 to 10.5 in 1990. The number of high schools tripled over the same time interval, and the number of high school graduates grew from 13,905 in 1948 to 143,436 in 1989<sup>66</sup>. As Murgescu notes, the 80 percent high school attendance of the 1980s showed that high school education had become less of a privilege and more of a norm.<sup>67</sup>

By 1980 Ceausescu's cult of personality (which included his wife) had grown to dominate almost all social life: politics, the media, education, culture and the workplace<sup>68</sup>. Romanian students had Ceausescu's portrait hanging in every classroom, printed on the first page (and not only) of every textbook, and had to praise the great man and leader in their classes and at school events. The backdrop of this culmination of ideological indoctrination efforts was an international economic recession worsened in Romania by Ceausescu's decision to pay off all of Romania's foreign loans (effort started in 1982) and at the same time to pursue his megalomaniac construction projects such as the "People's Palace." The payment of the loans was completed by 1989 through massive exports and severe cuts in consumption and spending. During this time Romanians suffered from a lot of basic food and goods shortages, rationing, pay cuts, blackouts and lack of heating in their apartments, schools and workplace<sup>69</sup> while their television sets blasted shorter and shorter daily programs<sup>70</sup>, filled with propaganda about living Romania's Golden Age under the wise leadership of Nicolae Ceausescu. The education budget as

---

<sup>66</sup> Constantinescu, *Istoria Economica a României*. In Murgescu, *România si Europa*, 387.

<sup>67</sup> Murgescu, *România si Europa*, 387.

<sup>68</sup> Lucian Boia, *Mitologia Științifică a Comunismului* (București: Humanitas, 1999).

<sup>69</sup> Mary Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu: a Study in Political Leadership* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1989).

<sup>70</sup> The length of the daily broadcast of the national television station was reduced to two hours in the late 1980s.

a percentage of the state budget dropped from about 6.3 percent in the 1960s, and 7.1 in the 1970s to 5.8 percent in the 1980s<sup>71</sup>. Some schools were closed and the number of teachers was cut down<sup>72</sup>. This is the context in which my research informants, the last generations of communist high school graduates completed their education.

## 2.2 TEACHER INTERVIEWS

Tracking down the teachers who taught social sciences<sup>73</sup> in Bucharest in the 1980s was a difficult task. According to the ones I interviewed, many changed careers in the post-1989 turmoil in Romanian education, when a lot of them were vilified and associated with the old regime, leaving only the more resilient ones in the system. All six teachers I interviewed were women, attended college in the late 1970s, were close in age (born between 1954 and 1958) and were affected by the post 1971 changes in the education system. Similarly to the changes in the high school system, the humanities departments in the universities were reduced and consolidated, and their number of students went from 39 percent in the total student body in 1969 to 14.8 percent in 1979 and 9.5 percent in 1989<sup>74</sup>.

In 1978 the previously independent university departments of Sociology, Psychology and Philosophy were consolidated with the History departments, and continued to function as sub-

---

<sup>71</sup> Murgescu, *România si Europa*, 391.

<sup>72</sup> Constantin *ibid*:12

<sup>73</sup> High school social science subjects were Economics, Social and Political Education, Political Economy of the Romanian Communist Party and Philosophy. History was not considered a social science and was taught separately.

<sup>74</sup> Constantinescu, *Istoria Economica a României*. In Murgescu, *România si Europa*, 389.

sections with their staff and number of courses reduced<sup>75</sup>. All the teachers I interviewed started in one of these departments and graduated from the consolidated program in the History department. They all ended up teaching social sciences in high schools in Bucharest, with the average class size of 30 students, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen.

I asked the teachers about the education they received in college in the late seventies, and considering that the social sciences were perceived as the most politicized disciplines, about the presence of politics and ideology in their lives. Surprisingly, all of them emphasized a “certain openness” within the university system, as one of the teachers put it, even after the crackdown on the Sociology, Psychology, and Philosophy departments. The one teacher who majored in Sociology mentioned great freedom in choosing research topics (hers was religion) and conducting fieldwork; there was “an overall great atmosphere” as she put it. In stark contrast with the post 1989 perception of lack of resources, she claimed that the resources available to students were of excellent quality:

We had access to the library and to a lot of foreign literature in English or French, the library was fabulous, they had a special section with foreign books brought by professors or through university exchanges and we were able to read them in the library. The professors were quite good about recommending readings and we were up to date with the Sociology literature, and we were feeling very comfortable and free. (Andrea)

The presence of communist ideology was felt in college, but the college professors seemed to treat it with detachment, sometimes even with criticism:

I remember that in our Economics class we criticized socialism; we learned about the capitalist economy, which is today's market economy and when we moved to the socialist economy the professor was very open and he was its biggest critic.. We were sort of sneaking between constraints and felt quite free. (Andrea)

---

<sup>75</sup> Due to the communist leadership's belief that social research activity could pose a threat to the regime.

Although the official philosophy was Marxism, and Marxism was supposed to inform every aspect of life, the teachers who majored in philosophy reported receiving what they considered a well-rounded, solid education, “not as Marxist philosophers, but as philosophers in general” (Corina). Many of their philosophy teachers (for example, Alexandru Valentin<sup>76</sup>, Mircea Flonta<sup>77</sup>) had training or degrees in Western universities and were seen as doing an excellent job. Even the courses that bore the heaviest ideological load, such as Scientific Socialism, were thought to be taught in an objective and critical manner, which drew the students’ admiration:

I took Scientific Socialism with Radu Florian<sup>78</sup>. He at the time was against the local exaggerations and even forbade us to pick them up. He was teaching us a sort of social philosophy, more like contemporary socialist doctrines, democratic, not totalitarian at all. We even had very open critical discussions about the difficulties that the socialist systems were facing. The only thing they asked us is not to take notes in lectures. For the exams he assigned several books. A form of dissimulation... (Corina)

This type of dissimulation was picked up by the college students and future high school teachers, who learned to separate the Marxist philosophy from Ceausescu’s take on it, filter out the latter and only use it when the situation called for it:

I think every time we dealt with written documents such as my professors’ publications or when we had to write our senior thesis we had to insert some quotes from him [Ceausescu], that was mandatory in a sense, people did it out of obligation, out of reflex, out of obedience... (Florentina)

---

<sup>76</sup> Specialized in Marxist philosophy.

<sup>77</sup> Specialized in epistemology.

<sup>78</sup> Radu Florian is mentioned in a Radio Free Europe report as one of the traditional, and more academic philosophers who criticized the dogmatic Leninist interpretations of his party loyal colleagues. “Philosophy in 1974: An Embarrassing Picture”, n.d., <http://www.osaarchivum.org/files/holdings/300/8/3/text/52-3-96.shtml>.

Extremely similar accounts of duplicity and circumventing the curricula in the university were reported in interviews by DiGiacomo<sup>79</sup>, in his 2010 dissertation:

Teachers also found clever loopholes in the program requirements that enabled them to preserve non-ideological or different elements of education. For example, on the topic of the teacher's ability as an individual actor, Interviewee Simona stated that for instance, I do remember that when you had the Marxist- Leninist course, the professor was simply telling us that look, this year, we are discussing the origins of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy. And the origins are actually Kant and Hegel, and he spoke all year on Kant and Hegel, nothing about Marx and Engels, and this happened in the faculty in '76, '77. So for instance, in my faculty, we didn't have this kind of ideological education because not one of the professors promoted anything like this. (144)

All the teachers got their jobs through a system of "allocation" of college graduates based on their GPAs and place of residence. Andrea, Dana and Eliza were initially assigned to teach outside Bucharest, based on their pre-college residence<sup>80</sup>, but in a few years they eventually managed to transfer and get substitute or full-time positions in various high schools in Bucharest, some in poorer neighborhoods, others in prestigious high schools in more affluent areas.

Andrea graduated from college in 1979, with a major in Sociology. She passed up a teaching job in her hometown of Craiova to be closer to Bucharest and hoping for a college position, and she took instead a job as a Pioneer instructor in a small town near Bucharest. In 1983, after marrying a Bucharest resident she was able to transfer to a modest industrial high school at the periphery of the city where she taught Logic, Psychology, Philosophy and Economics. A year later she transferred to a better, more central high school, "N. Iorga", and after 1989 she transferred twice more, until she found a position at one of the top high schools in the country, Sf. Sava.

---

<sup>79</sup> Francis Anthony DiGiacomo, "Education Amidst Transition: the Case of Romania" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2010), <http://hdl.handle.net/1903/10855>.

<sup>80</sup> Romanians were assigned a unique ID (Buletin de Identitate) which among other information specified your place of residence. If people changed their residence they had to have the ID updated. Moving to the capital was severely restricted, thus limiting a college graduate's prospects of getting a job in the capital.

Since Bianca was originally from Bucharest, she was able to start there, teaching History in an industrial, vocational high school in 1978. In 1985, due to a re-shuffling of teachers based on the neighborhood where they lived she got a job at a much better math-physics high school in a central area of the city, the Caragiale High School where she taught Social and Political Education and Political Economy. Corina, also a resident of Bucharest got a position first teaching History and Constitution in a secondary school and later Economics and Social and Political Education in a modest industrial high school.

Dana started teaching Economics in 1977 in a prestigious Economics high school, in a small city south of Bucharest. After a few years of commuting she was able to transfer to Bucharest, to a math-physics high school where she continued teaching Economics and Social and Political Education.

Eliza started her teaching in 1976 at a forestry high school north of Bucharest, in Campina. A few years later her husband got a position in Bucharest, they moved, and she became a substitute social science teacher for one year at an Industrial (Chemistry) high school. After another year, she got a position at the prestigious Zoia Kosmodemianskaia, the only humanities high school in Bucharest. She pointed out that she was able to get it when one of her husband's colleagues at the philosophy Institute was married to the principal of the school.

Florentina started teaching in Bucharest in 1979, in an Industrial high school in one of the poorest neighborhoods of the city, “where there was a massive gypsy population, with no motivation to study,” and many of her students were illiterate. She started by teaching History in the secondary school and later Economics and Social and Political Education.

Although they had varied careers that took them to schools of different quality, there was a consensus on a great deal about the job of teacher. The high school work environment they

described was very different from their “relaxed” university experience, and they felt more pressure to conform. It was loaded with ideological pressures, manifested through numerous party meetings<sup>81</sup>, mandatory “ideological debates,” rallies on the national or communist holidays, training sessions about new Party policies and taking students to mandatory agricultural “volunteering” (picking corn, or grapes, sorting onions or potatoes or cleaning city parks). Over the 1980s the duration and frequency of these activities intensified, eating into their class-preparation time, or even some of the class time. Here is how Dana remembers these pressures:

There were some rough times in the 80s, times when there were a lot of party meetings which I had to attend because we had to sign all kinds of papers. There were times when we had to do a lot of volunteer work, like harvesting corn. I didn't actually pick corn, I would go with the kids and the bus to the cornfield and when the bus returned to pick up another group of kids I would leave. I was only going to be seen and was embarrassed in front of the kids and other colleagues, but with the commute this was a huge waste of time.

Compared with the non-social science teachers, the ideological pressures extended far deeper into their classrooms. The curricula for all of the four social science subjects contained significant portions devoted to discussions of Marxist philosophy or economics, as well as long sections devoted to Ceausescu’s speeches or extolling his extraordinary leadership qualities. All teachers resented preparing and delivering such lectures: “When it was time to bullshit (*mananc rahat*) and give speeches and introductions I did that myself instead of the students, because I did not want to torture those poor kids. And of course they were never good enough and we were all laughing...” (Bianca).

---

<sup>81</sup> All philosophy graduates had to be party members in order to get a teaching position. Also joining the party came with a number of benefits: better chances to be promoted, transfers to better high schools.

Some of these pressures were sometimes eased by the very ones who were in charge of enforcing them. Two teachers recalled with gratitude their former high school Principals, people with very important positions in the Romanian Communist Party. These Principals used their power to excuse them from attending some of the mandatory ideological activities in exchange for running extra tutoring sessions with students participating in national (social science) “Olympic” competitions.

I also wanted to know how their political views were influenced by the education they themselves received. All but one teacher saw themselves as “non-Marxists,” and revealed that Marxist philosophy didn't really resonate with them. All of them made a sharp distinction between Marxism as in Karl Marx's work, which they respected and considered an interesting theory, and the local, domestic Romanian Communist Party's take on Marxism and its policies which they despised all along. They distinguished between Marxist true believers (people who have actually read Marx) and the opportunistic “Marxists” who were ignorant most of time and driven by the prospect of privileges and material benefits.

If someone believed in it and was truly a Marxist, that person is ideologically innocent. The problem was that we weren't tested on Marxist ideas but that we had to take Marxism with the local ideological behavior and everything else. (Bianca)

The only teacher with Marxist views emphasized it as her choice, not a product of her background (she was coming from a peasant family with strong anti-communist sentiments), her education, her wanting privileges or any other constraints:

In my fourth year of college I became a member of the Communist Party because I wanted to. Many years in a row I willingly chose to teach Marxist philosophy, not because my mom told me to or because the party leader told me to, it was my choice. Again, I joined of my own will, not because I wanted privileges, prestige or a position. I joined out of conviction. Of course as time went by and I read more I realized that things were... how should I put it... shaky in regards with my conviction. (Eliza)

Later on in the interview Eliza explained what caused her doubts about Marxism: “if you apply a philosophy that fails to produce good results in terms of living standards, the reason why you made a revolution, there must be something wrong somewhere.” She talked about her Marxist views as an unusual, isolated case among her peers. In a strange way, the “true believer” Marxist social science teacher in a socialist country sounded more like a dissident than someone whose views were aligned with the official political doctrine:

[...] I made my Marxist view clear in the school. In my classroom I would say what I thought. For example sometimes I taught Marxist philosophy. The students can always tell if you really believe in something or if you are just doing it because you have to. I was never embarrassed to say that was my choice. (Eliza)

She, however, described herself not as the enthusiastic and dull propaganda tool the regime was hoping to craft, but as a highly educated and sophisticated Marxist. Through her husband's job at the Philosophy Institute she was able to read contemporary Marxist literature, literature critical towards Marxism and even dissident literature that was not generally available, and in the classroom she felt free to discuss Marxism in a critical fashion with her students.

Before 1989 I never really felt limited. Who could really check what I was doing in the classroom? Of course, back then I wasn't really touching on political aspects, contesting the regime or praising capitalism. But that didn't prevent me from discussing from the very first year theories that were critical towards Marxism, and I never had anyone, any student or inspector complain about what I did in the classroom. (Eliza)

This almost carefree attitude regarding ideological pressures or constraints in the classroom was shared by the other teachers as well. They described several strategies in dealing with them. One teacher (Bianca) for example, avoided teaching altogether the subject of Political Economy because she would have to lecture about how much the living standard had improved in a time of severe economic crisis and shortages, and she did not want to discredit herself by

doing that. Another strategy she adopted in teaching “Political and Social Education” was to focus disproportionately on theory and teach what she called “masked logic” lessons. She would eventually have to talk about the Romanian Communist Party’s policies. She remembered this with remorse and regarded it as the price she paid so that she could teach philosophy:

[...] we were teaching the way we were teaching, there were lectures devoted to the party policies... anyway they were awful, if you look back it looks like a horrible joke but we did it because that was a way of saving philosophy. Again we were emphasizing the form not the content... (Bianca)

This convoluted way of teaching about Romanian Communism was reflected in her students’ papers which she called “completely ridiculous” and shared with her colleagues to amuse themselves until someone warned her that this could be interpreted as her not delivering a proper ideological education and cause trouble for the entire school. In the philosophy course she preferred to rely heavily on a historical perspective in order to avoid discussing contemporary issues (RCP ideology or Ceausescu’s speeches):

[...] there was a way around that, you could talk about Hegel's system for example and do it as part of the historical roots of Marxism, but we would talk more about Hegel. At the very end we would append a little section where we cover the proper Marxist critique point of view.

At the times when she really didn't feel like delivering the more ideologically loaded lectures she had the students simply copy in their notebooks fragments from the textbook or some Party documents and directives published in the newspapers, instead of lecturing, which was the main teaching method. They were aware that she avoided lecturing on certain subjects, and preferred it. Just like her own professors in college she developed a complicit relationship with her students in regards to these topics, where both she and the students were avoiding an unpleasant experience:

They also knew about it from home, about things you discuss and things you don't discuss and they also tacitly agreed to some of these procedures. Pretty much in exchange for not having to stand up and answer questions about party policies the students agreed to just read them from the book. (Eliza)

A similar account of these strategies of avoidance to teach the highly ideological parts of the curricula are remembered to exist as early as the 1950s by Leon Volovici in his biographical volume in dialog with Sandu Frunza.<sup>82</sup> Volovici recounts his history teacher stopping lecturing and asking students to “read the rest from the book.” He confesses to initially thinking that the teacher was bored or tired, only to realize later in the course that the sections they were asked to read from the book were the ones that consisted mostly of Party propaganda.

DiGiacomo's dissertation<sup>83</sup> also contains an example of this strategy, this time from a Romanian language teacher, suggesting that the practice was common among teachers of various subjects:

In another example provided by Interviewee Simona regarding subversive activities: I taught Romanian language, and all the textbooks started with a poem to the leader, but it was a method, you want to do this in the classroom or not. And all the times, for instance, [I assigned this task for homework]. And I said, okay, this year, the first text is a very nice [poem] [I said this] because you had to say that it's a very nice [poem]. Through such means, it seems teachers were able to maintain a sense of western culture or, at least, of non-communist Romanian values and skills. Therefore, the teachers in high school and higher education, when they chose to, contributed to what Interviewee Simona considered a “double education,” meaning that while the students learned one perspective at home, they could learn an alternative perspective in the school, depending on the teacher. (144)

The teachers' relationship with their students was always very good, but the rapport was considerably shaped by the relative affluence of the high school where they taught. Each teacher

---

<sup>82</sup> Leon Volovici and Sandu Frunza, *De la Iasi la Ierusalim si înapoi: pornind de la un dialog cu Sandu Frunza* (Bucuresti: Ideea Europeana, 2007).

<sup>83</sup> DiGiacomo, “Education amidst transition: the case of Romania.”

had a home-room and weekly meetings with her home-room students and four of them were Union of Communist Youth coordinators in their schools. Teachers familiarized themselves with the students during class, from the grade books (which contained all students' grades, home addresses and parents' occupation/workplace), homeroom meetings and school trips.

In the case of more affluent area high schools where most students aspired to go to college, the priority for teachers was to help the students who chose to go to universities where social science exams were part of the admission process<sup>84</sup>, and prepare them for national competitions. In this case they were on one hand trying to ease things for the students going to more technical colleges and on the other hand devoting themselves more to the students who needed to take the social science exams. With the latter, they made sure they thoroughly covered the material, no matter how ideological, because the exams required word by word memorization. Their efforts were appreciated and rewarded for both of these approaches. One of the teachers for example reported that the good performance of the students in college entry and competitions was rewarded with a monthly prize consisting of a chicken from the high school Principal (a well connected Party member)<sup>85</sup>. These strategies seemed to be widely known and valued among teachers, administrators and parents: teachers reported being popular among the students, and most important, never getting any complaints from parents, some of whom were important party and administration members and could have raised objections about their strategies.

---

<sup>84</sup> College admission in Romania was based on an entrance exam. Students chose their college and major in advance and the exam subjects were different for each major. The Economics/ Business schools required one social science exam. It's also worth noting that during economic decline of the 1980s admission in the business school became highly competitive.

<sup>85</sup> This was the only incident of positive reinforcement from the administration that I came across during discussions with teachers.

The teachers working with a working class student population mentioned organizing extra-curricular activities (mostly trips), and a few of them mentioned making efforts to better the lives of their students. For instance, one of them used the Union of Communist Youth organization as a way of getting involved and empowering the “troublemakers” in her school and forming a collective that sought to help students with broken families. In her own words, and using the same “bullshit” as Bianca, Andrea explained:

[...] the UTC structures were used more for their social role than a political one. When it was time to make bullshit speeches and introductions I did it, because I didn't want to torture those poor kids. And of course they were never good enough and we were laughing... well the point is that I was never able to run a process of indoctrination. (Andrea)

The supervision of the teachers was not limited to the high school Principals. At least once a year, their classrooms were visited by inspectors from the Ministry of Education. Once again, the common denominator in the description of these inspections was duplicity. The inspectors, along with the Party apparatus in the Ministry were seen with disdain by the teachers. Just as in other occupations, they argued, the teachers that were no good at teaching went for the administrative jobs. The inspections were scheduled ahead of time and announced to both teachers and students, and were superficial and mostly concerned with not stirring up anything that could bring trouble from their superiors:

[...] they couldn't control us 100%, and even they were in the same situation on a different level, being checked by someone above them in the hierarchy. Therefore, they were themselves willing to be duplicitous. (Bianca)

There were some party activists who came and looked into the paperwork (lesson plans, extra curricular activities) and knew that all the reports and everything was made up and had no connection with reality and never checked anything. They were happy that the papers were in order. (Corina)

In spite of the fact that none of them had any important problems during the inspections, all the teachers shared a great deal of anxiety about them. In the generalized duplicity, there were occasions when the inspectors would choose to exercise their power and pick on some issue and make a big deal out of it. For example, one inspector objected that one of my interviewees did not “raise their students’ consciousness enough” because while she was lecturing they were not browsing the Party policy pamphlets on their desks. Most of these inspection mishaps did not escalate beyond the school level, but were enough to keep the teachers on their toes and made the inspectors quite feared. Their effect was not to motivate teachers to be better, but to make them feel powerless:

The big issue was the arbitrariness of the situation in which we were: anybody could evaluate you in any way, anytime. They could put you in any situation... This extended, generalized arbitrariness, the fact that you could end up at the top or get fired...(Florentina)

The common denominator of the social science teachers’ classroom work during the last decade of communism in Romania was duplicity. This duplicity resulted from their attempt to reconcile the expectations and standards imposed by the country’s leadership “from above” and the often conflicting reality on the ground.

Several factors contributed to the duplicity. The first and most important was external and political: the unprecedented extent of ideological pressure, the aggrandizing focus on Ceausescu that affected the social sciences more than any other disciplines<sup>86</sup>. During the 1980s decade Nicolae Ceausescu’s cult of personality reached its highest point, and its over-embellishment of reality was flagrantly incongruous with the life of the average Romanian. The economic crisis Romanians were dealing with (in many ways perceived at the time as the direct

---

<sup>86</sup> Murgescu, *România si Europa*.

result of Ceausescu's policies) made it very difficult for teachers to convincingly argue about the extraordinary progress brought by the Communist leadership.

The requirements intended to strengthen ideological education, such as meetings, debates or “voluntary,” “patriotic work” often took teachers and students away from the classroom to the detriment of education. Often the lack of resources after the cutbacks in the education budget left schools without the ability to purchase the course materials students were supposed to study. As Dana put it,

We were supposed to ask students to purchase the pamphlets with the party speeches from bookstores, the schools were no longer providing them. Many of my students could not afford them, and I felt uncomfortable pressing their parents to buy them. We had to cope, and we had a convention: what happens between the walls in the classroom stays there, and this gives us a lot of freedom to think and to say what you think. Things like it's impossible to get X crop per acre. Many times I didn't even need to say it because they knew already.

Another important factor was the covert defiance against teaching what was perceived as the “exaggerations” in the official ideology, defiance that the teachers picked-up in college from their own professors. They reported being uncomfortable propagating the flagrant economic exaggerations from the textbooks and party pamphlets, and also worrying that by doing so, they would compromise the close relationships they reported having with their own students.

Finally, teachers were part of a duplicitous bureaucratic system in which participants were far more concerned with preserving their positions and privileges than serving an ideological “mission.” In this duplicitous system teachers received no credible supervision or positive reinforcement, but on the contrary, they felt like random targets for sanctions.

### 2.3 SOCIAL SCIENCE TEXTBOOKS

In this section I am discussing the social science-civic education high school textbooks used in the 1980s<sup>87</sup>. Although most of other disciplines were infused with explicit or implicit party propaganda (most significantly history and literature) I narrowed down my focus to social sciences in order to be able to triangulate with the teacher and student accounts<sup>88</sup>. It is also worth noting that in a broader discussion of ideology and education systems, the Romanian communist textbooks were no exception. As Steven Brint notes, historically, all education systems were driven by various ideologies, and were guided by the interest of nation-states of “developing a trained workforce and well-disciplined citizenry.”<sup>89</sup>

Very little has been written about socialist textbooks, largely because the post-1989 changes captured most scholars’ attention, and besides, among the records, documents and archives of the communist years, socialist textbooks every generation had to memorize did not exactly contain exciting material or revelations. A unique account of socialist textbooks so far is historian John Rodden’s “Textbook Reds” (2006) covering the East German textbooks. Rodden’s interest in the socialist textbooks is very close to my own. He looks at elementary school and high school textbooks as the product of pedagogical efforts to educate East German youth by telling them what to think about their country, their party, or their class enemy. Although it is very difficult to assess the effect of these efforts, Rodden draws on several interviews with former students and teachers and argues that they created a “textbook mentality” which equated

---

<sup>87</sup> Comparisons to other subject textbooks would have been very interesting, but they have not been studied yet.

<sup>88</sup> No other communist era textbooks were studied.

<sup>89</sup> Steven Brint, *Schools and Societies*, 2nd ed. (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 7.

citizens' critiques of the party and DDR government with disloyalty and such bourgeois sins as individualism, negativism, and cosmopolitanism imprinted itself deeply in generations of DDR pupils." (2006: xxviii)

Several of Rodden's observations about East German civics/social science textbooks could perfectly describe the Romanian textbooks as well. The most interesting of these observations is their unidimensional, party-only focus:

[...] unlike other subjects they did not have to contend with literary or geographical or historical "facts": it was almost pure ideology. Its textbooks cited virtually no authorities except sacred party documents and leaders. (2006:89)

As one would expect, this led to a very dry, lackluster content, which are the first adjectives that come to mind when describing the Romanian textbooks. Topics such as "socialist freedom" or "socialist romance" mentioned in the German textbooks analysis are completely missing from their Romanian counterparts. Quite the opposite, the Romanian textbooks emphasize more coercive concepts such as discipline, sacrifice and gratitude towards the Party. They also contain fewer examples, illustrations and practical tasks.

Like all Romanian textbooks from the 1980s, the social science textbooks reflect the peak of Ceausescu's personality cult opening with a first page full-page portrait of a young, healthy-looking Nicolae Ceausescu, who in reality was well over 60. The severe economic downturn is reflected in the poor physical quality of the textbooks, in the thin, yellow, almost see-through recycled paper they were printed on, which makes it possible to almost read the text printed on the reverse. They were provided free of cost to students and passed from one cohort to another, but the better-off and concerned parents would buy new copies for their children. Like all other textbooks, they were the unique official textbooks, part of the standardized national curriculum.

They were revised every five-seven years to reflect the latest Romanian Communist Party Congress speeches.

The purpose of the “Economics” (1978, 1985) textbook was to introduce 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to the basics of the socialist economy. Of all the social science textbooks it was the least ideological, most readable, non-repetitive and logical. Overall the style was very sober, and no illustrations or examples provided.

The textbook begins with a section emphasizing how important it is for the country that the students learn Economics, accompanied by a quote from Ceausescu about the “work heroism” ethic that young Romanian students are expected to develop. The next chapters introduced basic economic concepts such as the production of goods, labor, workforce, and means of production, followed by a brief history since 1944 of the socialist context in which Romania's economy functions. Here the students were told about the planned economy, socialist property, social equality (which didn't mean that meant that all citizens are being paid equally, but that they are all owners of the socialist property). The citizens’ salaries were based on the “quality, quantity and social importance of work” (1985:9).

The socialist economy was postulated to be in a permanent growth process “the national economy continuously develops,” and was also “one unitary and independent entity” (1985:15). The next chapters describe the socialist economic unit and its administrative structure, as well as concepts such as workers’ self-management, socialist production, organization of work and work discipline. Here, another set of basic economic concepts are introduced: productivity, production costs, price, profit, salaries, circulation of goods, import/export and gross domestic production. The final chapters discuss the current economic situation, living standards and Romania’s future development. Again, the Romanian economy is described as being on an ascending trend,

independent from the world economy, following only the prescriptions of central planners and the Party.

Perhaps the most glaring contradiction with the actual experience of the 1980s students is the discussion of Romanians' living standards. The improvement of living standards, argues the textbook, is "the ultimate goal of the socialist economy." Whatever progress the Romanian economy made since 1945, the authors completely fail to illustrate in terms of living standards. Instead, they shift the discussion to the last party Congress and empty phrases such as "profound revolutionary transformations in Romanian economy and society." Only two examples of economic growth are given: the current industrial production is said to be 120 times higher than in 1945, and there is a graph showing salaries increasing from 1950 to 1985 (inflation was not factored in) by a factor of 13. Although the "living standard" is described as an indicator taking into account factors such as "income, consumer goods and services, working conditions, living conditions, transportation, leisure time, social services, medical services, cultural activities, education, access to science art culture and politics", the authors gave no examples of improvements other than for income and state spending on "cultural activities." The last part of the chapter is solely devoted to detailed coverage of the next five-year plan and the improvements it is going to bring in "housing, consumer goods and culture." Romania's next goal was to "transition from a developing country to a medium-developed one."

In the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Romanian students were taught the subject of "Social and Political Education" (1978, 1985, 1988). In this textbook the ideological dimension completely takes over, making it an even more mind-numbing reading. Buried among endless and repetitive quotes from Nicolae Ceausescu, the students found occasional references to Marx, Engels and Lenin. The textbook manages to introduce several Marxist concepts about the evolution of

human society, types of social organization, socialist revolution and class struggle, but all these are dwarfed by long sections covering “comrade Nicolae Ceausescu’s contribution to the development of revolutionary theory.” The first two decades of communist rule in Romania are briefly mentioned, whereas the years after Ceausescu's rise to power are covered in a lot of detail, emphasizing all of his accomplishments, leadership and speeches. Unlike the Economics textbook which was a little more logical, this textbook is full of stereotypical party speech sentences, loaded with adjectives and very vague in their meaning. Here is an example of such a sentence:

Our party promotes with unrelenting consistency its policy of developing and consolidating socialist property, and its two forms - state owned and cooperatist (28).

Once again, just like in the previous textbook, a lot of the text is devoted to covering glowing future plans of development. A section on social classes describes Romania as a two class society: the working class (51,6 percent of working population) and the cooperatist<sup>90</sup> peasantry (28.3 percent), along with several other “social categories” such as intellectuals, administration and services personnel, small cooperative workers, freelancers and independent (non-cooperatist) peasants. These social classes, the authors argued, were not antagonistic, but functioned in the spirit of the “worker-peasant alliance” the political basis of our society” (37). Future economic development and policies such as the “systematization of the villages”<sup>91</sup> will transform Romania into a classless, homogenous society. The Romanian Communist Party is presented as “a group of people united by their common politics, ideology and social interests, [...] the most active and most organized part of a social class” (41) with a membership of 3.7

---

<sup>90</sup> Member of an agricultural cooperative.

<sup>91</sup> An internationally criticized program initiated by Nicolae Ceausescu aiming for a forced urbanization, by razing villages and moving their population to the cities. (39)

million, of which 55 percent were workers, 15.5 peasants and 20 percent intellectuals and other categories. The party members and the president represent “the sovereign will of the nation,” however nothing is mentioned about the selection of party members and leaders or about how the nation communicates its will to them. The next section, devoted to democracy, discusses the flawed capitalist democracies which “proclaim formal rights, whereas our society provides essential human rights: the right to work, to education and healthcare, equal work for equal labor and nondiscrimination based on sex or nationality” (48). Party elections and “workers’ self-governance” are given as examples a functioning socialist democracy.

One of the most important goals of the Party policy was to form the “New Person”: a citizen with revolutionary spirit, motivated by socialist revolutionary patriotism, devoted to socialist ethics and equality, with a materialist scientific education and views, and an eye out for combating mystical-religious manifestation. The Party’s hope for attaining this ideal citizen was focused on the youth, “the vital center of our society” (9), which had a chapter of its own in the textbook, the ones who were seen as the most malleable segment of the population, removed from the old capitalist system and naturally progressive. Therefore, the authors present the youth as being especially targeted through “political ideological” and “cultural educative activities” throughout their education, and having a “very special place” in the Communist Party through the Union of Communist Youth. The last chapter discusses Romania's foreign-policy where some of Ceausescu's favorite causes are mentioned, such as stopping nuclear proliferation, slowing down the arms race, and conflict mediation. The significance of the East-West political divide is remarkably absent from this section (a brief mention of NATO and the Warsaw Pact is the only hint). Instead, Ceausescu's international peace activism is given prominence. Romania comes across as an independent state, as Ceausescu liked it, but also as a politically isolated

state, with no friends<sup>92</sup> or enemies. This representation of Romania in international relations is highly consistent with Ceausescu's autarchic leadership style and policies of isolationism in foreign affairs noted by Nelson, such as non-integration in the Warsaw Pact, military self-reliance as well as a less voluntary isolation from the Reagan administration which decided to pay more attention to human rights violations in the 1980s<sup>93</sup>.

The 11th grade social science subject seems to have taken things to an entirely new level: compared with the ninth and 10th grade subjects textbooks which were about 70 to 100 pages long, the Political Economy of the Romanian Communist Party textbook stretches to 236 dense pages. It is divided into three sections: Introductory Concepts, The Socialist Economy, and The Capitalist Economy. The introductory section addresses in more depth concepts previously introduced by the Economics textbook (labor, modes of production) as well as an attempt to define the discipline ("the totality of principles and norms that guide the economic life of a state, internally and internationally, as well as the means and methods used to perfectly accomplish the course of economic life" p. 21)

As in the case of the previous textbooks, economic concepts are covered briefly to make room for the sections covering the Party or Ceausescu's take on the specific concept discussed. Here, the authors show off their exceptional ability to write apparently articulate but very vague paragraphs such as this one:

In our Party's political economy, the scientific dimension blends organically with its creative original character. Through its realism, precise estimation of internal and international factors and conditions that factor into its design, the political economy of the party constitutes a living example of the development of general truths, universally valid for the socialist construction (22).

---

<sup>92</sup> It is also very interesting to note the absence of Ceausescu's most famous foreign policy move: the critique of the Soviet Prague invasion of 1968, which gained him a lot of admiration in Romania and internationally.

<sup>93</sup> Nelson, *Romania after Tyranny*.

The next section on “The Capitalist Economy” covers concepts such as production, commodities, value, capitalist exploitation, accumulation of capital, the working class and the crisis of capitalism. All concepts are introduced without any context, as purely “theoretical” until the end of the “Capitalism” chapter, where a discussion of the situation of the working class in capitalism developed, Western countries come up as examples. To illustrate how bad the working-class situation was, the authors mention data from a 1987 United Nations report on unemployment (average of 8.5 percent which equals 31.5 million total in the developed countries among which women, youth, elderly are overrepresented), income inequality (in the US 18.7 percent control 76 percent of the wealth; same in Belgium, France, UK, Italy and Sweden), and poverty (14 million UK, 18 million France, 32 million. USA) (pp.54-56). The US car industry is used as an example of monopoly, whereas companies such as Exxon and Philips are examples of the imperialist export of capital. The rise of transnational, multinational companies is a confirmation of Leninist theory about the economic division of the world, the inevitable collapse of capitalism and the transition to socialism:

Capitalism transformed into a world system of social oppression and colonization, of exploitation of the vast majority of the world population by a group of developed capitalist countries (71)

The issue of imperialism constitutes another occasion to introduce a little bit of Ceausescu’s thinking, something unusually straightforward in this textbook: his analysis of the thesis that nineteenth and twentieth century Romania was an imperialist state. His argument was that capitalist Romania was economically too underdeveloped to be imperialist, and far from being an exploiting state it was an exploited one (p. 71).

The final section on “The Socialist Economy” offers the students a brief recap of Romania’s transition to socialism, where the earlier historical analysis credited to Ceausescu is attributed this time to Lucretiu Patrascanu (a leading member and “party intellectual” of the Romanian Communist Party, promoter of national-communism within the party, executed in 1954 and rehabilitated by Ceausescu in 1968<sup>94</sup>) and accompanied by a quote. Unlike Ceausescu, Patrascanu actually published several books and social-history essays about Romania in the 1930s. Several indicators of Romania’s economic backwardness in the 1940s are used: an economy mostly based on agriculture, a modest industrial sector, a trade balance deficit, low income per capita plus the costs of World War II, large losses due to economic subordination to Germany (443 million in 1938 currency) and Northern Transylvania’s brief annexation to Hungary.

The incursion into reality and data stops after a couple of pages, after which the highly abstract-theoretical enumeration of concepts continues with socialist property, agrarian revolution, the planning of economic activity, productivity, cost of production, workers self governance and financial self-management, socialist reproduction, circulation of goods.

The chapter concludes with a special section about “the improvement of living standards: the supreme goal of party policy” (208). Here the authors mention Romania’s effort to deal as much as possible with members of the Eastern Bloc’s economic organization (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) and with developing countries, which represent 24 percent of Romania’s total foreign trade (the textbook does not specify which countries outside of the Council are the rest) . The task of illustrating the improvement of Romanian citizens’ standards of living is carried out by reiterating the national economic growth numbers mentioned earlier in

---

<sup>94</sup> For more on Patrascanu see Adrian Cioroianu, *Pe Umerii lui Marx: o Introducere in Istoria Comunismului Românesc* (București: Curtea Veche, 2005).

the “Economics” textbook, as well as a weak attempt to give more individualized examples. These are limited to healthcare (an improvement from a ratio of 1485 population per physician in 1945 to 475 on 1986), and a mention of improvement in housing and cultural activities.

The style remains as convoluted and a-historical as in the previous textbooks. Overall, the textbook makes for an extremely dull, repetitive and confusing reading; its lack of examples or practical assignments, question, discussion points, or illustrations make it the worst of all the social science textbooks.

The last of the textbooks, the 12<sup>th</sup> grade subject of “Philosophy” is a blend of history of philosophy, Marxist philosophy, and Ceausescu quotes. The textbook opens by clearly situating the development of philosophy in a social-historical context. Philosophy is a partisan discipline which “represents one way or another, the interests of a certain social group” (6). Philosophies can be progressive (such as the Marxist-Leninist philosophy) or conservative. The former, which represents the ideals of the working class is the philosophy of the Party, and is the people’s only way to accede to a superior society, and is therefore, objective. The textbook continues with a historical overview of philosophical schools from ancient Greece, middle ages to modern philosophy, everything being presented as an evolutionary process that led to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Marxist revolution in philosophy. Again, the Party’s 13<sup>th</sup> Congress<sup>95</sup> documents and Ceausescu’s speeches creep-up in every section, emphasizing that:

The learning of Marxist philosophy contributes to the formation of a new human type, with a superior capacity of understanding objective laws and acting upon them, freed from idealistic, conservative, and mystical conceptions (8).

---

<sup>95</sup> The Romanian Communist Party started holding Congresses at irregular intervals since 1921. After 1948 they were held every five years. The 13<sup>th</sup> Congress took place in 1984. King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party*.

Contemporary philosophy is also mentioned (existentialism, phenomenology, spiritualism, neopositivism, structuralism, the Frankfurt school) along with Romanian philosophy, where Gr. Ureche, M. Costin, Scoala Ardeleana, Gh. Lazar, T. Diamat, V. Conta, T. Maiorescu, B.P. Hasdeu, A.D. Xenopol are sandwiched between Ceausescu and the same Ceausescu. The Romanian section insists on the “original” and “progressive Romanian traditions in philosophy.” A lot of authors, some of whom had written religious texts, are recovered in this nationalist key, and presented as champions of humanism, knowledge and freedom of expression. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century is presented as a battlefield between the materialistic and idealistic philosophies. The authors of the latter are not mentioned, only the ones that significantly “critiqued and exposed it”: P.P. Negulescu, P. Andrei, M. Florian, M. Ralea, D.D. Rosca.

The focus shifts again to Ceausescu and the Party’s “contributions to the development of revolutionary theory.” Ceausescu is given credit for concepts such as the “novel spirit” the Party seeks to spread among its people and the “multi-laterally developed socialist society,” an ideal stage of independent development towards communism. The next few sections (Matter and Consciousness, Epistemology, Determinism, Social-human determinism, The Materialist-Dialectics of Development, Social Progress, Social Conscience, Forms of Social Conscience; the Formation of the New Man) continue with heavy theorizing, classifications and definitions intermixed with the Marxist view of each topic.

The Romanian social science textbooks used in the 1980s shared a great deal with the official Party rhetoric, or “double speak,” often called in Romania “the wooden tongue,”<sup>96</sup> which

---

<sup>96</sup> Lavinia Betea, *Mentalități și Rămășițe Comuniste* (București: Nemira, 2005), suggests a Russian, pre-communist origin of the term

“does not communicate anything new, and does not describe anything”<sup>97</sup> (Thom, 1989). Betea<sup>98</sup> suggests the “wooden tongue” speech originated in the Soviet Union and was propagated in Romania (and Eastern Europe) by the intellectuals affiliated with power. She cites poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga’s experience of mandatory ideological training: “I understood that professors had to suspend their own brain activity and try the impossible: to think with the brain of the classical Marxists.”<sup>99</sup> All the characteristics of early Soviet communist rhetoric inventoried by Jakobson<sup>100</sup> (1963) are found in the textbooks analyzed in this chapter: vague, full of abstractions and redundancies, identical from one author or topic to another, with heavy use of hyperbole, euphemism and superlative. The vocabulary is poor, the tone is passive, and the discourse lacks clarity and it is not adapted to the audience<sup>101</sup>. As Lavinia Betea discovered in her interviews with Ceausescu’s speechwriter D. Popescu, everyone was aware of these problems, but this was the way Ceausescu wanted his speeches and party documents. Here is what Popescu recounted:

Nobody forced him to deliver speeches all the time... he was not bothered that all his speeches were alike [...] once we had a discussion about these concerns of mine and he was surprised, “why are you bothered by this? It’s normal. We don’t have two policies, we have only one!” His speeches, even among the small circle of party leaders felt like a bath in ice water, like the North Pole. The strongest sensation was of depersonalization, people walked out of meetings with a feeling of mineralization. (1994: 74-75)

---

<sup>97</sup> Thom, 1989 in Betea *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Lavinia Betea, *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Lucian Blaga, *Luntrea lui Caron: Roman* (București: Humanitas, 1990), 1990:183 in Betea 2004:47

<sup>100</sup> Roman Jakobson, *Essais de Linguistique Generale: les Fondations du Langage*. (Paris: Minuit, 1963).in Betea 2004.

<sup>101</sup> Françoise Thom, *NewSpeak: the Language of Soviet Communism* (London: Claridge, 1989). in Betea *ibid.*

### **3.0 THE EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCE OF ROMANIAN YOUTH: PARENTS, FAMILY, FRIENDS**

This chapter is devoted to the everyday life experience of youth in the 1980s. First, it situates my work in the context of theoretical and methodological shifts in the scholarship on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, and the relevance of the everyday life perspective for understanding communism in the region. It also sketches the evolution of Romanian literature and research on the communist era and the theoretical and political factors that shaped them.

Based on my interviews with former students I offer a general description of all phases of the educational system as directly experienced by students, followed by a more in-depth analysis of how former high school students from Bucharest traced their political education over time. I divided their accounts by sources of influence: parents, peers, schools and communist youth organizations (Pioneers and the Union of Communist Youth).

### **3.1 LENS TRANSITION: A SLOW SHIFT FROM MACRO TO MICRO ANALYSIS ON SOCIALIST EASTERN EUROPE**

During the Cold War and for most of the first decade following 1989, the scholarship on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was marked by a distinct focus on elite level politics and its opposition/resistance, “particularly owing to the persistence of the ‘victim-oppressor’ syndrome”

according to Kott<sup>102</sup>. As more and more reports about the victims of the socialist revolutions surfaced from the Soviet Bloc in the 1950s, the concept of “totalitarian systems” seeking total control of their subjects became the lens through which issues of oppression, fear, and the absence of individual freedom were exposed. This approach was rooted in the “totalitarian paradigm” originating in the works of Karl Popper<sup>103</sup> and Hanna Arendt<sup>104</sup> and exerted considerable intellectual influence on Western sovietologists<sup>105</sup>. Although there were exceptions, such as Fitzpatrick’s work<sup>106</sup> on the Soviet Union or Burawoy’s<sup>107</sup> work on Hungary, this paradigm dominated the scholarship on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

During the decade that followed the revolutions of 1989, as the socialist experience moved into the realm of the past, alternative approaches emerged in both local and Western scholarship from history, anthropology and sociology. This shift in methodological approach is most often associated with Alf Lüdtke’s<sup>108</sup> German school of *Alltagsgeschichte* (history of everyday life) and drew on Eric Hobsbawm’s and E. P. Thompson’s “history from below” focusing on ordinary people left out by the previous grand narratives<sup>109</sup>.

---

<sup>102</sup> Sandrine Kott, “Everyday Communism: New Social History of the German Democratic Republic,” *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 2 (May 1, 2004): 233–247.

<sup>103</sup> Karl Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* Karl Popper. (London; New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>104</sup> Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. in Péter Apor, “The Joy of Everyday Life: Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life in the Socialist Dictatorships,” *East Central Europe* 34, no. 1/2 (June 1, 2007): 185–218.

<sup>105</sup> Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958); Carl Friedrich, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 2d ed., rev. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Robert Tucker and American Council of Learned Societies Devoted to Humanistic Studies., *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*, 1st ed. (New York NY: Norton, 1977); Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Byzantine Rites, Stalinist Follies: the Twilight of Dynastic Socialism in Romania* (Philadelphia PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1986); *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts Under Lunacharsky October 1917-1921* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1970)., Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Burawoy, *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary’s Road to Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>108</sup> Alf Lüdtke, *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).

<sup>109</sup> Apor, “The Joy of Everyday Life.”

The new “wave” of scholarship draws from the wide range and diversity of ordinary people’s lives and practices under socialism, such as women’s experiences of (in)equality, fashion, labor, sexuality<sup>110</sup>, socialist spaces (dachas, street photography, Pioneers’ Palaces, communal apartments, décor<sup>111</sup>, youth in working class towns<sup>112</sup>), social class and popular culture<sup>113</sup>, cinema<sup>114</sup>, citizenship and power<sup>115</sup>, social work<sup>116</sup>, culture<sup>117</sup> modernity, and material culture<sup>118</sup>.

Several critiques have been leveled against the everyday life perspective on the socialist experience. The most common one is the failure to take into account the historical context of these everyday life experiences. For example Koczanowicz<sup>119</sup> and Kubik<sup>120</sup> are concerned with the “normalizing”, nostalgic or even apologetic potential of such accounts. Apor on the other hand warns about the trap of thinking from the point of view of the fall of communism in 1989 and the dangers of ignoring the pre-communist context of “poverty, deprivation, uncertainty,

---

<sup>110</sup> Rebecca Kay, *Gender, Equality and Difference During and After State Socialism* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)., Jill Massino, “Something Old, Something New: Marital Roles and Relations in State Socialist Romania,” *Journal of Women’s History* 22, no. 1 (March 6, 2010): 34–60.

<sup>111</sup> David Crowley, *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2002).

László Kürti, *Youth and the State in Hungary: Capitalism, Communism, and Class* (London; Sterling Va.: Pluto Press, 2002).<sup>112</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

<sup>114</sup> Joshua Feinstein, *The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema, 1949-1989* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>115</sup> Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-1990* (Cambridge UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>116</sup> Lynne Haney, *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

<sup>117</sup> Bren, *The Greengrocer and His TV*.

<sup>118</sup> Susan Reid, *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-war Eastern Europe* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2000).

<sup>119</sup> Leszek Koczanowicz, “Memory of Politics and Politics of Memory. Reflections on the Construction of the Past in Post-Totalitarian Poland,” *Studies in East European Thought* 49, no. 4 (1997): 259–270.

<sup>120</sup> Jan Kubik, “Historical Memory and the End of Communism,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 2 (May 9, 2007): 127–133.

absence of social welfare systems”, and the existence of local anti-capitalist sentiments.<sup>121</sup> Another important critique is that this approach is turning a blind eye to processes of the production of power, and presenting power instead as “external, from a clearly defined center” attempting to control subjects that come across as “a separate sphere”:

It was as if socialism had been a project only of a group of strange people who were cultivating lunatic utopian ideas and as if those ideas had been artificial ideological constructions, or even that during socialism nobody had ever believed in anything.<sup>122</sup>

Some proponents of the everyday life approach, however, emphasize the importance of addressing this interconnectedness, of looking at “the inter-relations between the overlapping and mutually informing elements of state and society”<sup>123</sup>. Furthermore, they argue, it is important to understand not only how the state was able to influence individuals but also how policies were “mediated, contested, reinforced, and in some cases ignored” in everyday life<sup>124</sup>.

### 3.2 EVERYDAY COMMUNISM IN ROMANIA

The interest in everyday life under communism, quite noticeable today, took about a decade to sprout in the Romanian field, much later compared to the Soviet Union or East Germany<sup>125</sup>. Local Anthropology and Sociology were repressed, and although research was still conducted in some institutions (as I describe in chapter 3), analyses and publication were very limited. Several

---

<sup>121</sup> Apor, *ibid*: 207

<sup>122</sup> Apor, *ibid*.

<sup>123</sup> Mary Fulbrook p. 289 in Patrick Major, *The Workers' and Peasants' State: Communism and Society in East Germany Under Ulbricht 1945-71* (Manchester UK; New York ;New York: Manchester University Press; Distributed exclusively in the USA by Palgrave, 2002).

<sup>124</sup> Massino *ibid*:36

<sup>125</sup> See Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*; Lüdtko, *The History of Everyday Life*.

western anthropologists (such as Katherine Verdery<sup>126</sup>, Gail Kligman<sup>127</sup>, David Kideckel<sup>128</sup> and Steven Sampson<sup>129</sup>) were able to conduct fieldwork in Romania and their work constitutes an exception from the focus on politics and elites. Their work, however, was limited to small rural communities.

In the early years of the first decade of post-socialism the present seemed the most pressing issue and Romanians, just like the other post-soviet societies, seemed to be eager to discuss the future. Many local scholars joined their western counterparts in debating political and economic transition, as well as the spread of nationalism in Eastern Europe. As far as the past was concerned, it was the early decades of communism and its victims that occupied a privileged place in both scholarly circles and public debate, not the recent period. This trend could be due to the general perception that communism was a Soviet-backed<sup>130</sup>, external imposition, coupled with a romantic view of the interwar period<sup>131</sup>. These factors, in the context of the post-1989 policy issues of property restitution, led to a strong interest in the forceful ways in which communism was imposed, and the Romanian resistance to communism, which was severely suppressed and never before discussed in public.

---

<sup>126</sup> Katherine Verdery, *Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California press, 1983).

<sup>127</sup> Gail Kligman, *Căluș: Symbolic Transformation in Romanian Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Gail Kligman, "The Rites of Women: Oral Poetry, Ideology, and the Socialization of Peasant Women in Contemporary Romania," *Journal of American Folklore* 97, no. 384 (1984): 167–188.

<sup>128</sup> David Kideckel, "The Socialist Transformation of Agriculture in a Romanian Commune, 1945-62," *American Ethnologist* 9, no. 2 (1982): 320–340.

<sup>129</sup> Steven Sampson, *National Integration Through Socialist Planning* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1984).

<sup>130</sup> See Cioroianu, *Pe Umerii Lui Marx*.

<sup>131</sup> See Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

Several histories of the communist Party were published<sup>132</sup>. One of the most iconic public figures in the discourse about the early communist past was TV producer Lucia Hossu-Longin. She produced a 35 episode long documentary titled “Memorialul Durerii” (The Memorial of Suffering) where she featured interviews with the anti-communist resistance of the 1950s and 60s and portraits of their tormentors, members of the secret police. It was aired between 1991 and 1994, a time of bitter political division between the so called “neo-communist” regime of Ion Iliescu and the much less influential opposition that included several pre-1945 veteran politicians<sup>133</sup> who survived the communist prisons.

The focus on the victims inevitably portrayed the first two decades of communism as a dark and horrific experience. The interviews with the anti-communist resistance and torturers were accompanied by footage of dark prison halls, cells, torture instruments with Hossu-Longin’s low and grave commentary in the background. The documentary generated strong support from dissident poet Ana Blandiana, who along with writer Romulus Rusan went on to found “The Civic Academy Foundation” (Fundatia Academia Civica) and in 1993 “The International Center for Research on Communism” (Centrul Internațional de Studii asupra Comunismului)<sup>134</sup>. The Center collects historical material and oral histories about the resistance. It transformed the former Sighet prison (where many political prisoners were detained) into “The Sighet Memorial”, a place to educate the younger generations about the crimes of communism.

---

<sup>132</sup> Tismaneanu, *Byzantine Rites, Stalinist Follies*; Deletant, *Communist Terror in Romania*; Dennis Deletant and Centrul de Studii Românești., *Romania under Communist Rule*, Rev. 2nd ed. (Iași Romania; Portland OR: Center for Romanian Studies in cooperation with the Civic Academy Foundation, 1999)., Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*.

<sup>133</sup> Corneliu Coposu, Radu Campeanu, Ion Ratiu, Constantin Dumitrescu.

<sup>134</sup> <http://www.memorialsighet.ro/>

The museum received some criticism from one former political prisoner for lack of authenticity in its freshly varnished look.<sup>135</sup>

The use of oral history to document the suffering during the communist repression was pioneered in Romania by linguist and anthropologist Smaranda Vultur<sup>136</sup>. Along with a team of students she collected oral histories of communities from the western province of Banat, Jews or Germans deported to the Baragan plains (Romania's dust bowl).

The passing of time and the rise of questions about responsibility for the abuses and debates about how history should be taught to the post-89 generations led to a proliferation of state and private/non-profit institutions and organizations created specifically to document the communist past. Most of these institutions retained the primary focus on the political victims of communist abuses. The earliest one is the National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism (Institutul National pentru Studiul Totalitarismului), created under the patronage of the Romanian Academy in 1993<sup>137</sup>. It deals with documenting the communist repression, political history and foreign relations. The Oral History Institute<sup>138</sup> (Institutul de Istorie Orală) was created in 1997 within the History and Philosophy department of the Babes Bolyai University in Cluj and although it ran projects about the anti-communist resistance as well, it expanded its focus to include research on ethnic and religious minorities.

The Romanian Institute for Recent History<sup>139</sup> (Institutul Roman de Istorie Recenta) was established in 2000 as a non-profit organization through a program of the Dutch foreign affairs

---

<sup>135</sup> Adrian Marino, *Viața Unui Om Singur* (Iași: Polirom, 2010).

<sup>136</sup> Smaranda Vultur, *Istorie Trăită - Istorie Povestită: Deportarea din Bărăgan (1951 - 1956)* (Timisoara: Ed. Amarcord, 1997); Smaranda Vultur, *Germanii din Banat prin Povestirile lor* (București: Paideia, 2000); Smaranda Vultur, *Memoria Salvată: Evreii din Banat, Ieri și Azi* (Iași: Polirom, 2002); Smaranda Vultur and Fundația "A Treia Europă," *Lumi in Destine: Memoria Generațiilor de Început de Secol din Banat* (București: Nemira, 2000).

<sup>137</sup> <http://www.totalitarism.ro/>

<sup>138</sup> <http://hiphi.ubbcluj.ro/hiphi/institute/orala.htm>

<sup>139</sup> [www.irir.ro](http://www.irir.ro)

ministry, with the mission of opening up the academic debate about communism through public debates, collection of oral histories and publications. They supported the publication of several volumes focused on political repression, such as histories of the secret service, the Brasov workers' revolt of 1987, forced demolitions and foreign policy but also more "everyday life" topics such as gender identity under communism and urban oral histories of Bucharest. The same year the non-profit organization AsperA was founded by Romanian émigré Lidia Bradley, with the mission of supporting education but also running the "Memoria" periodical and the website <http://www.memoria.ro/>, "a digital library of interviews, memoirs, oral histories, books and images from Romania's recent history."<sup>140</sup>

Soon enough, the state stepped into the Romanian memory industry, as Pierre Nora<sup>141</sup> would call it. The state involvement in the communist memory work in Romania was plagued by contemporary political divisions and tensions, and bitter fights over funding, staff and "academic" turf.

The first state-funded institute under direct government control under the Nastase government (and "coordinated by the Ministry of Culture) was The National Institute for the Memory of the Romanian Exile<sup>142</sup> (Institutul Național pentru Memoria Exilului Românesc) and was established in 2003. Its mission was to collect historical material about the Romanians living in exile during communism, to support publications about the exile and function as liaisons between the government and the Romanian diaspora.

In 2005 the Tariceanu government created the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România) and

---

<sup>140</sup> <http://www.aspera.ro/index.html>

<sup>141</sup> Nora, *Realms of Memory*.

<sup>142</sup> [www.exilul-romanesc.ro](http://www.exilul-romanesc.ro) – website defunct, accessed with Google Cached page on October 25, 2011.

appointed Romanian historian Marius Oprea (prolific author of publications about the secret service and communist repression in general) as its head. Consistently with Oprea's expertise, the institute focused on victims and perpetrators and started a campaign of locating burial sites of citizens executed during the communist repressions, exhumations and identifications.

Political tensions in 2006 between president Basescu and the Tariceanu government, led the president to start his own Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania (Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România) headed by University of Maryland political scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu. The mission of the commission was to examine the communist period, write-up a report, and advise the president on the appropriateness of publicly condemning communism. The broader backdrop of this drive to investigate the communist past was a long time refusal or avoidance of previous post-1989 governments (both the so called "neo-communist" social democrats as well as the one-time in power conservative Democratic Convention) to take a stand about that past or to open investigations about past abuses. The presidential commission presented its 660 page report<sup>143</sup> in December 2006 and, based on it, the president officially condemned communism<sup>144</sup>, declared it an "illegitimate and criminal regime," "a totalitarian regime born through violence and terminated thorough violence."<sup>145</sup> The report covered the abuses perpetrated by the communist regime (imprisonments, persecutions and demolitions of villages, churches and cultural heritage sites) as well other faults such as the indoctrination of the population<sup>146</sup> or the destruction of national culture and the imposition of party approved culture. The report was criticized by

---

<sup>143</sup> The entire report is available on the presidency website [http://www.presidency.ro/?\\_RID=htm&id=83](http://www.presidency.ro/?_RID=htm&id=83).

<sup>144</sup> The report and presidentially address explicitly condemned "communism" as an ideology.

<sup>145</sup> Presidential speech on December 18 2006

[http://www.presidency.ro/?\\_RID=det&tb=date&id=8288&\\_PRID=ag](http://www.presidency.ro/?_RID=det&tb=date&id=8288&_PRID=ag).

<sup>146</sup> Tismaneanu's own parents are listed as perpetrators of the indoctrination.

several intellectuals on various grounds, such as the (in)appropriateness of spending tax revenue on it, the choice of the committee members, the short timeframe (6 months), its indiscriminate blaming or its anti-left political bias. These critiques were later published in a collective volume<sup>147</sup>.

In November 2009 president Basescu decided to consolidate The National Institute for the Memory of the Romanian Exile and the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism (created by his political rival prime minister Tariceanu) into the Institute for the Investigations of the Crimes of Communism and the Memory of the Romanian Exile<sup>148</sup> (Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului si Memoria Exilului Romanesc). Vladimir Tismaneanu was appointed the head of the new institute. Marius Oprea, the former head of the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism protested the consolidation and unsatisfied with the deputy head position offered in the consolidated institution created in 2010 a new Center for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism<sup>149</sup> (Centrul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului) where he continues his archeological search for those executed in the first two decades of communism. The center is funded through private donations and in part by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

The political history of communist repression and its victims still dominates the way the communist past is re-memorized in Romania, but beginning with the 2000s different accounts started to emerge. Most of these come from a younger generation, born in the 1960s and 70s, a generation that today, as adults, is starting to remember their childhood and realize its uniqueness. A lot of this remembering took place in conversations and in online forums and

---

<sup>147</sup> Critiques of the report can be found in Ciprian Șiualea, *Iluzia Anticomunismului: Lecturi Critice Ale Raportului Tismăneanu*, Ediția 1. (Chișinău: Cartier, 2008).

<sup>148</sup> <http://www.crimelecomunismului.ro>

<sup>149</sup> <http://www.condamnareacomunismului.ro/>

blogs, and later in dedicated websites<sup>150</sup>. Here, members of those generations shared memories of growing up under communism, such as children's games, nursery rhymes, stories of fetishizing western consumer products, old communist newspapers, photos, communist film fragments, communist era snacks and brands, very much in the spirit of the popular yet controversial German film "Goodbye Lenin." Advertisers quickly caught the trend and concocted several "nostalgia" ads, such as the one for the resuscitated communist-era Rum Chocolate<sup>151</sup> featuring a cameo of Ceausescu scaring off high school students or the Bucegi<sup>152</sup> beer ad reminiscing about the two hours-a-day Romanian television broadcast and the habit of watching the Bulgarian television channels<sup>153</sup>.

The Romanian "New Wave of Cinema" writers and directors are part of the same age group and some of their films are representative of this new current. Catalin Mitulescu's "The Way I Spent the End of The World" (2006) portrays communist everyday life and its permeation by politics through the eyes of a school girl whose world is completely changed when she accidentally breaks a bust of Ceausescu. The award winning "4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days"<sup>154</sup> (2007) closely follows the experience of a young woman going through the process of arranging an illegal abortion<sup>155</sup> for her best friend, while "Tales from the Golden Age"<sup>156</sup> is a humorous exploration of several urban legends of the 1980s, most of them ridiculing the communist bureaucracy and red tape.

---

<sup>150</sup> <http://www.latrececut.ro/>, <http://www.comunismulinromania.ro>

<sup>151</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5BsN9BKoFI&feature=related> (circa 2003)

<sup>152</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKpKHdZn8W4> (circa 2004)

<sup>153</sup> Watching it was popular despite the obvious language barriers: Romanian is a romance language and Bulgarian Slavic. Many Romanians started learning Bulgarian to be able understand the dubbing of their western TV programs. In the 1980s Bulgarian dictionaries were rumored to be sold out in Romania.

<sup>154</sup> 2007, directed by Cristian Mungiu.

<sup>155</sup> In the post-1967 Romania abortion and contraception was banned as a way of increasing birth rates. See Gail Kligman's "Politics of duplicity".

<sup>156</sup> 2009, directed by Hanno Höfer

In a series of three volumes titled “Explorations of Romanian Communism”<sup>157</sup> literary critics and members of the same generation<sup>158</sup> Ion Manolescu, Paul Cernat, Angelo Mitchievici and Ioan Stanomir analyze (sometime sarcastically) literary productions, plays, and political or cultural figures of the communist era. The four also wrote an autobiographical volume<sup>159</sup> about their childhood and youth experiences from the communist era. Their intent, as explained on the book’s back cover, is remembering and “recapturing” those times:

We would like our texts to be read not with judging eyes but by someone able to understand their relativity. We were silent about some things from our past and opened up about others. Those who are our age will recognize, undoubtedly, the familiar everyday atmosphere, but for those who don’t have memories of those times it’s all fiction already. Through the stories collected here we wanted to open and close a gate to a magical, atrocious or tender past, knowing very well that it would never be possible to completely recapture it. (my translation)

In the same book series, the publisher (Polirom) released in 2008 a volume of memoirs of women writers<sup>160</sup> touching on such issues as sexuality, schools, abortions, motherhood, or shopping under communism. The interest in oral history also produced a collection of everyday oral histories from Bucharest<sup>161</sup> collected by the Romanian Peasant Museum researchers, and a volume of secondary school and high school student essays about communism based on interviews with their family members<sup>162</sup>. Communist dissenters such as Mircea Carp<sup>163</sup>, Radu

---

<sup>157</sup> Paul Cernat, *Explorări în Comunismul Românesc: 3 Vol.* (Iași: Polirom, 2004).

<sup>158</sup> They were born between 1968 and 1973.

<sup>159</sup> Cernat et. al. *O Lume Dispărută: Patru Istории Personale Urmate De Un Dialog Cu H.-R. Patapievici* (București: Polirom, 2004).

<sup>160</sup> Radu Gheo, *Tovarășe De Drum: Experiența Feminină în Comunism* (Iași: Polirom, 2008).

<sup>161</sup> Anghelescu, Serban et. al. *Mărturii Orale: Anii '80 și Bucureștenii.* (București: Paideia, 2003).

<sup>162</sup> Luciana Jinga and Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România., *Elev în Comunism = Student During the Communist Regime* (București: Curtea Veche, 2009).

<sup>163</sup> Mircea Carp, *“Vocea Americii” În România: 1969-1978* (Iași: Polirom, 1997).

Filipescu<sup>164</sup>, Herta Müller<sup>165</sup> published autobiographical volumes, along with witnesses of the privileged lives of party members such as coffee shop manager Gheorgeh Florescu<sup>166</sup>. Powerful photographs<sup>167</sup> surfaced, very different from the official photos everyone remembers, reminding Romanians of the depressing face of the 1980s, of poverty, waiting in lines of hundreds, overcrowded busses, demolitions of old historical neighborhoods, empty shop windows or lucky shoppers showing off a dozen rolls of rough toilet paper.

### **3.3 THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AS SEEN FROM THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE**

This section is based on my interviews with former students. First, I offer a general description of all phases of the educational system such as Preschool, Grade school and High school, as they were directly experienced by students, followed by a more in-depth analysis of how former high school students from Bucharest traced their political education over time. I divided their accounts by sources of influence: parents, peers, schools and communist youth organizations (Pioneers and the Union of Communist Youth).

---

<sup>164</sup> Herma Kennel, *Jogging Cu Securitatea: Rezistența Tânărilor Radu Filipescu* (București: Editura Universal Dalsi, 1998).

<sup>165</sup> Herta Müller, *Regele Se-nclină și Ucide* (Iași: Polirom, 2005).

<sup>166</sup> Gheorgeh Florescu, *Confesiunile Unui Cafegiu* (București: Humanitas, 2008).

<sup>167</sup> Andrei Pandele, *Martorul-Surpriză: Fotografii Necenzurate din Comunism* (București: Compania, 2008).

### 3.3.1 Preschool

Nurseries and kindergartens were optional, and the attendance rate for the time my respondents were of that age was about 45.7 percent<sup>168</sup>. Ideological education was present at this level through the youngest communist organization, named “Falcons of the Fatherland” (Soimii Patriei). All four year old kindergarten children were enrolled, and wore uniforms made up of orange shirts with a button on red tie trimmed with the national flag colors, blue skirts/pants, and blue hats. Kindergarten teachers were required to teach children about president Nicolae Ceausescu (presented as the father of the country) and the Communist Party. In addition, children were read news stories about the president and taught songs and poems about the president, party, and patriotism.

### 3.3.2 Grade school

During grades 1-4 Romanian students studied with one teacher and were taught reading and writing, math, drawing, physical education, and music. In most of these subjects (except for math and physical education) the ideological component is present through photos of the president in the classroom and on the first page of each textbook, in poems, stories, or direct learning about the president and the communist party. In second grade, ideological education becomes more structured, through the enrollment of the students in the “Pioneers” youth organization (grades 2 to 8). Most<sup>169</sup> students were invited to join in an oath ceremony that took place at a location of

---

<sup>168</sup> Education in the SSR (1973:17) in Martin Croghan, *Ideological Training in Communist Education: a Case Study of Romania* (Washington: University Press of America, 1980).

<sup>169</sup> Usually 2-3 students with very low grades were invited in a second round of enrollment which took place a year later. Not being invited to be a pioneer was equivalent to being labeled a bad student.

historical-national significance, such as The Communist Party Museum in Bucharest, The Army Museum, or the Doftana Museum, a former prison where Nicolae Ceausescu and other party founders had been imprisoned before 1945. The pioneers wore uniforms as well: blue skirts/pants, white shirts, red scarves with the national flag trim, belts, and white berets with the Pioneer insignia pins.

The pioneers held meetings that entailed military-style protocol and elected leaders named after military ranks, such as row leader (commandant de grupa), class leaders (commandant de detasament) and school leaders (commandant de unitate). All elections were closely supervised by teachers, and up to the school leader level they were quite democratic: students nominated their candidates and voted for them during the same session, without campaigns. The school leader positions were less democratic, the position was strategically assigned to students with important Party connections or who were perceived by teachers as more obedient, mature, and responsible. All pioneers participated in activities in their classroom (organized by their home-room teacher) as well as school activities organized by one teacher assigned to be a Pioneer school-supervisor (instructor de unitate). These activities involved leisure activities such as school-trips and camping, as well as more ideological ones, such as readings from the Party newspaper, visits to factories or pageants with plenty of poems and songs praising the president, the party, and the fatherland. The pioneers were also required to participate in rallies supporting the president and the Party and do collective “volunteer” work – called “patriotic work”, which in most cases involved cleaning parks or other green areas, collecting recyclables, and gathering medicinal herbs. Participation in these activities was required. Although no direct grading was involved, missing these activities led to notifications sent to parents and possibly penalties in the “behavior” grade, which could get the student

expelled. Ideology was also present in a lot of the subjects taught (such as literature or history) and parents were often involved in helping their children do their ideological homework on topics such as “The Party is the party of all workers”, “Romania loves peace”, “The importance of the five year plan.”<sup>170</sup>

Starting with 5<sup>th</sup> grade students had different teachers for each subject – Math, Language and Literature, Foreign Languages (mostly German, English, French, Russian), History, Biology, Geography, Chemistry, Drawing, Physical Education. At this stage, Croghan noted in his research about education in the 1970s, ideological education continued with a more intense emphasis on nationalism, especially present in subjects such as History and Romanian Literature.<sup>171</sup>

### **3.3.3 High school**

In Romania, just like in the Soviet Union, tracking started at age 14 (the equivalent of 9<sup>th</sup> grade) through competitive examinations which, as Brint argues “[...] favored children whose parents had higher levels of formal education.<sup>172</sup>” In the case of Romania I would amend Brint’s observation by also adding children whose parents did not necessarily have high levels of education but had the available income and social aspirations to hire tutors for their children.

As students got closer to 8<sup>th</sup> grade high school admission exams became the focus of students, parents, and teachers. The high school exams were very competitive and were regarded as extremely important in determining one’s future. Students had to choose a high school they

---

<sup>170</sup> Croghan *ibid*:108.

<sup>171</sup> Croghan *ibid*:121

<sup>172</sup> Steven Brint, *Schools and Societies*, 2nd ed. (Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 101.

would like to attend (the most desirable ones were the “math-physics” ones and the specialized ones such as computer-science, pedagogy, art, music or Economics). After signing up, students took an entrance exam (Math and Romanian Language). Based on the exam grades they occupied the available slots at the desired high school; lower-scoring students were redistributed to less desirable high schools. The exams constituted a great source of stress for students, families, and teachers. Hiring private tutors for their children was the norm for better-off parents and even less affluent parents, who often forfeited other necessities for what they saw as the guarantee of better jobs for their children. All the students I interviewed had at least one private tutor in 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Math and some of them also had tutors for Romanian Language<sup>173</sup>. At this point in a student’s life both parents and teachers eased up on the expectation to get high marks on every subject in favor of the two exam subjects. Since ideological classes at this level were not important for getting into high school, sometimes home-room teachers arranged to replace them with tutoring from the math or Romanian teacher, and most teachers in the school acknowledged the hurdle ahead for their students and eased their assignments. Prestigious high schools also held tutoring sessions for aspiring 8<sup>th</sup> graders on Sundays.

Tutoring continued in high school for students aspiring to go to the university, as well as to prepare for another exam scheduled half-way through high school. This mid-course exam was similar to the admission exam and was scheduled at the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade and it determined their eligibility to continue attending their present high school or to transfer to another (better or worse) high school. Since both the high school and University exams in the 1980s tested the students only on two subjects (independent of their GPA) the trend of focusing more on the exam disciplines started in 8<sup>th</sup> grade continued through high school. Only Economics high schools

---

<sup>173</sup> Croghan (ibid) reports widespread practice of private tutoring in both secondary school and high school as early as the 1970s.

(which a small number of students attended) required a Political Economy exam, thus making it an important subject for their aspiring students. For all other high schools (the majority), however, exams tested students on different subjects, thus decreasing the importance of instruction in ideology. In the case of college admissions, ideology courses played an important role only for a limited number of students, those aspiring to attend the Economics Academy. These were a minority in an educational system that prioritized industrial training and allocated most of the college seats to the Polytechnic Institute.

On average a student attended thirty hours of classes per week<sup>174</sup>, as well as a few hours of participation in meetings of the UCY and occasional “patriotic work”. Sundays were free, but school met on Saturday, regarded as a work day in socialist Romania. Patriotic work in high schools often involved school trips accompanied by teachers to nearby agricultural cooperatives where students were required to pick or sort corn, potatoes or onions, or trips to factories where they were supposed to participate in the production process.

During their first year of high school, students were to join en-masse The Union of Communist Youth (UCY). The UCY was founded in 1949 as a Romanian version of the Soviet youth communist organization, the Komsomol.<sup>175</sup> By the 1980s the UCY included all high school and college students and some youth between the ages of 15 and 26. Its secretary was Ceausescu’s son Nicu Ceausescu from 1983 to 1987.<sup>176</sup> The mission of the UCY was to introduce youth to the party culture. It continued their ideological education in high school and beyond. In high schools the UCY activity was exclusively run by teachers. The teachers had their

---

<sup>174</sup> Croghan *ibid*:128.

<sup>175</sup> Federal Research Division, *Romania: a Country Study* (Kessinger Publishing, 2004).

<sup>176</sup> As Tismaneanu noted, the second half of the Ceausescu regime had a strong dynastic component. Nicu Ceausescu was widely known in Romania as Ceausescu’s successor. His image among Romanians was one of a privileged, arrogant heavy drinker known more for his wild partying and escapades than for his political involvement. See Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*.

own party organization run by a teacher who was party Secretary. Usually the teacher who was the assistant of the high school party secretary was appointed as the secretary of the UCY organization. This person was responsible for coordinating the school UCY organization which included virtually all students and their representatives for each grade. At the homeroom level the responsibility for organizing the UCY activities was given to the homeroom teacher. Some of these activities included weekly or biweekly meetings for ideological education. These would typically have lectures or involve reading a newspaper article about the activities of the president or the party. They occasionally included criticism for “incorrect ideological behavior.” Other activities were participation in demonstrations, patriotic and literary or artistic competitions, or more leisure oriented activities such as trips, camps, visits to the theater or the movies or dances.<sup>177</sup>

### **3.4 REMEMBERING POLITICAL EDUCATION IN THE 1980S**

Between January and December 2005 I conducted ten life history interviews with high school graduates (4 women and 6 men) from Bucharest who completed high school between 1980 and 1989. In the interviews we focused on their memories of childhood, education, family and friends with specific focus on the presence of politics and ideology in their lives. The interviews ranged from a total of 1.5 to 3 hours, sometimes in two sessions. My respondents were born between 1966 and 1972. I recruited them through snow-ball sampling with three different starting points. Their current occupations were production manager in an advertising company

---

<sup>177</sup> Croghan *ibid*: 132.

(1), journalist (3), public relations and multimedia specialist (1), advertising copywriter (3), non-profit manager (1), and high school teacher (1). Four of them attended elite high schools (Balcescu, Lazar), five attended medium-prestige high schools (Caragiale, Mate-fizica 3, Neculce, Sincai) and one of them attended an “industrial” low prestige high school, but only for the first two years after which he transferred to a higher prestige high school. All of them continued their education in college, majoring in business, literature and languages, architecture, electronics (2), the polytechnic institute (2, one of whom dropped out), history and journalism. Only one respondent had parents who were originally from Bucharest, which explains the fact that all of them grew up in new working class neighborhoods, in apartments built during socialism that were usually provided by state companies where a parent worked. This could reflect their parents’ social mobility but it can also be explained as the result of intense urbanization of the country during the communist years, and the fact that new communist-era apartment building neighborhoods were the only option available for new families. Their early childhood accounts are remarkably similar: playing with many other kids around their apartment buildings and new construction sites, attending the neighborhood school, visiting grandparents in the countryside on vacation. Six of them came from families where both parents were college educated (2 fathers had PhDs), two had only fathers with college degrees and two came from parents with a high school education. Among the grandparents I found a middle or upper class background<sup>178</sup> before Communism among five maternal grandparents and three paternal grandparents. Two of the middle-upper class maternal grandparents were political (non-communist) party member before 1948, the rest were not involved in politics or they did not

---

<sup>178</sup> This was important to know because in their efforts to achieve social equality the early communist governments expropriated and persecuted not only the members of the upper class but also middle-class or even wealthier peasant families.

mention it to their grandchildren. The rest of the grandparents were peasants, except for one working class grandparent who worked for the railroads. Among parents, men were more likely to be party members: eight out of ten fathers were members of the RCP, compared with only four mothers. Considering the social class of their grandparents before 1945, five of the ten pairs of parents married across class lines.

### **3.4.1 The influence of parents**

As I showed in the previous section, the generation of my informants was bombarded, beginning with kindergarten until maturity, with communist ideological messages and the personality cult propaganda of Nicolae Ceausescu. The intensity and reception of these messages, however, changed considerably over time. The most susceptible to the ideological indoctrination were the very young kindergarten and primary school students. This is the age when my informants reported going home from kindergarten reciting patriotic and pro-Ceausescu poems or even thinking of him and his wife as special parents watching from above. This is how Gabriel remembers thinking about Ceausescu:

I thought he was the smartest man on earth... when I was little. I knew he was president, and back then I thought the president was the smartest man in the country. On the other hand I realized later that my mom and dad had a different opinion, around first or second-grade. My parents weren't talking openly with me about this, but I caught a whiff that things weren't exactly that way, that this Ceausescu guy wasn't exactly okay.

As they grew older and more aware, they overheard criticism of the regime and president from their parents and extended family, and ultimately it was explained to them that things were not exactly the way they were taught in school, and they were trusted to keep absolute secrecy about the things they discussed at home. This was the experience of all my informants. In

Adrian's family, politics or criticisms were almost never present, but because of his father's important position<sup>179</sup> he received the warning as well:

I had to be careful when I talked on the phone, my parents warned me. Because of my dad's job our phone was tapped.

The most common discontent expressed in the critical political discussion within the family was about the severe consumer goods shortage and economic crisis, which were perceived as the direct result of Ceausescu's policies and the corruption among Communist party members who lived lavishly compared with the average socialist citizen. Ceausescu's personality cult and the heavy penetration of ideology in every aspect of life were also resented.

My informants had more and more open discussions about politics as they grew past the age of 7-8, heard political jokes in the family and even listened to Radio Free Europe with their parents. Even the party member parents (except for Adrian's father) expressed critical views about the Ceausescu regime. Camelia's father, a working class communist sympathizer's son who graduated from the party college was listening to Radio Free Europe with her and discussed the pre-communist history of Romania. "I think he really believed in communism helping the working class", Camelia explained, but he became disillusioned, especially after he lost his position as mayor due to machinations in the local party organization. Her mother, a party member teacher, also complained about the food shortages and the many hours of ideological classes she was required to attend as a teacher as well as to advise her home-room students. Ana's mother is another example of a "poster case" for communist social reform. A young girl with only four years of primary school, she worked for a rich banker's family, as a companion for his daughter. After the communists came to power she got a factory job and later she was

---

<sup>179</sup> Factory manager.

sent to attend one of the “Workers’ Universities” that offered the equivalent of a college degree and became a party member. Ana remembered her mother as genuinely believing in communism and being very grateful for the chance it gave her to continue her education. “She was aware of all the abuses but she was rationalizing and thinking that somehow, overall it was still good.”

I asked her how she felt when she heard about her mother’s life story, and if she felt sympathy for her. She replied:

I thought she was very exotic and I was eager to find out details, especially about the time when she worked for the very rich banker's daughter. And I thought those were things from very different times that will never repeat again. I also thought it was very stupid that she had to study so much and stay up all night [in the Workers’ University].

Ana was much closer to her father, who was very well-read and who came from a wealthy family. Because of his wealthy background he was unable to join the party and advance his university professor career. Ana and her father listened to Radio Free Europe together and discussed history and politics. But she also heard stories about how much property was confiscated from her grandfather and greatly admired her father’s “more sophisticated, cultured and interesting” side of the family over her mother’s peasant grandparents. She was critical towards her mother and tried to show her that she was wrong in her political views:

I was identifying with the rich and that made my mother very angry. She thought that the rich were bad and greedy and the poor were good. After the banker’s family she worked in a textile factory in the night shift and sometime sang. Someone's spotted her great voice and put her in an office so that she won't ruin her voice. See? I was telling her, it was pure luck that you got out of there.

V: did you ever feel empathy for her?

The opposite! I was criticizing her. I was trying to take apart her ideas. I was trying to make her admit that she was subjective about communism.

When political discussions did not take place with the parents, families of peers or grandparents stepped in. Alexandru's parents for example, never discussed politics around him, but he learned about Radio Free Europe and Western culture from his best friend's family, who were more "intellectual, open-minded, and more artsy" than his own. Grandparents who before 1945 were middle-class or politically involved and subsequently expropriated or marginalized by the communist regimes were more vocal and political than parents in criticizing the Ceausescu regime. My informants considered them influential in how they began to think of the official propaganda. Adrian (whose parents avoided discussing politics) remembered listening to Radio Free Europe with his maternal grandfather who was a former National Peasant Party member who after 1945 was arrested and tortured by the Romanian Secret Services. Camelia's maternal grandfather served (she said he "was a sort of confidante") for a Romanian prince before 1945, and she grew up with stories of the royal court, with princes, princesses, and politics. When I asked if the stories affected how she perceived the world she grew up in she responded:

I wasn't comparing a lot, I took things the way they were. But I was thinking that they were very beautiful times, I was thinking of it with melancholy. Especially because I read a lot of literature and I fell in love with the epoch. But most of these things for me were stories, they were not palpable reality. At that age I didn't really see an end to the present situation. I was thinking that this is how my life is, and will be.

Radu's grandmother had her family's bakery confiscated and suffered marginalization because of their "bourgeois" background. She also entertained him with stories about interwar Romania. Radu browsed interwar newspapers from his grandfather's collection. His grandfather, he told me, was from a noble family, had been politically active and after 1945 was accused of being a legionnaire<sup>180</sup>, his wealth was confiscated, and he lost his university professor position.

---

<sup>180</sup> Member of Romania's interwar fascist movement "The Legion of Archangel Michael", also known as the "Iron Guard".

In all the cases parents, grandparents, or friends exposed my interviewees to messages contradicting what the communist power was trying to convey: that their lives were so much better than the lives of people living in capitalism, past and present. The shortage economy of the 1980s, the romantic images of interwar Romania, the identification with the former upper-class side of the family (a very ironic outcome of the communist pressure for social equality that made such marriages possible), all went against the goals of the official propaganda.

From my interviews I found that fathers and (both) grandparents were more likely than mothers to discuss political issues with their children. Mothers were more likely to be on the cautious side or express indirect complaints, such as the long hours of ideological meetings that added to their work hours, or the time spent waiting in lines to procure the basic food needed for their families. Although party membership brought some career advantages, mothers were also more resistant to party recruitment. Only four mothers were party members (compared to 8 fathers), and three of the rest of the mothers refused to join the party claiming that they were too busy raising a family.

### **3.4.2 The influence of teachers and youth political organizations (the Pioneers and the Union of Communist Youth)**

General education and political/ideological education were deeply intertwined in Romania in the 1980s. All youth organizations were run by grade school and high school teachers, and most of their activities originated in schools or were coordinated through schools.

Most of my interviewees considered themselves to be average – to very good students. All reported having private tutors for exams. Looking back at their education they considered it “good”, some of them even commenting that post-1989 public education has gone into decline.

From its very beginning, and also in the 1980s, Romanian education was based on obedience and discipline and the teachers were treated with a great deal of respect. Students addressed them as “Comrade teacher”, boys had to uncover their head when greeting them and all students had to rise and greet a teacher entering or leaving the classroom. Even sitting at one’s desk was regulated (especially in grades 1-4): students had to hold their hands together behind their backs when not reading or writing at their desk. In order to talk they had to raise their hand and receive the teacher’s permission. They had to stand up whenever they were addressing the teacher. Uniforms and dress code were strictly enforced and deviations could lead to the student being sent home. Teachers had authority not only in the classroom but also outside. They could admonish or sanction any inappropriate student behavior they noticed anywhere, even outside the school. In addition, students were required to wear textile badges sewn on their uniforms with the school name and a number assigned to each one, so that they could be identified any time they wore the uniform. Most of teaching consisted of the teacher lecturing and writing on the blackboard and students taking notes, writing down every word the teacher said. A few classes involved other activities in laboratories, such as biology, chemistry and physics. The grades were based on written exams, quizzes, oral examinations and papers.

My interviewees’ perception was that their teachers had a lot of power over them, and a few of them abused it. Sometimes this took the form of physical abuse, such as in Gabriel’s account about his homeroom teacher (grades 1-4):

She would hit us with a ruler. We were all scared of her. She made us believe that when we go home she might be walking behind us and watching us. She actually sometimes did it. So every once in a while we would turn back to see if she was there. She told us to go straight home, and talk nicely and be quiet on the way home. I think her intentions were good, she was trying to teach us good manners.

Ana had a home-room teacher in high school who used some unusual psychological abuse to punish her students over a pageant gone wrong:

One day she was very mad and she came to the class with a tape recorder and played a tape with her saying very mean things about each of us, pointing out our “flaws”. We were really traumatized by that, I still remember the mean things she said about me.

Radu remembered one politically well-connected teacher who used student behavior outside the school as reason to fail them in Chemistry course:

[...] we had a chemistry teacher who was an inspector, very well connected and well indoctrinated, and nobody dared to say a word to her. This character really marked our existence in high school, she was very mean and aggressive. She failed a lot of students no matter how hard they tried, just because she could. [...] we had another mean math teacher who was also some kind of inspector. He hooked up with the chemistry teacher, one student saw them in the park and whistled. She saw him, and later failed him. He had to leave and transfer to another high school.

Although they could not directly question the teachers’ decisions, students did sometime respond to what they perceived as abuse. Radu recounted a new rule that required them to wear a special hat that resulted in a lot of students not being allowed to enter the school without the hat. He and a large group of students from his high school went to protest in front of the Ministry of Education and that got their principal fired. Maria and her classmates took revenge on a boring teacher:

[...] there was a teacher of “Industrial Materials” who had a notebook from which he used to dictate to us every class. Whenever he started class he asked us: which were the last three words? ... to resume his dictation. Once he dropped his notebook on the way out, and of course we took it and destroyed it. That day he wasn't able to teach the class.

This was the only instance when one of my respondents recalled the effectiveness of collective action. Of course, there were also great teachers they remembered with great fondness. One teacher Radu remembered was a teacher of Russian who was “very cultured” and approached

teaching with “unusual” and enjoyable methods such as talking about nature or art in Russian. Camelia “had a crush” on her young History teacher, who captivated the class with his lectures and inspired her life-long passion for history. A history teacher was also Gabriel’s favorite in high school. He remembered her interesting lectures and, most importantly, that she let the students express their opinions, and encouraged them to think for themselves. He also credited some of his college professors for teaching him to think and express an opinion of his own, but emphasized that these were exceptions in his experience of the educational system:

It was the opposite of what all the other teachers were doing. We weren't taught to think, and discouraged from expressing our opinions.[...] Romanian education was and still is dominated by teachers who think they can “stuff things into your head”. Lots of memorization...

Ana had two of what she called “celebrity teachers.” One was a famous geography teacher and author of textbooks (Octavian Mandruta). He not only was a great teacher but was “adored” by students. He played soccer with them and shared his passion for cinema by narrating his favorite films to the students (such as *Solaris*<sup>181</sup> by Tarkowskii). The other was math teacher Valentin Matrosenko, also famous among students.

Ideology was physically present in the classrooms through the portrait of president Ceausescu. A familiar story that I heard during my interviews and numerous other occasions was the encounter of this symbol of power with various objects the students were playing with during recess. Here is Gabriel’s experience:

---

<sup>181</sup> Andrei Arsen’evich Tarkovskii et al., *Solaris* ([S.I.]: Criterion Collection, 2002).

There was a portrait of Ceausescu in the classroom, the one with one ear<sup>182</sup>, and we were staring at it. Beyond the portrait there was a presence we felt in the air. I don't think we can talk about seven, eight years olds suffering from paranoia, but we were taught at home: “be careful about what you say in school, be good, the comrade is up there, watching you”... It was imprinted in your subconscious, to be careful when someone said something against him, we were taught not to agree and just walk away. We didn't talk about this psychological tension, but we all felt it. Once during a break someone hit the portrait with an eraser and left a mark on it. We were all silent and paralyzed. It felt as if someone broke someone else's skull and he was covered in blood.

The rigid and dull ideological education started very early, and most times it was delivered without any basic considerations such as the style of delivery or its intended audience. Gabriel remembered the 11th Congress of the RCP in the fall of his first grade just because their teacher came into the classroom and started writing on the blackboard a long quote from a Ceausescu’s speech for students who didn't know to read or write yet. This formalism continued throughout their education. Radu remembered with amusement the “Training for the defense of the fatherland” (Pregatire pentru Apararea Patriei) class in ninth grade. In preparation to defend their country students had to make a scrapbook with newspaper clippings from Party speeches:

The teachers would check them; even the principal would double-check once in a while. We glued them with water based glue, and the pages would wrinkle and turn into a cabbage-like notebook.

As part of the same class other students were taken to a shooting range outside Bucharest and learned to shoot two rounds with a rifle. As Diana remembers, some girls refused to do it, afraid of hurting their shoulder, and the boys filled in for them. The heavy metal fans from her

---

<sup>182</sup> In the 1980s all the three-quarter profile photo portraits of Ceausescu that were displayed in the front of every classroom, workplace, textbook, or magazine were replaced everywhere with a more frontal one, showing both of his ears. The explanation that circulated among Romanians was that the replacement was carried out in order to avoid having people call him “one eared,” which in Romanian means “gone crazy.” This is a story that came up in two of my students’ interviews and in many, many informal conversations, and I remember it as well.

high school “had a field day” showing off their khaki outfits. Except for the tight jeans the dress of the heavy metal subculture was made up of shirts, boots and bags procured from the military.

None of the teachers of social sciences, the most ideological courses, came up without my prompting in the student accounts of their education. When I specifically asked them about those classes and teachers they remembered taking them, but not the teachers’ names. Their memories of those classes were very vague, and centered on how boring they were. Here is Ana’s account:

Yes, I remember this stuff.. I remember reading the newspapers, cutting out articles.... it was so unfriendly and abstract you couldn't possibly understand it. I also remember underlining a lot of things. I don't remember any message, anything that made sense or could be remembered ... (laughing).

Dragos remembered a “double” ideological message from his social science teacher:

I remember our teacher once had us memorize some fragments from his [Ceausescu’s] discourses... but also slipped in once in a while something against him.

Alexandru told me “I slept through those classes”. Only Adrian, who was preparing for the admission exam in the Economics Academy, had to study the Political Economy textbook. He referred to it as “doping” or “making you dumb” (dopaj) and remembered that it covered extensively the Party’s 13<sup>th</sup> Congress and that he had to memorize it:

There were teachers who would dictate or recite everything from memory. And we figured out that the exam was going to be the same.

### 3.4.2.1 The Pioneer experience

My informants' memories of the pioneer<sup>183</sup> experiences were remarkably similar, and more favorable than the experience of the UCY. All of them remembered the induction ceremony (which took place in some location of historical/political significance), wearing the red neck scarf, the class ceremonies and the pioneer election for sections and class leaders. Interestingly, these elections, which were largely free from teachers' interference up to the class "leader" level, gave them their first democratic experience. Adrian, whose father rose from a poor peasant family to military academy graduate, Moscow PhD and factory manager, fared modestly in the pioneer organization, with only a row commander position. "I did not like to stand out" he told me, and remembered missing a lot of the less desirable Pioneer activities such as sweeping the streets because he knew that the school would not pressure him because of his father. Ana, a very extroverted student and talented writer and poet, reached the "school leader" position in the pioneer hierarchy, and she was chosen by her teachers, not through elections. She explained her trajectory in the organization as a reflection of her above-average level of maturity which was valued by the teachers more than being a top student. The teachers used her as a liaison with the students, not for ideological indoctrination but to keep them in line in difficult situations such as this one:

For example we had a very young and popular teacher who requested permission to emigrate to the US. This put her in a very bad situation at the workplace<sup>184</sup>, and coincidentally, a few students in her class started misbehaving. The principal called me into her office and explained that she already is in a lot of trouble and any additional trouble

---

<sup>183</sup> The Pioneer enrollment started in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and ended in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade students were enrolled in the Union of Communist Youth. These organizations were the only officially approved youth organizations. They had connections across the Soviet bloc, but they were not connected with international scouting.

<sup>184</sup> The request to emigrate from Romania in the 1980s took years to process, and in the meantime the authorities did everything in their power to make the lives of the applicant difficult. They usually lost their jobs and their family members became suspect as well and lost the right to receive promotions or advance in their careers.

from students will make her case worse. I went and explained to my classmates and they understood. She left later for the US and everything ended well.

### **3.4.2.2 The Union of Communist Youth experience**

According to all my respondents, at the age of 14, as they moved from grade school to high school they experienced less active involvement in political organizations (UCY). Membership in the UCY just like the Pioneers was obligatory, but it was more formal and there were fewer meetings and activities. Students attending elite high schools reported that in their case, the ideological pressure was less present than in the rest of the high schools. They felt that UCY activities were kept at a minimum “because everyone was very good and talented or came from an important party or administration background. Everyone was privileged in a way.” (Maria).

Only one of my informants, whose parents did not have college degrees and were not party members, had a leadership position in the UCY during high school. Gabriel failed the high school admission exam and was sent to a lower status high school. Here he was appointed to the high school UCY organization and became propaganda secretary in ninth grade. He saw participation in the UCY favorably not because of ideological conviction but as an ego boost and a way to advance his “career”:

I was promoted in high school and I was very proud of it. I noticed that politics was a good way of advancing toward becoming someone, only through politics you actually can succeed. My family also taught me that, actually everyone around me. [...] The opportunist inside me was thinking that I have a future now. I was even thinking of a political career. I was very young, a naïve 15 years old.

Gabriel was not impressed with how the organization looked from inside. He remembered his disappointment after taking courses at the political school of the UCY: “The class was totally formalized, I didn't learn anything, they weren't serious about it not even at that high level, all I got was a diploma.” After he was able to move in 11<sup>th</sup> grade to a more

prestigious high school he stopped being involved in the UCY activities and focused more on mingling with his new peers:

I was a newcomer and I wasn't the best in my class, so I didn't care much about that [UCY position] anymore. I started thinking there was more dignity in not being active in the UCY, and I was ashamed of thinking before of becoming a party activist. I probably grew a little bit, I matured.

He also invoked the worsening of the shortages and deprivations from the late 1980s as a disincentive for UCY involvement. The rest of my informants emphasized a generalized lack of interest in the UCY, and a high degree of casualness. Radu, for example, recounted "being inducted" into the UCY but never picking up his membership card. Later on, when he joined the military service he had trouble proving his membership and had to re-join.

Romanian students in the 1980s grew up surrounded by the official ideological messages delivered mostly through the educational system. Although they were exposed to them as early as kindergarten, these messages were deconstructed and discredited in the family environment. As early as second grade, students were exposed to their parents' criticism of the Party, and especially about the economic shortages that affected the family most directly: the limited food items on the kitchen table, the shortage of domestic goods and the increasingly long hours family members spent in lines to obtain them. Coupled with increasingly long Party meetings at the workplace, these made a topic of criticism that was shared within all families.

Along with the trust in sharing such criticism came the education in fear and duplicity: parents taught their children to not discuss any of the criticism with anyone, to be circumspect when asked questions that might pry into such matters, and to avoid political discussions outside the family altogether.

Within the family, students were exposed to alternative sources of information, mostly foreign radio stations such as Radio Free Europe or the Voice of America. Another important source of political alternative information were the grandparents. Their pre-communist experiences and increased willingness to talk about politics constituted an important influence, and many times helped create a sense of nostalgia for an idealized interwar Romania, where some of their ancestors perhaps had a better economic situation. Even the working-class background students found those times fascinating, and at the same time remembered being unimpressed with their poor parents' social mobility.

The delivery of ideological messages through the education system was remembered as deeply flawed. The participation in youth organizations was favorably remembered as their first (and last) experience with democracy in the case of the Pioneers, while the Union of Communist youth was considered an insignificant, uninteresting part of the high school experience. The social science teachers and courses were remembered as some of the least interesting, because of the dreary, repetitive and abstract party documents and Ceausescu speeches were thrust into the classrooms indiscriminately, even to not yet literate students. Teachers were in the difficult position of being supposed to "teach" something that was very difficult to understand and explain and resorted to memorization and scrapbooking; and some of the teachers were themselves engaging in the practice of duplicity and delivery of "double messages".

#### **4.0 YOUTH AS RESEARCH SUBJECT IN 1980 ROMANIA**

My research in Romania uncovered that youth was not only the focus of the Communist Party's policies or the target of the Union of Communist Youth (Uniunea Tineretului Comunist) recruitment efforts, but also the research subject of the Center for Research on Youth (Centrul de Cercetari pentru Problemele Tineretului). This chapter is devoted to describing the broader context of Romanian Sociology, its history, organizational structure, researchers, and methods. I also discuss some of their research findings that are relevant for understanding Romanian youth in the 1980s and the type of data that the center made available to the Communist Party and its overall political and academic impact. The research carried out by the Center made very clear that in some important ways the regime's program of indoctrination was less than a complete success, in some ways much less. Young people took patriotism more seriously than socialist ideology and for very many, religion seems to have still been important.

#### **4.1 ROMANIAN SOCIOLOGY UNDER COMMUNISM**

In Romania, unlike much of Eastern Europe, Sociology had an early academic start, quite closely connected with the development of Sociology in France and Germany. Larionescu traced the use of the term "sociology" in Romania to politician and intellectual I. C. Batianu as early as 1853,

only fourteen years after Auguste Comte coined it.<sup>185</sup> The first Sociology course was offered in 1896 in Bucharest and Iassy (concurrent with the courses offered by Durkheim, for example). It was followed closely by other universities in the country, and by 1925 it became a course offered in both graduate and undergraduate studies<sup>186</sup>. As Larionescu notes, Sociology in Romania was driven by a several important scholars, many of them involved in politics, nation building and debates over the place of the (Romanian) nation in the world.

One of the most prominent of these intellectuals was professor Dimitrie Gusti<sup>187</sup>, the 1918 initiator of what was going to be remembered as Romanian Sociology's "golden age." Using his political clout (he held the position of Minister of Education between 1932 and 1933 and in 1935 he became the chairman of the Romanian Academy of Sciences), he set up and secured public funding for the Romanian Social Institute, a multi-disciplinary group of researchers and students committed to what they believed should be the purpose of sociology: "modernizing" the country and "strengthening" the nation (Stahl, 1980). His team was made-up of (publicly) funded 2,500 researchers, and spent extensive time collecting data and writing 626 village monographs (Ungureanu, 1980). Gusti political involvement allowed him to secure the funds not only for research, but also for structural improvements in the communities they studied (roads, schools, sanitation). Between 1932 and 1935 he was the minister of Education.

Stalinism brought an end to Romanian Sociology's "golden years." Like everywhere else in the Soviet bloc, Sociology was considered a "bourgeois" science and in 1948 was excluded from the curriculum at all levels, and Gusti's Romanian Social Institute was closed. During the

---

<sup>185</sup> Larionescu, *Istoria Sociologiei românești*.

<sup>186</sup> Costea in Keen, *ibid*: 73

<sup>187</sup> Graduate of the Universities of Paris, Berlin, and Leipzig (doctorate in 1904).

ban, although Sociology was inexistent institutionally, the collection of empirical data in Romania continued, since the new communist administration needed it<sup>188</sup>.

The end of the ban in Romania occurred in 1965, in an environment of increased freedom and liberalization promoted by the communist leadership and coincided with a political and cultural trend of rejecting Soviet domination and reassertion of “national values”.<sup>189</sup> In his address at the 19<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Romanian Communist Party President Ceausescu acknowledged the usefulness of Sociology in the socialist society. However, the person informally credited for the lifting of the ban was Miron Constantinescu, at the time a prominent member of the Communist Party, minister of education and, most importantly, a former student of Dimitrie Gusti<sup>190</sup>.

Soon after Ceausescu’s speech, Sociology was reinstated as a subject of study in universities across the country and within the Romanian Academy, where three research institutions were created: “The Center for Sociological Research”, the “Anthropology Center,” and the “Department for Social Research” of the Philosophy Institute. Several applied research centers were set up outside academia as well in 1965: the Institute for the Examination and Recovery of the Labor Force (Health Department), the Institute for Ethnography and Folklore (Ministry of Culture), the Office for Studies and Research within the Committee for Radio and Television, the Laboratory for Urban Sociology, and the Center for Research on Youth (Ministry of Youth).<sup>191</sup>

---

<sup>188</sup> Larionescu, *Istoria sociologiei românești*.

<sup>189</sup> Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*.

<sup>190</sup> interview with Ion Iliescu (former Minister of Youth in 1968), see also Ioan Mihailescu and Zoltan Rostas, *Dialog Neterminat* (Curtea Veche, 2007).

<sup>191</sup> Costea, *ibid*: 73, his translation.

This academic and institutional revival gave great hopes to sociologists, and intellectuals in general, but it was short-lived. The hopes for more advances in liberalization were completely crushed in 1971 when Ceausescu released his “July Theses” where he condemned the movement for autonomy and liberalization of 1965 and restored a strict political control over cultural production, education and cultural institutions.<sup>192</sup> In 1977 Sociology started being marginalized again in academia, ending up as a subsection of the History department, along with Psychology. Looking back at those years, sociologist Ioan Mihailescu, chancellor of the University of Bucharest in the 1990s, blamed the new marginalization on the close interconnectedness of the discipline with politics:

It was easy to reduce, to make Sociology disappear in 1977 because its role was practically insignificant. At the beginning of his career as the head of the party Ceausescu needed Sociology to gain legitimacy. He had no legitimacy and Sociology gave him that. When he took control of the situation Sociology became useless, even worse; if it claimed to be critical it could become dangerous for the system [...].<sup>193</sup>

Only a few courses in the Sociology of art and literature, as well as rural and industrial Sociology continued to be offered in the university departments of Philosophy, Literature and at the Polytechnic Institute, according to Badescu.<sup>194</sup> In 1982 Romanian officials (and Elena Ceausescu, the president’s wife) became aware of a group of intellectuals taking “meditation” courses (inspired by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s spirituality) within the Institute for Pedagogy and Psychology Research, an institute under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture. The discovery of the group led to what was called the “Transcendental Meditation” scandal, with accusations of “conspiring against the communist regime”, a crackdown on the institute’s leadership and the

---

<sup>192</sup> Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*.

<sup>193</sup> Mihailescu and Rostas, *Dialog Neterminat*, 19.

<sup>194</sup> Badescu and Baltasiu, “Romanian Sociology since 1989” in Mike Keen, *Sociology in Central and Eastern Europe: Transformation at the Dawn of a New Millennium* (Westport Conn.: Praeger, 2003).

demotion of all the many intellectuals involved. Most of them lost their positions and were demoted to lower level, working class jobs.<sup>195</sup> This scandal served as an excuse to scale back the research institutes as well: their personnel were cut, their research scope was limited, and censorship was tightened.<sup>196</sup>

#### **4.2 THE YOUTH RESEARCH CENTER (CENTRUL DE CERCETARI PENTRU PROBLEMELE TINERETULUI) AND ITS RESEARCH ABOUT THE UNION OF COMMUNIST YOUTH**

After the 1977 and 1982 backlash, sociological research in Romania was thought to be virtually gone. Katherine Verdery, in her brief discussion of the fate of Romanian Sociology, mentions that several research centers survived, but due to a shortage of new trained staff “their demise would be only a matter of time.”<sup>197</sup> Among all the cutbacks and suppression, the Youth Research Center (Centrul de Cercetari pentru Problemele Tineretului), very likely because of its association with the Union of Communist Youth, managed to slip under the radar and continued to conduct empirical research. The center was created during the peak years of Miron Constantinescu’s political influence. In 1968 Ion Iliescu, then a prominent party member<sup>198</sup>, was appointed as Minister of Youth, and, among his first initiatives, was the creation of the Center<sup>199</sup>, which he affiliated institutionally with the Romanian Communist Youth organization. When I

---

<sup>195</sup> Doina Jela, *Afacerea Meditativa Transcendentală* (Humanitas, 2004).

<sup>196</sup> Mihailescu and Rostas, *ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*. p. 335.

<sup>198</sup> During the 1990s Ion Iliescu held three terms as president of Romania. One of the researchers I interviewed him described him as a “believer in science”, as someone who wanted to develop policies based on scientific evidence and scholarly research.

<sup>199</sup> The Center was officially created in November 1968, in Buletinul Oficial al R.S.R. nr. 51/1968.

got the chance to interview Iliescu and asked him about where the idea to create the center came from, he pointed to inspiration from other countries, both Western/American and East European:

We were inspired by others as well, by the Poles, for example, to develop social research on youth. [...] we looked into what research they were doing in other places and hired researchers to do it as well.

In other countries 1968 was unfolding. One former Youth Research Center researcher that I interviewed pointed to the worldwide wave of social movements of 1968 as the inspiration:

The Center, along with many other European centers, was established in 1968 as a result of the European social movements of that year.<sup>200</sup>

The Western and Eastern European (Polish, Czech) movements of 1968 were well known in Romania, as this early period in Ceausescu's rule was one of extraordinary openness towards the West. There is no record of significant local "contagion", but there is one apparently "innocent" incident that one of my informants and Ioan Mihailescu mentioned: in December 1968 students from the University of Bucharest marched from the dorms in Grozavesti, to the Moxa dorms, and then to the Economics Academy, singing Christmas carols.<sup>201</sup> Events like this, Mihailescu believes, "introduced a sense of panic or at least a preoccupation with youth among the leadership in the socialist countries",<sup>202</sup> and, in the Romanian case, an early winter break (before Christmas instead of December 30).

---

<sup>200</sup> He also mentioned the Prague Spring and the French student movements as a political inspiration

<sup>201</sup> The event is also mentioned in an article about the Romanian new wave band "Timpuri Noi": "Cum a Scapat Formatia Timpuri Noi De Ancheta Fostei Securitati: Prin Pile - Muzica - HotNews.ro", n.d., <http://life.hotnews.ro/stiri-muzica-10455043-cum-scapat-formatia-timpuri-noi-ancheta-fostei-securitati-prin-pile.htm?cfat=>.

<sup>202</sup> Mihailescu and Rostas, *Dialog Neterminat*, 79.

Although not trained in sociology, Ion Iliescu told me that he was well acquainted with Gusti's school of sociology: during his term as party secretary in the county of Timisoara he read the monographs about two villages of the region and was very impressed with their work. As minister of youth he appointed the late Ovidiu Badina<sup>203</sup>, a former student of Dimitrie Gusti, as head of the Youth Research Center, and then recruited sociologists Petre Datculescu, Fred Mahler, and a number of researchers from the first Sociology cohort to graduate after the communists came to power. Among them were Constantin Schifirnet, Ion Bazac, Mariana Buruiana, Ernest Dumitru and Catalin Mamali. Several local branches of the Youth Research Center were also established in some of Romania's larger cities (Targu Mures, Timisoara, Constanta, Iasi). All these researchers continued to do research and write about youth until 1989, and some even later.

The most pressing problems youth faced in Socialist Romania stemmed from the process of intensive industrialization; the issues were grouped into three broad categories by the researchers at the center: (1) the migration of youth from the countryside to the cities and especially issues of housing and a variety of social problems, (2) the effect of urbanization on young families (such as low birth rates), and (3) educational issues: how to make good communists out of adversaries of communism.

The Center was commissioned (and funded) by the Union of Communist Youth to carry out research on specific topics. Although it was directly subordinate to the Union of Communist Youth, their relationship was quite loosely defined. Other than the specific research projects it commissioned, the UCY did not coordinate or supervise the Center's activity. It was thus was

---

<sup>203</sup> Badina was the head of the Center for Research on Youth from its inception until 1989.

able to conduct research for other institutions and organizations such as the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and Police departments or the Ministry of Industry<sup>204</sup>.

The projects researched by the center over twenty years included young people's attitudes towards work, youth's moral and political values, their perceptions about the Communist Youth Organization, youth education and career preferences, young workers in specific industries, the effects of mass communication on youth, religious values and behaviors, youth cultural consumption, the role of science in young people's lives, youth in other countries, rural youth, and other topics as well.<sup>205</sup>

On the one hand the research agenda seemed to be constrained by whatever commissions they were given and they did not initiate their own research projects. On the other hand the researchers I interviewed reported that they had a great degree of freedom in deciding how to approach the assigned topics in terms of methodology, sampling and even reporting and publishing<sup>206</sup>. The unique positioning of the Center, compared to other research institutions that were heavily supervised and controlled, might explain why it made it through the 1970s and 80s without the cuts in personnel and censorship others had to face. Another very important factor in retaining a degree of independence seems to have been the managerial qualities of center director Ovidiu Badina. Under his leadership the Center survived the 1977 backlash against Sociology departments and research institutions, safely tucked under the umbrella of the Romanian Communist youth organization.<sup>207</sup>

---

<sup>204</sup> This information was provided by the former researchers. The research reports in the archives of the Center do not specify who commissioned and funded the research discussed in their reports.

<sup>205</sup> For a more complete list of topics see Appendix A.

<sup>206</sup> The CCPT had its own publications that were distributed to a small number of subscribers, most of them sociologists - the estimated number is about 500. They were not available for the public in bookstores.

<sup>207</sup> Mihailescu and Rostas, *Dialog Neterminat*. 45.

### 4.3 RESEARCH DATA FROM THE COMMUNIST ERA – ISSUES OF RELIABILITY

While I was conducting research in 2005, I encountered the remnants of the Center for Research on Youth under a new name: The National Agency for the Problems of Youth (Agentia Nationala pentru Problemele Tineretului – A.N.S.I.T). I was extremely lucky to find a group of friendly and very enthusiastic researchers who rescued two large boxes full of the publications of the defunct Center for Research on Youth from the basement of their old headquarters and graciously made them available. They included publications that are still available at the University Library as well as a few pamphlets that were never put in circulation (some marked “top secret”).<sup>208</sup>

The first question that came to mind while I was looking at the Center for Research on Youth publications was: how valid were they, how much of the data was real and not falsified? The two decades (1970 – 1980s) that they were covering were marked in Romania by duplicity between public and private, between what one thought and what one said in public<sup>209</sup> that spanned from the leadership of the party through television programs, to everyday conversations in the family or between neighbors and friends. Romanian television, radio, and the press were controlled by the Communist Party since the late 1940s. As time went by they became caught more and more in the whirlwind of reporting highly exaggerated crop yields, productivity levels, record numbers of hours worked by Romanian workers, and extraordinary standards of living to the point of losing any credibility among Romanians confronted every day with the grim realities of shortage and poverty. Could there be anything true in something published by an institution

---

<sup>208</sup> Most of these were about deviance and were based on police statistics on juvenile delinquency.

<sup>209</sup> Milosz, *The Captive Mind*; Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*.

subordinated to the Communist youth organization or in any sociological research reports published under communism?

These are not easy questions to answer. The data and research collected under socialism were not easily accessible to foreign researchers interested in the region before 1989; after 1989 the data became very uninteresting, even for local sociologists, who were more interested in the transition than in the communist past. The very few non-East European scholars who raised this question of their worthiness were either dismissive about it<sup>210</sup> or did their best to gather and put together the little bits of information that were available.<sup>211</sup> There has been no attempt so far by any East European sociologist to write an updated history of the national social research of the region. On the contrary, although sociologists met many times before 1989 in conferences within the Soviet Bloc East European, sociologies remained insular at best, as Eva Kovacs put it so well:

Slowly we formed an image of East European sociologists standing next to each other without looking at or even noticing one another, each separately contemplating the West on the far away horizon.<sup>212</sup>

Two decades after 1989, the years of communism have recently become a subject of interest for filmmakers, scholars and nostalgic alike. However, this new wave of interest has not touched on sociological research yet. Although today's researchers at the former Center for Research on Youth generously gave me access to their old publications, except for one

---

<sup>210</sup> Liah Greenfeld, "Soviet Sociology and Sociology in the Soviet Union," *Annual Review of Sociology* 14 (1988): 99–123.

<sup>211</sup> Raj Mohan, *Handbook of Contemporary Developments in World Sociology* (Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975); Jiri Kolaja, *Glimpses of Sociology in Eastern Europe* (New Delhi: Prints India, 1990); Dmitri Shalin, "Sociology for the Glasnost Era: Institutional and Substantive Changes in Recent Soviet Sociology," *Social Forces* 68, no. 4 (1990): 1019–1039; Mucha, Janusz, Keen, Forrest, ed., *Eastern Europe in Transformation: The Impact on Sociology* (Greenwood Press, 1994).

<sup>212</sup> Kovács, Éva;, "What's New in East-Central European Sociology?," *Regio - Minorities, Politics, Society - English Edition* 1 (2002): 90. in Keen, *ibid.*

researcher who worked there before 1989, they did not express a great interest in them. Some worried that I was wasting my time, which I admit, sometimes was a great concern for me, too, especially considering the heavy layers of propaganda and party-speak in which most communist era publications bundled their content.

In order to deal with this very vital issue of validity of data, I interviewed some of the former researchers at The Center for Research on Youth.<sup>213</sup> Some of them were hired early on when the center was created, others a few years later. They all remembered the days at the Center for Research on Youth with great pleasure and their status as researchers there as quite privileged compared to the average person in Romania. Aside from things like freedom in carrying out their research, they also reported a very wide availability of foreign publications (mostly English and French which they all spoke)<sup>214</sup>, good salaries, holding a “work passport”<sup>215</sup> and with it the opportunity to travel abroad to conferences and obtain scholarships even outside the Warsaw pact countries.<sup>216</sup> As a workplace, it was remembered by researchers as a very comfortable environment:

Until 1990 Romanian sociologists were a very small group, we knew each other from college and there were a very small number of research institutes. [...] a small world, a hundred people at most, who knew each other and were all friends, they were all happy to collaborate. We had no place to publish or to discuss so we were discussing the way we talk here in a coffee shop. The Center for Research on Youth had its own publication that was read by our small group so we were left alone.

---

<sup>213</sup>Two requested confidentiality for some of the data. Since they are all well known public figures in Romania today I decided to anonymize all three.

<sup>214</sup>The bibliographies and reviews contained in the CCPT publications are quite impressive, with very recent articles and books. According to Mihailescu, one of the first things Miron Constantinescu told the first Sociology cohort was that “it is very important for you to learn foreign languages” in Mihailescu and Rostas, *Dialog Neterminat*. 41.

<sup>215</sup>“Pasaport de serviciu” – a special work passport that made it easier for its holder to travel for work related purposes, at a time when passports were very difficult to obtain and travel abroad was allowed to very few Romanians.

<sup>216</sup>Reportedly, the center functioned also as a research “Chamber of Commerce” of Romania -- the communist regime was happy to be represented in international research organizations and send researchers abroad to places like the German Federal Republic, France, Bulgaria, the Soviet Union, Poland, Italy, Finland or China.

All researchers denied having problems with any explicit external censorship. However, they did report an internalized form of censorship intended to keep them out of trouble:

You were OK as long as you didn't stir the waters. What is characteristic for a Socialist administration? You're employed to do something; nobody cares if you do it right or not. Only one thing matters: to keep your boss happy. To keep your boss happy means that you have to make sure his boss is happy, and so on... Then you could enjoy the little perks: a coffee<sup>217</sup>, travel abroad... why say "no"? Your biggest concern was to make sure that his boss will never come to ask you: what is your employee doing? [...] And this was the Center for Research on Youth strategy of reporting: everything is nice and pretty, we may have some problems but they're under control, we're taking care of them, and you need to do a few little things...

The internal censorship the researchers reported strongly resembled what Czeslaw Milos, in his discussion of practices of acting and dissimulation in the Eastern bloc, called "Professional Ketman"<sup>218</sup> and was described as follows:

If I am a scientist I attend congresses at which I deliver reports strictly adhering to the Party line. But in the laboratory I pursue my research according to scientific methods and in that alone lays the aim of my life.<sup>219</sup>

Researchers also felt comfortable reporting the real numbers from the data they gathered, mostly because they were completely sure that nobody outside their small group was going to read their reports. Mihailescu<sup>220</sup> even reports an anecdotal incident that I was unable to verify, but that reflects their mindset very well: a famous sociologist published quite a long report and inserted a note in one of the chapters giving his phone number and promising a case of beer to

---

<sup>217</sup> Coffee, especially during the food and consumer good shortage of the 1980s, was almost impossible to find in stores, and therefore it was considered a treat. For example, half a pound of coffee could easily pay the bribe for a doctor's visit.

<sup>218</sup> Milosz used the term "Ketman" to discuss practices of acting and dissimulation in the Eastern bloc. I discuss the concept in more detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>219</sup> Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 69–70.

<sup>220</sup> Mihailescu and Rostas, *Dialog Neterminat*, 47.

the reader that got to the page and called him. Needless to say, the case of beer was never claimed. However, when discussing sociologists in general, Mihailescu<sup>221</sup> does not dismiss everything that was published:

Among the many papers collecting dust at the Academy, there were some well done research reports by serious scholars for whom this was an outlet, a way to say things you couldn't say otherwise. We knew these were not going to be available to the public. Once in a while, quite rarely, Radio Free Europe would mention something interesting one of us wrote in a report.<sup>222</sup>

Discussing the Center for Research on Youth publications with its former researchers brought up a very interesting picture of the research team. Since holding a position there was prestigious and came with so many advantages, getting hired was a complicated process. According to the researchers I interviewed, the team was a mix of some talented sociologists (30 percent), some mediocre but well-connected sociologists, and some that were outright incompetent and were hired through powerful party connections (I was told they accounted for about 20 percent). All of them however, were connected in one way or another with the Communist Party. One of the researchers confessed getting the job in exchange for writing a PhD dissertation for a party member.

From the accounts of its researchers it appears that the data collected by the Center for Research on Youth didn't seem to make it to the higher levels of policymaking, or that if they did, it certainly wasn't noticed. This fact was also confirmed by party insider Ion Iliescu. When I asked him what was the impact of the research reports he shrugged and said: "They offered them; the smart ones<sup>223</sup> used them as inspiration and in decision-making..."

---

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>222</sup> This suggests that someone who had access to the Center's publications was in touch with Radio Free Europe.

<sup>223</sup> The literal translation would be "smart boy" (baiat destept).

#### 4.4 THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON YOUTH RESEARCH DATA

One of the first research projects of the Center Ion Iliescu remembered during the interview was inspired, he claimed, by a Swedish longitudinal study following the psychosomatic development of youth before and after the Swedish socialists came to power. The Swedish data showed a significant improvement in the physical development of Swedish youth, with large increases in height and body type (from short and stocky to tall and athletic)<sup>224</sup>. The Romanian study was supposed to find whether there were similar improvements since the communists came to power. The Center held a roundtable on in 1969 Romanian youth where they discussed existing health statistics and it also drafted a research agenda and several policy recommendations. These included the introduction of more gymnastics classes and sports activities as well as improving health education and healthcare and schools.<sup>225</sup> The pamphlet containing the summary of the roundtable discussions was marked on the cover in bold letters: “**For internal use only.**” The Romanian Communist regime, like the Soviet Union<sup>226</sup> and its allies, was very sensitive about social sciences and Sociology was labeled as “bourgeois science”. They believed that social problems that research might discover might tarnish the image of extraordinary progress they sought to project.

---

<sup>224</sup> For similar studies see John Komlos, *Nutrition and economic development in the eighteenth-century Habsburg monarchy: an anthropometric history* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989).

<sup>225</sup> Buletin informativ, CCPT, Iunie 1969.

<sup>226</sup> Sociological research in the Soviet Union was suppressed in 1924. In 1956, after Stalin’s death it was reintroduced as a discipline and flourished, except for two episodes in 1969 and 1983 when suspicion of “bourgeois” ideological influences led to purges and brief restrictions. Greenfeld, “Soviet Sociology and Sociology in the Soviet Union”; Alex Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia; a Study in Mass Persuasion*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958).

The next interesting research report I found, titled “*Delinquency among youth in the Romanian Socialist Republic of 1968*,”<sup>227</sup> sounded attuned to the international political context of 1968 movements, and reinforced the former researchers’ observation that motives behind the creation of the Center were also fear of youth rebellion and the need for state control/supervision.

The delinquency report was based on data provided by the Police Department and the Romanian Secret Service. It found that the number of minors investigated by the police for criminal behavior nationally increased 3.8 times between 1963 and 1968, whereas the corresponding increase in the total number of people investigated by the police during the same interval was only 1.4.<sup>228</sup> The report also contained data about the course of the investigations, which indicates that these were taken very seriously by the authorities: 92.1 percent of cases went to trial<sup>229</sup> and 7.9 percent were sent to rehabilitation institutions without trial.

This research seems to have been discontinued after 1980 (I could not find any other reports on this subject). After that the Union of Communist Youth seems to have commissioned more reflexive research, concerned with its own organizational performance and membership. These later reports show consistent failings and shortcomings of the Union of Communist Youth activities when compared to schools or families.

In order to understand the significance of the data about youth political and ideological views contained in the Center reports, it is important to emphasize the political context in Romania at that time. In the 1980s, censorship tightened, and the reporting of anything related to the President or to the communist organizations was strictly controlled. The sensitivity of the regime was so high that the slightest potential for criticism or ridicule was nipped in the bud. All

---

<sup>227</sup> Buletin informativ, CCPT, Iunie 1969.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid: 13.

<sup>229</sup> The report did not include the number of cases that resulted in convictions.

public appearances of Ceausescu, including on television, involved a massive effort reminding one of a movie set. Roads were paved for his motorcade; grocery stores were stocked with goods otherwise unavailable, unfinished buildings were given a finished façade, people and children were herded from work or school to line the roads and cheer him. Any public statistics that spoke about Romania, had to reflect the exemplary work that the president and the party were doing, the wonderful standard of living they brought to the people and how grateful people were. Any exception was considered a lack of patriotism or outright betrayal. Therefore, all the tasks were reported as 100 percent complete or above target (such as the agricultural crops or coal production) and negative developments were underreported or flatly denied (such the AIDS epidemic that affected especially children, found in the thousands in special orphanages after 1989). In local elections the unopposed party candidates were always winning 100 percent, and record voter turnout and “unanimity” was the norm in all meetings when voting various decisions.

The Center for Research on Youth reports are quite different from the regime propaganda and public reports and records that were cleaned-up by the censorship or started off as inflated numbers reported by co-operative managers scared of sanctions.

The earliest report to touch on the influence of the Union of Communist Youth is titled “The Moral and Political Values of Socialist Youth” (The Center for Research on Youth, 1980). Here, researchers tried to measure the importance Romanian youth attributed to a number of social and individual values (Love of Country, Countering Behavior against the Socialist Regime, Respect for the Law, Attachment to the Social, Political and Economic [Socialist] System). The researchers asked respondents from a representative sample (n=3,894) to indicate the degree to which they agreed with general statements (such as “Love for One's Country” or

“Combating Chauvinism”), as well as an equivalent set of questions about their individual actions vis-à-vis the same values. They reported a discrepancy between the high level of adherence to the values in the general statements (85-86 percent) and a significantly lower adherence when it came to practical actions (63-66 percent). Here is the table<sup>230</sup> with the dimensions of patriotism as defined by the Center for Research on Youth researchers:

**Table 1.** Dimensions of socialist patriotism

<b>Dimensions of socialist patriotism</b> <sup>231</sup>	<b>Exceptional importance (%)</b>	<b>Great importance (%)</b>	<b>Medium importance (%)</b>	<b>Reduced importance (%)</b>
Love for one's country	92	5	1	1
Being devoted to the socialist system	76	18	4	1
Combating acts against the socialist system	90	6	1	1
Combating chauvinism	80	13	4	1
Protecting the wealth of our nation	76	17	3	1

n=3,894

The abstract “Love for one’s country” was rated as exceptionally important by 92 percent of the youth, while being devoted to the political (socialist) system was significantly lower (76 percent), indicating support for the political system was conceptualized as separate, and less important than the value of “patriotism”. Their interpretation of these answers by researchers was a diplomatic statement, asserting that “when it comes to social and political values on the individual level, there is an incomplete harmonization between the theoretical and practical levels” (1980:87). The difference between “love of country” and the other items confirms

---

<sup>230</sup> 1980 “Moral and Political Values of the Socialist Youth”, CCPT p. 105.

<sup>231</sup> I tried to keep the translations as close as possible to the Romanian version, although they might sound a little awkward.

Katherine Verdery's<sup>232</sup> argument that the Marxist/communist discourse in Romania was subverted, assimilated into the pre-existing strong tradition of nationalism (and not the other way around), as the communist regime became more nationalist than Marxist.

The relationships between the variable “love of country” (Dragostea de Patrie) and other variables showed youth even more divided, quite different from the homogenous patriotic and devoted youth image that Ceausescu’s regime was trying to project. Here for example, is a table from the same report about the relationship between “Love of Country” and “Being knowledgeable about Socialist Policies and Politics:”

**Table 2. The importance of loving ones’ country I**

The importance of loving ones’ country	The importance of being knowledgeable about socialist policies and politics %		
	Very important	Somewhat important	Not important
Exceptionally important (92%)*	74	24	1
Very important (5%)	37	57	3
Somewhat important (1%)	33	55	11

\*92% of those surveyed reported that the importance of loving one’s country is exceptionally important

n=3,894

The variable “love for one’s country” does not fully overlap with one’s enthusiasm for learning about socialist policies and politics: only 74 percent among the 92 percent who declared that “the importance of loving the country” considered that it was exceptionally important to learn about the political system. The discrepancy is even more visible among those who considered that “love of one’s country” was “very important” (5 percent): only 37 percent considered that it was important to learn about the socialist political system. Such statistics

---

<sup>232</sup> Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*.

indicate that although many youths were successfully educated to love their country, they were rather apathetic when it came to learning about political education (that was delivered mostly through the educational system).

The questions that addressed political education even more directly, by asking about the influence of the communist youth organizations (the ones that were in charge of teaching about socialism), showed that the “love for one’s country” variable shows less influence from the Union of Communist Youth (p. 111):

**Table 3. The importance of loving ones’ country II**

The importance of loving ones’ country	The moral influence of the Union of Communist Youth %			
	Great influence	Medium influence	Reduced influence	Inexistent influence
Exceptionally important (92%)	46	35	15	4
Very important (5%)	22	29	29	19
Somewhat important (1%)	11	22	39	28

n=3,894

The Union of Communist Youth had “medium” to “reduced” or “inexistent” influence on 54% of the 92% of the highly patriotic youth. This comparatively quite low number was surprising from two points of view: the fact that respondents actually answered that way to an official questionnaire and secondly, that the results were published in an official publication. Along with what the researchers told me and the very restricted circulation of these reports, this makes a very strong case that the data were not interfered with. The fact that they were collected in an authoritarian, high-surveillance regime, where people were hesitant to disagree with those in power gives even more weight to the “less than enthusiastic” answers.

Aside from the influence of the communist youth organizations, researchers also collected data about the influence of other factors, such as literature, radio, newspapers, and television. Their data showed that in comparison, the moral influence of the youth organizations was less than that of literature, and slightly above that of radio/television and newspapers.

**Table 4. The importance of loving ones' country III**

The importance of loving ones' country	The moral influence of literature, radio, television and the newspapers											
	Great influence			Moderate influence			Reduced influence			Inexistent influence		
	<i>L</i>	<i>R/TV</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>R/TV</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>R/TV</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>L</i>	<i>R/TV</i>	<i>N</i>
Exceptionally important (92%)	53	43	41	33	42	38	11	12	16	2	2	3
Very important (5%)	47	30	26	36	47	38	13	19	28	4	4	7
Somewhat important (1%)	36	25	11	44	42	39	6	14	39	14	19	11

n=3,894

Although this research report did not include a discussion of the relationship between the variable “love for one’s country” and “the moral influence of schools”, I found the influence of schools discussed in relationship with one of the dimensions of patriotism, “the importance of protecting socialist property.” Here, the role of schools shows as considerably more important compared with the previous figures on the influence of the communist youth organizations (1980: 125):

**Table 5. The importance of protecting socialist property**

The importance of protecting socialist property	The positive moral influence of schools (%)			
	Great influence	Medium influence	Reduced influence	Inexistent influence
Exceptional importance (76%)	68	27	3	1
Great importance (18%)	55	34	9	1
Medium importance (4%)	42	42	13	2
Not important (1%)	34	46	16	3

n=3,894

The finding about the stronger influence of the schools over other factors is consistent with the previous finding about “literature” being more influential, since literature was taught in schools.

Surprisingly, for a time when religion was a taboo topic in public or denounced in tabloid style as a deviation, the Center for Research on Youth included in their research design variables such as “Religious beliefs.” They measured it here as “The importance of rejecting religious beliefs” (1980: 117).

**Table 6. The importance of being devoted to the socialist system**

The importance of being devoted to the socialist system	The importance of <i>rejecting</i> religious beliefs (%)		
	Very important	Somehow important	Not important
Exceptional importance (76%)	9	15	75
Great importance (18%)	9	22	67
Medium importance (4%)	11	34	54
Not important (1%)	22	30	48

n=3,894

The results of the survey portray Romanian youth overall, and even more those most-devoted to socialism, as quite uninterested in “rejecting religious beliefs.” The variable does not directly speak about the religiosity of youth, but it clearly shows that teaching them to “reject religious beliefs” failed. Similarly, a research report about youth in the county of Constanta<sup>233</sup>, revealed for example, that only 45% of the students questioned answered “never” to the question about holding “superstitious views,” and only 30% reported never attending church service (n=603). Another report from 1986<sup>234</sup>, shows that only 51% of youth answered “No” when questioned about believing in supernatural forces, and 69% did not believe in life after death (n=600, sampling method not known).

Another report published<sup>235</sup> in 1980<sup>236</sup> (data collection took place in 1979, n=1,347) directly addressed the efficacy of the Union of Communist Youth among its members, reports a surveyed a sample of 3744 Union of Communist Youth members (31.5% in leadership roles). The table below shows how youth evaluated the activity of the Union:

---

<sup>233</sup> Stefan, and Ciochina “Unele aspecte ale fenomenului religios in rindul tinerilor din Judetul Constanta” in *Tineretul, Puternica Forta Sociala*, 1/1981.

<sup>234</sup> Petre Datculescu “Modalitati de manifestare a atitudinilor mistico-obscurantiste si perfectionarea formelor de educatie materialist-stiintifica” in *Tineret, Cercetare, Actiune Sociala* 3/1986.

<sup>235</sup> When referring to the CCPT reports I use “published” more in the sense of “a few copies printed”, since these reports were not publicly available and their circulation was restricted to a very small number of researchers and party members (under 100).

<sup>236</sup> Elvira Cincea “Imaginea tineretului despre activitatea Uniunii Tineretului Comunist” in *Tineretul Puternica Forta Sociala* 2/80 CCPT.

**Table 7. Evaluation of the efficacy of the Union of Communist Youth activity**

<b>Evaluation of the Union of Communist Youth</b>	<b>Union of Communist Youth members %</b>	<b>Union of Communist Youth leadership %</b>
Very good	14.5	7.5
Good	61.4	76
Poor	13	12
Very poor	2	1.5
Don't know	9.1	3.0

Only 14.5% of the Union of Communist Youth members evaluated the activity of their organization as “very good,” while the majority considered it “good” (61.4%), leaving a total of 24.1% discontented (including “Don’t know” answers) or detached from their youth organization, and apparently not afraid to say so. The Union of Communist Youth leadership members were fifty percent less likely to give the “very good” evaluation, but also less likely to be dissatisfied or detached (total of 16.5). These numbers certainly don’t fit the standards of always reporting excellent results in the mass media.

Another set of open-ended questions asked students what were some of their reservations about the activity of the Union of Communist Youth. Among these, the most frequent ones were “not addressing the problems that people face in the workplace and in school” (improve their training, housing, food) and “lack of concern with leisure time sports, travel.” The Union of Communist Youth leadership reported a lack of support from the larger institutional structures (schools, factories) and the lack of funding for such activities. The least satisfied with their organizations were college students who mainly complained about the Union of Communist Youth’s lack of involvement in organizing leisure activities, followed by working class youth

concerned with work and housing problems. The author also noted a category of “disaffected youth” (9%) who did not answer some of the survey questions, and a certain degree of apathy regarding the Union of Communist Youth: only 19% of their subjects volunteered to make suggestions to improve the Union’s functioning. A similar report based on the same data concluded that “in order to become a real community of work and communist life, the Union of Communist Youth needs not only to educate youth about party policies but to expand its focus on issues related to work and leisure time.”<sup>237</sup>

Several researchers<sup>238</sup> specialized in the Sociology of culture, and published a number of reports surveying the cultural preferences of Romanian youth. In their 1981<sup>239</sup> report they included the Union of Communist Youth in the list of possible factors influences on youth’s cultural development (in Romanian “cultura generala”):

**Table 8. Factors contributing to one’s cultural education**

Factors contributing to one’s cultural development	Influence %			
	Great influence	Medium influence	Reduced influence	Inexistent influence
School	59	33	5	1
Family	42	41	13	3
Union of Communist Youth	17	33	33	14
Self-taught	48	32	11	6

---

<sup>237</sup> Vladimir Marin in “Aspecte ale participarii tinerilor la activitatea organizatiilor UTC”. 1981 Tineretul puternica sociala (1), p. 60.

<sup>238</sup> Constantin Schifirnet, Doina Buruiana, Dumitru Bazac.

<sup>239</sup> Comportament si optiuni culturale ale tineretului. 1981. CCPT.

They found the Union of Communist Youth remarkably absent as an influence on youth's cultural development (17% - great importance), significantly lagging behind factors such as school (59%), one's own efforts (self-taught – 48%) or family (42%). For an organization whose specific goal was the communist education of youth these evaluations were particularly poor.

A 1985 report<sup>240</sup> published by the Center analyzed the “effectiveness of propaganda among youth.” The researchers made a list of propaganda activities and asked a representative sample of youth to rate their effectiveness. Here are the results (1985:72):

**Table 9. The effectiveness of propaganda among youth**

Propaganda activity	Effectiveness %			
	Rank	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective
Debates, discussions	I	59.4	31.2	9.4
Political information		51.6	38.8	9.6
Political-ideological classes		51.3	36.4	12.3
Meetings with party leaders	II	42	43.2	14.8
General assembly meetings	III	34.8	49.5	15.7
Conferences, presentations		34.4	49.3	16.3
Visual propaganda		33.2	47.2	19.6
Other propaganda activities	IV	16.7	61	32.3

In the top ranking category (I) we find “Debates, discussions,” “Political education,” and “Political-ideological classes.” The last two of these activities took place in school classrooms, and were taught by teachers, not Union of Communist Youth leadership, except the “Debates, discussions” which also took place at Union meetings and were not conducted by teachers.

---

<sup>240</sup> Buburuzan, Leon. “Opinii ale tinerilor despre eficienta mijloacelor de propaganda” in *Tineret cercetare actiune sociala* 2/1985.

However, in the responses to the open-ended questions about the Union, a frequent comment was the request for more debates and discussions, which corroborated the student interviews from Chapter Three and seems to suggest that debates and discussion were infrequent. Presentations by teachers rather than party members or events at which students could discuss things were the most effective.

The more formal activities that the Union of Communist Youth was organizing (“General assembly meetings,” “Conferences, presentations,” and “Visual propaganda”) were in the least effective category (III). The researchers interpreted this as proof of Union of Communist Youth’s lack of effectiveness and lack of responsiveness to youth needs. From looking at the responses to the open-ended questions it seems that young people considered these activities rather boring, repetitive and restricted, and felt constrained to participate. Here are some of the things they would have liked: “more sincere and more open debates, not just the old standard talk,” “more interesting activities, not just mandatory participation,” and “more open discussion without fear of consequences,” “more debates and less presentations,” or “more attractive, interesting, attractive visual propaganda.” (1985:81) The report ended with a convenient critical quote from Nicu Ceausescu, the son of President Nicolae Ceausescu and at that time Minister of Youth Issues<sup>241</sup>, meant to show that the researchers were in line with one important Party member:

Right now educating youth has fallen behind the standards set by the Party; we are not fully taking advantage of the multiple possibilities available.

The last report of the decade dealing with the Union of Communist Youth came out in 1988 and was titled “Issues faced today in the process of perfecting the working style and

---

<sup>241</sup> Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 295.

guidance of the leadership of the Union of Communist Youth.”<sup>242</sup> The researchers surveyed 1218 members of the Union of Communist Youth leadership<sup>243</sup>, asking them about their own difficulties and deficiencies. They grouped the “deficiencies” in three categories: instructional, behavioral, and work related.

Here are the deficiencies in instruction and behavior among the Union of Communist Youth leaders, ranked in descending order of their importance:

**Table 10. Deficiencies in the Union of Communist Youth leadership**

<b>Deficiencies in instruction</b>	<b>Behavioral deficiencies</b>
1. ignoring theoretical learning	1. fawning upon superiors
2. know-it-all attitude	2. subjective
3. arrogant, power-tripping	3. hasty
4. lack of interest/deriding training	4. uncommitted
5. superficial	5. disorganized
6. unilateral thinking	6. untrusting
	7. indolent
	8. authoritarian
	9. overestimating oneself
	10. too bureaucratic
	11. self-interested

When it came to working in the organization, the highest ranking problem of all was constituted by “deficiencies in the overall education/culture/knowledge of the Union of Communist Youth leaders” which interfered with the “planning and carrying out of their activities as well as keeping a good work climate.” The subjects also complained about the

---

<sup>242</sup> Buburuzan, Leon. “Probleme actuale pe care le ridica perfectionarea stilului de munca si de conducere a organelor si cadrelor Uniunii Tineretului Communist” in Tineret cercetare actiune sociala. 1/1988.

<sup>243</sup> Leader was defined as anyone holding a position higher than a “member”.

planning process itself (the fact that only 2 or 3 Union of Communist Youth secretaries were doing the planning), the lack of horizontal and vertical coordination, and the lack of follow-up on goals set. Their decision-making was characterized as often plagued by haziness, sectarianism, imposing one's personal views, and setting unrealistic targets. The top-down hierarchical relationship between the various levels of leadership had its own problems. Subjects complained about too much control and too little guidance, stemming from superiors who were too authoritarian, or, at the other end of the spectrum, a superficial approach to both control and guidance.<sup>244</sup>

For the people who witnessed first hand the years of communism in Romania, most of the findings of the Center for Research on Youth would not come as a big surprise; now that the story ended in 1989, they're not even interesting. However, if we expand our examination lens beyond the individual level, things become a little more interesting: they are confirming to each individual subject that what they experienced, what they felt all along was shared and even voiced by many of their contemporaries. Expanding the focus even more, to the scholars of communism in Eastern Europe, things become very interesting. The Center for Research on Youth data offers insights into a statistical portrait of communism in Romania that foreign scholars of Cold War and ordinary Romanians could not even dream of accessing.

The Union of Communist Youth is portrayed as inefficient, unpopular, run by power-seeking, often incompetent, apathetic, and superficial leaders. The data show a reality that was the opposite of a state-run apparatus able to produce the heavily indoctrinated, "brainwashed," loyal subjects that a lot of scholars<sup>245</sup> of post-communism worried about. There may be a

---

<sup>244</sup> Ibid: 56

<sup>245</sup> Jowitt, *New World Disorder*; Vladimir Tismaneanu, *The Crisis of Marxist Ideology in Eastern Europe: the Poverty of Utopia* (London; New York: Routledge, 1988).

“communist legacy,” but among this generation it seems to be not what the Communist Party intended. There were, rather a number of indirect, unintended consequences (such as a very well-read generation due to the lack of television & entertainment).

Furthermore, the data answers the question of whether the Romanian Communist Party officials were at all aware about how disaffected the Romanian youth were. The research that resulted in the core of the data discussed here was commissioned by the Union of Communist Youth and was reported to their leadership, many of them also Communist Party members.

Although sociological research conducted under the communist regime in Romania was largely ignored in post-communist scholarship, my research suggests some of the data collected can be an interesting and useful source for understanding life under communism. The research carried out by the Center for Research on Youth suggests significant exceptions from the narrative of complete regime control over its subjects. Under the patronage of the Union of Communist Youth sociologists were able to conduct sociological research even during times of severe restrictions, such as the 1980s. Furthermore, they were able to report their findings, suggesting that the regime’s program of indoctrination was less than a complete success, in some ways much less, or that young people took patriotism more seriously than socialist ideology and for very many, religion seems to have still been important.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

As I was writing this chapter the world was inundated by images of the mourners of North Korean dictator, Kim Jong Il. The images of women, men of all ages, and children participating in a mass display of grief were shortly followed by reports that “insincere” mourners were being punished<sup>246</sup>. I could not help but wonder if the 1989 Romanian revolution didn’t happen, if the broader context of political opportunity<sup>247</sup> didn’t exist, and Ceausescu had the time to appoint a successor and die naturally, would I, along with students and teachers I interviewed be among the pixel-sized faces making up such a grandiose display of grief?

Western journalists noted the North Korean display of grief with horror and bemusement, referring to it as “mass hysteria”<sup>248</sup> and grappled with the question of how such a thing was possible. For someone who lived through the 1970-1980s Romania, such images are not that surprising. After all, Kim Jong Il’s father, Kim Il-sung (to Romanians known more as Kim Ir Sen) along with Mao Tse-Tung were the inspiration for the massive and pervasive cult of personality<sup>249</sup> of Nicolae Ceausescu.

---

<sup>246</sup> “Daily NK - Harsh Punishments for Poor Mourning”, n.d., <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk01500&num=8668>.

<sup>247</sup> such as the “Gorbachev factor”, the reform in other countries in Eastern Europe, and “domino effect” of protest movements.

<sup>248</sup> “North Koreans Grief-stricken over Kim’s Death - CNN.com”, n.d., <http://www.cnn.com/2011/12/19/health/north-korea-mass-grieving/index.html>.

<sup>249</sup> John Borneman, *Death of the Father: an Anthropology of the End of Political Authority* (New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2003), 127.

Beyond the amazement and the absurdity of such images, denunciations and post-factum repudiations, there has been little attempt to look beyond this public façade and understand the ordinary subjects of such regimes. My research was guided by this objective. I tried to understand how Romanian youth experienced politics in their everyday lives in the 1980s, under a totalitarian-sultanistic system. I tried to answer this question by looking at three levels: the lived and remembered experience of students and their teachers, the “indoctrination” materials such textbooks and policy documents they were exposed to, and the social research from the 1980s aimed at assessing the effectiveness of their “indoctrination.”

From talking to high school students of the 1980s I found that from an early age (around eight years) the communist ideological messages and the personality-cult propaganda of Nicolae was undone within the family with several counter-discourses. Parents and grandparents, increasingly tired of after-work mandatory ideological meetings and the daily hunt to provide the basic necessities for their families, were not shying away from expressing their frustrations in front of their children, just home from school, reciting over-flattering poems about Ceausescu. In families where one parent was a party member and holding a high position and was therefore abstaining from any criticism in front of the children, other members (spouses and grandparents) actively engaged in it.

The criticism of ideology and the frustration with economic hardships was augmented by the youths’ direct interaction with privileged sons and daughters of the Party leadership who were engaging in conspicuous consumption of goods (mostly imports) not available to ordinary citizens. In the political context of a regime that claimed to satisfy all of its citizens’ needs, this created a strong perception of unfairness.

Their encounters with western products and culture, the listening to broadcasts of Radio Free Europe, along with grandparents' romanticized accounts of economic prosperity in interwar Romania, further undermined official discourse about their lives being better than the lives of people living in capitalism, past and present.

At the same time, families were the environment where fear was taught. Anything out of the official party line, any criticism of the regime by parents was accompanied by (successfully) teaching youth to keep such discussion inside the family, avoid any mention of it in public, and leave any conversation that might lead to those topics.

The main institutions in charge of the delivery of ideological messages (the education system and youth organizations) were often doing it through a deeply flawed pedagogy. Most of the time, ideological education consisted in throwing dreary, repetitive, and abstract party documents and Ceausescu's speeches into the classrooms indiscriminately, even to not-yet-literate students. Teachers were in the difficult position of being supposed to "teach" something that was very difficult to understand and explain, so they resorted to memorization and scrapbooking. According to students, some of them even delivered "double messages", especially when discussing the economic situation. Similarly, youth organizations demanded mandatory participation, were highly controlled by the same teachers and their activities (except for trips, sports, picnics), were highly scripted and formalized, thus precluding active, unforced participation on the behalf of the students.

The high school social science teachers I interviewed, the ones who bore the brunt of the ideological work, also had interesting and surprising accounts of the 1980s. In spite of the political and ideological pressures affecting the education system and their university departments in particular, they all reported coming from a relatively free academic environment,

where they had access to a wide array of readings. Thanks to a few “open-minded” teachers, they were exposed to balanced, objective, and sometimes, even critical views of their fields (Philosophy, Sociology, History). As they started their teaching careers they were put in a much more restrictive environment, where they were required to teach subjects that were heavily ideological and filled with exhortations of the Ceausescu’s genius and leadership. Furthermore, as years passed by, they spent more and more hours of ideological trainings, meetings and other activities celebrating Ceausescu’s “Golden Age.” As my analysis of the textbooks shows, reconciling the flagrantly exaggerated claims of economic progress and prosperity with the economic reality of the 1980s was quite a difficult mission. Also, the extreme, dull, and repetitive personality cult of Ceausescu that was infused in all the texts, made teaching even harder, especially at the high school level, when students were already too familiar with how their parents felt about the regime.

“Bullshitting” and “embarrassment” were terms former teachers used when discussing these parts of their own teaching. All of them unapologetically acknowledged doing it, but along with it came a list of strategies they used to make things more bearable for themselves and for the students. Some of them reported avoiding teaching certain subjects that were more ideological, such as Political Economy. Others reported focusing on theory and less on the current social situation, favoring a historical perspective as opposed to discussing the present, subverting the ideological purpose of the Union of Communist Youth for more practical and student focused activities or simply having students copy the more ideological sections of the textbook in their notebooks instead of lecturing. Although teachers expressed fear of state control in the form of school inspectors, they still claimed to employ these strategies with the complicity of students, parents and administrators, and with the conviction that what happened

in the classroom stayed in the classroom. They were convinced that they were safe as long as they kept the inspectors happy with the proper paperwork and staged their classes for their visits.

The last element of my method and source triangulation, the examination of the research reports from the Center for Research on Youth, revealed yet another space that in many ways escaped the apparently draconian censorship and suppression of the Ceausescu regime. Under the patronage of the Union of Communist Youth researchers at the center carried on social research in times when empirical research seemed to have been halted in academia. They were able to collect, analyze, and report (although in a restricted fashion) sensitive data suggesting significant failures of the youth “ideological education” that Ceausescu imposed.

Some of their reports from the 1980s highlight the stronger influence of families and schools over communist youth organizations in influencing youth’s moral beliefs. Others, specifically commissioned by the Union of Communist Youth to assess its efficacy show very critical evaluations from its members, and even more critical evaluations from its leadership. The ratings of its activity as well as the written answers to the open-ended questions of the surveys portrayed a superficial, undemocratic organization detached from the actual interests and concerns of its members, virtually absent in terms of cultural influence, and run by power-seeking, often incompetent and apathetic leaders.

The common thread in all the accounts of the communist years is a double discourse noted by Czeslaw Milosz<sup>250</sup>, as well as scholars of Romania such as Gail Kligman<sup>251</sup>, Katherine Verdery<sup>252</sup> and Steve Sampson.<sup>253</sup>

Milosz discussed this practice as early as 1951 in his famous essay titled “Ketman”, in his critical volume about living under socialism. He borrowed the concept of “Ketman” from Gobineau’s writing on Persia<sup>254</sup>, and defined it a practice of acting and dissimulation, especially in circles of power:

“He who is in possession of truth must not expose his person, his relatives or his reputation to the blindness, the folly, the perversity of those whom it has pleased God to place and maintain in error.” One must, therefore, keep silent about one’s true convictions if possible.<sup>255</sup>

In the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, argued Milosz, Ketman was widely practiced in “its narrowest and severest form.” Everyone participated in it, as a strategy of coping with the contradictions between the official propaganda and the reality of living under socialism. Describing an atmosphere of competition rather than complicity, he emphasized that the participants delighted in deceiving each other, and took advantage of situations of “accidental unmasking of Ketman” to take down their adversaries.<sup>256</sup>

---

<sup>250</sup> Czeslaw Milosz, *The Captive Mind* (New York: Knopf, 1953). Elemér Hankiss, *East European Alternatives* (Oxford [England]; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1990); Edgar L Feige, *The Underground Economies: Tax Evasion and Information Distortion* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>251</sup> Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity*.

<sup>252</sup> Verdery, *National Ideology Under Socialism*, 90, 293.

<sup>253</sup> Steve Sampson. “Dedublarea, diversiunea si conspiratia” Revista 22. April 4, 1994.

<sup>254</sup> Arthur de Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l’Asie Centrale* (Paris: Didier, 1866). Milosz also distances himself from Gobineau whom he describes as a “dangerous writer,” most likely in regards to his racial theories.

<sup>255</sup> Milosz, *The captive mind*, 57.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

Gail Kligman's ethnography of reproductive politics in Ceausescu's Romania<sup>257</sup> contains the most thorough discussion of the Romanian case:

Duplicity became a mode of communicative behavior, consciously lying was customary practice. Each was a characteristic form of *dedublare*, which all together spun the thread of duplicity. "Dedublare", Romania's version of *ketman*, roughly means division in two, or dual or split personalities. In the context of Ceausescu's Romania it generally referred to distinctive representations of the self: a public self that engaged in public displays of conformity in speech and behavior, and a private self that may have retreated to the innermost depths of mind to preserve a kernel of individual thought.<sup>258</sup>

Kligman's discussion of duplicity, similarly to Milosz, notes the existence of competition and denunciations, but in addition to that she also notes the existence of complicity among those practicing *Ketman*: women, families, networks of friends, and physicians. Her take on duplicity neatly fits in to James Scott<sup>259</sup>'s influential analysis of what he termed "hidden scripts," as responses and patterns of resistance to power and domination, that are less visible from the perspective of macro-level, conventional analysis. Scott goes on to argue that manifestations such as "lies, sabotages, laughter, disguises, folktales, ideological inversions" are indeed a form of legitimate resistance to structures of domination and can over time lead to destruction of these structures.

Although Scott has been criticized for his "schematic dichotomy of dominant and subordinate,"<sup>260</sup> throughout my interviews I consistently found that my informants referred and related to "power" or "the regime" as a distinctly external entity, as opposed to more complex structures of power and domination. Croghan<sup>261</sup>, in his observations about the Romanian

---

<sup>257</sup> Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity*.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>259</sup> Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance*.

<sup>260</sup> Susan Gal, "Language and the 'Arts of Resistance': *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. James Scott," *Cultural Anthropology* 10, no. 3 (1995): 416 (review).

<sup>261</sup> Croghan, *Ideological Training in Communist Education*, 30.

education system in the 1970s, noted a “heightened consciousness” about ideological training and the fact that the teachers and students he interviewed were acutely aware of it as something external, “something that was being done to them.” Kligman suggests an interesting answer as to who was this “external” power:

[.] in the former socialist states and according to popular understanding, the state, the party, and the secret police were virtually synonymous with respect to their referent: “the power”. These rhetorical devices distinguished “them” from “us”, and in part legitimated acts of complicity with, and duplicity against, the state. [...] duplicity and complicity – viewed as modes of communicative behavior – were crucial to both the endurance and the demise of the Ceausescu regime.<sup>262</sup>

Considering that the Romanian Communist Party had a membership of four million and was “perhaps the largest communist party, in proportional terms, in the world,”<sup>263</sup> and its secret service had a massive network of informants, such a view and awareness of the power structures is not surprising, and it might very well explain the prevalence and preference of such “hidden scripts” in Romania as opposed to more organized forms of opposition. Helena Flam<sup>264</sup>’s discussion of Scott’s relevance to Eastern Europe casts a shadow of doubt on his contention about the “anger” contained in the autonomous spaces where the subordinate “venting” occurs. Her analysis of the opposition movements in Poland and Germany suggests that it was rather fear, anxiety, and caution that characterized their activities, leading to forms of protest that had “ambivalent, satirical and carnivalesque forms.”<sup>265</sup>

---

<sup>262</sup> Kligman, *The Politics of Duplicity*, 4.

<sup>263</sup> Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons*, 19.

<sup>264</sup> Helena Flam, “Anger in Repressive Regimes: A Footnote to Domination and the Arts of Resistance by James Scott,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no. 2 (2004): 171–188.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.* 185.

My research shows that ideological indoctrination of youth in 1980s Romania existed more as intent (Party policies) than as outcome. It was put in practice through the education system and youth organizations in an inept and ambivalent fashion, and further deconstructed in autonomous spaces of expression within family and friendship circles. By contrasting the official documents, textbooks, and policies with the way everyday life in the 1980s was remembered, I found that the “Orwellian” policies and educational objectives of the Ceausescu regime played out in everyday life in a much more diluted, inefficient, and self-sabotaging way than the study of the official documents alone would indicate.

My interdisciplinary and mixed methods approach to studying political socialization allowed me to look at it not only as a discourse or in terms of policy effectiveness but as a dynamic process, in which social actors do not passively absorb political messages delivered by an authoritarian regime, but filter out, divert, deride, or even subvert them, even at a young age. Another important finding is that, whereas in the literature about democratic societies, schools are widely considered as more important than families in the political socialization of teenagers<sup>266</sup>, in my case-study of a totalitarian society, it was the families and peers that were unarguably the most important influence.

---

<sup>266</sup> M. Kent Jennings and Richard G Niemi, *The Political Character of Adolescence: the Influence of Families and Schools* ([Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974); Spiro Kiouisis, Michael McDevitt, and Xu Wu, “The Genesis of Civic Awareness: Agenda Setting in Political Socialization,” *Journal of Communication* 55, no. 4 (2005): 756–774.

**APPENDIX A. RESEARCH TOPICS IN THE CENTER FOR YOUTH PROBLEMS  
REPORTS**

**Table 11. Research topics in the Center for Youth Problems Reports**

Year	Topics
1969	Delinquency among youth Health
1970	Delinquency among youth The role of education in youth job training Youth problems in the foreign press
1971	Youth organizations
1972	Youth studies Theory, methodology Youth and social movements in capitalist societies Political and ideological education Problems of working class youth Social integration of young girls Delinquency among youth Youth participation in higher education

	<p>Leisure time</p> <p>The influence of families on youth</p> <p>Career preferences of youth</p> <p>Participation in the Union of Communist Youth</p> <p>Moral education of youth</p> <p>Adolescence</p>
1973	<p>Theory, methodology</p> <p>Youth problems in the foreign press</p> <p>Delinquency among youth</p> <p>The moral education of youth</p>
1974	<p>Theory, methodology</p> <p>Youth and demographic trends in Romania</p> <p>The materialist-scientific education of youth</p>
1975	<p>Education</p> <p>Youth, science and technology</p>
1976	<p>Youth and rural modernization</p> <p>The role of youth in socialist development</p> <p>The materialist-scientific education of youth</p> <p>Theory, methodology</p> <p>Youth organizations</p>
1977 – 1979	<p>Missing</p>
1980	<p>Rural UCY organizations</p>

	<p>Attitudes toward work</p> <p>Moral and political values</p> <p>The image of the Union of Communist Youth among youth</p> <p>Life goals and ideals of youth</p> <p>Education and career preferences</p> <p>Work socialization among rural youth</p> <p>Literary preferences of deviant youth</p> <p>Socialist consciousness of youth</p> <p>Revolutionary patriotism and attachment toward socialism</p> <p>Theory, methodology</p>
1981	<p>Work education/socialization</p> <p>Participation in the Union of Communist Youth</p> <p>Urbanization processes among youth</p> <p>Religious beliefs among youth</p> <p>Youth participation in factory management</p> <p>Union of Communist Youth leadership working and leadership styles</p> <p>The work culture of youth</p> <p>Cultural values and aspirations of youth</p> <p>Working class youth culture and aspirations</p> <p>Reading habits of youth</p> <p>Theory, methodology</p>
1982	<p>Professional education</p>

	<p>Research methods in mass communication</p> <p>Education</p> <p>Youth knowledge and preferences in arts</p> <p>Western youth ideals and realities</p> <p>Youth and socialist lifestyles</p>
1983	<p>Mass media influence on youth: newspapers, magazines, radio and television</p> <p>Youth attitudes toward peace</p> <p>Prison sentences for criminal youth</p> <p>Students' knowledge of history</p> <p>Problems of political-ideological education</p> <p>Youth participation in mining sector management</p> <p>Theory, methodology</p>
1984	<p>The Patriotic, revolutionary education of youth</p> <p>The role of schools, families and youth organizations in youth's patriotic education</p> <p>Cultural and artistic based methods of patriotic education</p> <p>The effectiveness of political-ideological education by the youth organizations</p> <p>Cultural values of youth</p> <p>Theory, methodology</p>
1985	<p>Intergenerational relations</p> <p>Youth opinions about the effectiveness of propaganda</p>

	<p>Career preferences of youth</p> <p>Socialization and professional values of youth</p> <p>Youth and occupational prestige</p> <p>The dynamic of youth's cultural preferences</p> <p>Generations and culture</p> <p>Youth's imagining of the year 2000</p> <p>Social and professional integration of youth</p> <p>Normative and value orientations of youth</p> <p>The role of families and peers in the social integration of youth</p> <p>Theory, methodology</p>
1986	<p>Mystic/obscurantist activities and perfecting the scientific-materialistic education among youth</p> <p>The social consequences of religious alienation</p> <p>Secularization in the contemporary world and the crisis of religion</p> <p>The role of the Union of Communist Youth in promoting scientific-materialist education</p> <p>Value orientations and professional performance</p> <p>College students' professional aspirations and motivation</p>
1987	<p>Culture, cultural institutions and youth socialization</p> <p>Moral and civic education</p> <p>Moral values of youth</p> <p>Youth and "Culture Houses"</p>

	<p>Values and aspirations among youth</p> <p>Theory, methodology</p>
1988	<p>Perfecting the work style of the Union of Communist Youth leadership</p> <p>Mystic/obscurantist activities and perfecting the scientific-materialistic education among youth</p> <p>The ideological education of youth</p> <p>Secular ceremonies in the lives of youth</p> <p>Youth and creativity in the factory</p> <p>Social and professional integration of youth</p> <p>Young families</p>
1989	<p>Education and Romanian traditional values</p> <p>Cultural and political attitudes of youth</p> <p>Patriotic education of youth</p> <p>Moral socialization of teenagers</p> <p>Demographic changes in rural areas</p> <p>Cultural influences on marriage rates</p> <p>Youth and culture (literature, film, poetry, science)</p> <p>Romanian sociology in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century</p> <p>Living spaces of youth</p> <p>Religion among youth</p> <p>Workplace integration</p> <p>Career preferences of youth</p>

	Civic and moral education of youth Theory, methodology
--	---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Almond, Mark. *The Rise and Fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu*. London: Chapman, 1992.
- Anghelescu, Serban et. al. *Mărturii Orale : Anii '80 si Bucureștenii*. București: Paideia, 2003.
- Apor, Péter. "The Joy of Everyday Life: Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life in the Socialist Dictatorships." *East Central Europe* 34, no. 1/2 (June 1, 2007): 185–218.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New ed. New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1966.
- Betea, Lavinia. *Mentalități si Remanențe Comuniste*. București: Nemira, 2005.
- Blaa, Lucian. *Luntrea lui Caron: Roman*. București: Humanitas, 1990.
- Blee, Kathleen. *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Blee, Kathleen M. "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan." *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 2 (1993): 596–606.
- Boia, Lucian. *Mitologia Științifică a Comunismului*. București: Humanitas, 1999.
- Borneman, John. *Death of the Father: an Anthropology of the End of Political Puthority*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn, 2003.
- Boym, Svetlana. *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- Braham, Randolph L. *Education in Romania: a Decade of Change*. [Washington: U.S. Office of Education, Institute of International Studies; [for sale by the Supt. of Docs., U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1972.
- Bren, Paulina. *The Greengrocer and His TV: the Culture of Communism After the 1968 Prague Spring*. Ithaca [N.Y.]: Cornell University Press, 2010.
- Brint, Steven. *Schools and Societies*. 2nd ed. Stanford Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006.

- Browning, Christopher R. *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.
- Burawoy, Michael. *The Radiant Past: Ideology and Reality in Hungary's Road to Capitalism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Carp, Mircea. "Vocea Americii" În România: 1969-1978. Iași: Polirom, 1997.
- Cernat, Paul. *Explorări in Comunismul Românesc: 3 Vol.* Iași: Polirom, 2004.
- et. al. *O Lume Dispărută: Patru Istории Personale Urmate de un Dialog cu H.-R. Patapievici*. București: Polirom, 2004.
- Cioroianu, Adrian. *Pe Umerii lui Marx: o Introducere in Istoria Comunismului Românesc*. București: Curtea Veche, 2005.
- Constantinescu, N. N. *Istoria Economica a României*. Bucuresti: Editura Economica, 2000.
- Cooley, Charles Horton. *Human Nature and the Social Order*. New York: Schocken Books, 1964.
- . *Social process*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1918.
- Croghan, Martin. *Ideological Training in Communist Education: a Case Study of Romania*. Washington: University Press of America, 1980.
- Crowley, David. *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*. Oxford; New York: Berg, 2002.
- Min, Choi Song "Daily NK - Harsh Punishments for Poor Mourning", accessed on January 20, 2012, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk01500&num=8668>
- Deletant, Dennis, and Centrul de Studii Românești. *Romania under Communist Rule*. Rev. 2nd ed. Iași Romania, 1999.
- Deletant, Dennis. *Communist Terror in Romania: Gheorghiu-Dej and the Police State, 1948-1965*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Denzin, Norman K, and Yvonna S Lincoln. *The landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1998.
- DiGiacomo, Francis Anthony. "Education Amidst Transition: the Case of Romania". PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2010.
- Division, Federal Research. *Romania: a Country Study*. Kessinger Publishing, 2004.
- Fainsod, Merle. *Smolensk Under Soviet Rule*. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958.

- Feige, Edgar L. *The Underground Economies: Tax Evasion and Information Distortion*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Feinstein, Joshua. *The Triumph of the Ordinary: Depictions of Daily Life in the East German Cinema, 1949-1989*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Fischer, Mary. *Nicolae Ceaușescu: a Study in Political Leadership*. Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1989.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "Afterword: Revisionism Revisited." *Russian Review* 45, no. 4 (1986): 409–413.
- . *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet Organization of Education and the Arts Under Lunacharsky October 1917-1921*. Cambridge: The University Press, 1970.
- Flam, Helena. "Anger in Repressive Regimes: A Footnote to Domination and the Arts of Resistance by James Scott." *European Journal of Social Theory* 7, no. 2 (2004): 171–188.
- Florescu, Gheorghe. *Confesiunile Unui Cafegiu*. București: Humanitas, 2008.
- Friedrich, Carl. *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*. 2d ed., rev. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- Gheo, Radu. *Tovarășe de Drum: Experiența Feminină in Comunism*. Iași: Polirom, 2008.
- Gobineau, Arthur de. *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*. Paris: Didier, 1866.
- Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1996.
- Greenfeld, Liah. "Soviet Sociology and Sociology in the Soviet Union." *Annual Review of Sociology* 14 (1988): 99–123.
- Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Haney, Lynne. *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Hankiss, Elemér. *East European Alternatives*. Oxford [England]; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Hann, Chris. *Postsocialism Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Eurasia*. London; New York: Routledge, 2002.

- Huyssen, Andreas. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Inkeles, Alex. *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia; a Study in Mass Persuasion*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958.
- Ivan, Ruxandra, Daniel Barbu, and Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România. “*Transformarea Socialista*”: *Politici ale Regimului Comunist între Ideologie si Administratie*. Iasi: Polirom, 2009.
- Jakobson, Roman. *Essais de Linguistique Generale: les Fondations du Langage*. Paris: Minuit, 1963.
- Jela, Doina. *Afacerea Meditatie Transcendentala*. Humanitas, 2004.
- Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard G Niemi. *The Political Character of Adolescence: the Influence of Families and Schools*. [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974.
- Jinga, Luciana, and Institutul de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România. *Elev În Comunism = Student During the Communist Regime*. București: Curtea Veche, 2009.
- Johnson, Eric A. *Nazi Terror: the Gestapo, Jews, and ordinary Germans*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.
- Jowitt, Kenneth. *New World Disorder: the Leninist Extinction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- . *Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development the Case of Romania, 1944-1965*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.
- . *Social Change in Romania, 1860-1940: a Debate on Development in a European Nation*. Berkeley: University of California; Institute of international studies, 1978.
- Kay, Rebecca. *Gender, Equality and Difference During and After State Socialism*. Basingstoke New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Keen, Mike. *Sociology in Central and Eastern Europe: Transformation at the Dawn of a New Millenium*. Westport Conn.: Praeger, 2003.
- Keen, Mike Forrest, Mucha, Janusz., ed. *Eastern Europe in Transformation: The Impact on Sociology*. Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Kennel, Herma. *Jogging cu Securitatea: Rezistența Tânărului Radu Filipescu*. București: Editura Universal Dalsi, 1998.
- Kideckel, David. “The Socialist Transformation of Agriculture in a Romanian Commune, 1945-62.” *American Ethnologist* 9, no. 2 (1982): 320–340.

- King, Robert. *A History of the Romanian Communist Party*. Stanford Calif.: Hoover Institution Press Stanford University, 1980.
- Kiousis, Spiro, Michael McDevitt, and Xu Wu. "The Genesis of Civic Awareness: Agenda Setting in Political Socialization." *Journal of Communication* 55, no. 4 (2005): 756–774.
- Kligman, Gail. *Căluș: Symbolic Transformation in Romanian Ritual*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- . *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- . "The Rites of Women: Oral Poetry, Ideology, and the Socialization of Peasant Women in Contemporary Romania." *Journal of American Folklore* 97, no. 384 (1984): 167–188.
- Koczanowicz, Leszek. "Memory of Politics and Politics of Memory. Reflections on the Construction of the Past in Post-Totalitarian Poland." *Studies in East European Thought* 49, no. 4 (1997): 259–270.
- Kolaja, Jiri. *Glimpses of Sociology in Eastern Europe*. New Delhi: Prints India, 1990.
- Komlos, John. *Nutrition and Economic Development in the Eighteenth-century Habsburg Monarchy: an Anthropometric History*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Kott, Sandrine. "Everyday Communism: New Social History of the German Democratic Republic." *Contemporary European History* 13, no. 2 (May 1, 2004): 233–247.
- Kovács, Éva; "What's New in East-Central European Sociology?" *Regio - Minorities, Politics, Society - English Edition* 1 (2002).
- Kubik, Jan. "Historical Memory and the End of Communism." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 9, no. 2 (May 9, 2007): 127–133.
- Kürti, László. *Youth and the State in Hungary: Capitalism, Communism, and Class*. London; Sterling Va.: Pluto Press, 2002.
- Larionescu, Maria. *Istoria Sociologiei Românești*. București: Ed. Univ., 2007.
- Linz, Juan. *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-communist Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- Livezeanu, Irina. *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995.
- Luca, Laurentiu. "Propaganda in the schools of Communist Romania". MA Thesis, University of Toronto, 2005.
- Lüdtke, Alf. *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995.

- Maier, Anneli. "Philosophy in 1974: An Embarrassing Picture", accessed January 26, 2012. <http://www.osaarchivum.org/files/holdings/300/8/3/text/52-3-96.shtml>.
- Major, Patrick. *The Workers' and Peasants' State: Communism and Society in East Germany Under Ulbricht 1945-71*. Manchester UK; New York: Manchester University Press; Palgrave, 2002.
- Marino, Adrian. *Viața Unui Om Singur*. Iași: Polirom, 2010.
- Massino, Jill. "Something Old, Something New: Marital Roles and Relations in State Socialist Romania." *Journal of Women's History* 22, no. 1 (March 6, 2010): 34–60.
- McAdam, Doug, John D McCarthy, and Mayer Zald. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Mead, George Herbert, and Arthur Edward Murphy. *The Philosophy of the Present*. Chicago; London: Open court Pub. Co., 1932.
- Mihailescu, Ioan, and Zoltan Rostas. *Dialog Neterminat*. Curtea Veche, 2007.
- Milosz, Czeslaw. *The Captive Mind*. New York: Knopf, 1953.
- Min, Choi Song "Daily NK - Harsh Punishments for Poor Mourning", accessed on January 20, 2012, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?cataId=nk01500&num=8668>.
- Mohan, Raj. *Handbook of Contemporary Developments in World Sociology*. Westport Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975.
- Momanu, Mariana. *Educație și Ideologie: o Analiză Pedagogică a Sistemului Totalitar Comunist*. Iași: Ed. Univ. "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 2005.
- Müller, Herta. *Regele Se-nclină și Ucide*. Iași: Polirom, 2005.
- Murgescu, Bogdan. *România și Europa: Acumularea Decalajelor Economice: 1500--2010*. Iași: Polirom, 2010.
- Navadaru, Cosmin. "Cum a Scapat Formatia Timpuri Noi de Ancheta Fostei Securitati: Prin Pile - Muzica - HotNews.ro", accessed on October 11, 2011 <http://life.hotnews.ro/stiri-muzica-10455043-cum-scapat-formatia-timpuri-noi-ancheta-fostei-securitati-prin-pile.htm?cfat=>.
- Nelson, Daniel N. *Romania after Tyranny*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992.
- Nora, Pierre. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.
- Oprea, Marius, and Dennis Deletant. *Banalitatea Raului: o Istorie a Securitatii în Documente 1949-1989*. Iasi: Polirom, 2002.

- Palmowski, Jan. *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945-1990*. Cambridge UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Pandele, Andrei. *Martorul-Surpriză: Fotografii Necenzurate din Comunism*. București: Compania, 2008.
- Park, Madison. "North Koreans Grief-stricken over Kim's Death - CNN.com", accessed on December 22, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/2011/12/19/health/north-korea-mass-grieving/index.html>.
- Popper, Karl. *The Poverty of Historicism Karl Popper*. London; New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Radulescu, Dan Constantin. "Învățămintul Românesc 1948–1989 – Între Derivă și Recuperare Instituțional - Funcțională." *Calitatea Vieții XVII*, no. 3–4 (2006): 307–318.
- Raportul Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România, accessed on January 20, 2011. [http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT\\_FINAL\\_CPADCR.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/RAPORT_FINAL_CPADCR.pdf).
- Reid, Susan. *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-war Eastern Europe*. Oxford; New York: Berg, 2000.
- Rostás, Zoltán, and Andrei Pippidi. *Chipurile Orasului: Istorie de Viata în Bucuresti: Secolul XX*. Iasi: Polirom, 2002.
- Rostás, Zoltán, and Sorin Stoica. *Istorie la Firul Ierbii: Documente Sociale Orale*. Bucuresti: Tritonic, 2003.
- Sampson, Steven. *National Integration through Socialist Planning*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 1984.
- Schwartz, Barry. "Introduction: The Expanding Past." *Qualitative Sociology*. 19, no. 3 (1996): 275–282.
- Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.
- Shafir, Michael. *Romania: Politics, Economics and Society: Political Stagnation and Simulated Change*. London: Pinter, 1985.
- Shalin, Dmitri. "Sociology for the Glasnost Era: Institutional and Substantive Changes in Recent Soviet Sociology." *Social Forces* 68, no. 4 (1990): 1019–1039.
- Șiulea, Ciprian. *Iluzia Anticomunismului: Lecturi Critice Ale Raportului Tismăneanu*. Ediția 1. Chișinău: Cartier, 2008.
- Stokes, Gale. *The Walls came Tumbling down: the Collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

- Tarkovskii, Andrei Arsen'evich, Natal'ia Bondarchuk, Donatas Banionis, Yuri Yarvet, Stanislaw Lem, Moskovskaia kinostudiia "Mosfil'm.", and Criterion Collection (Firm). *Solaris*. [S.I.]: Criterion Collection, 2002.
- Thom, Françoise. *Newspeak: the Language of Soviet Communism*. London: Claridge, 1989.
- Tismaneanu, Vladimir. *Byzantine Rites, Stalinist Follies: the Twilight of Dynastic Socialism in Romania*. Philadelphia PA: Foreign Policy Research Institute, 1986.
- . *Stalinism for All Seasons: a Political History of Romanian Communism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- . *The Crisis of Marxist Ideology in Eastern Europe: the Poverty of Utopia*. London; New York: Routledge, 1988.
- . *Understanding National Stalinism: a Comparative Approach to the History of Romanian Communism*. Washington D.C.: East European Program European Institute The Wilson Center, 1990.
- Tucker, Robert, and American Council of Learned Societies Devoted to Humanistic Studies. *Stalinism: Essays in Historical Interpretation*. 1st ed. New York NY: Norton, 1977.
- Vasile, Cristian. "Educație și Ideologie în România 1948–1953." *Revista Istorică* XV, no. 5–6 (2004): 121–140.
- . *Literatura și Artele în România Comunistă: 1948 - 1953*. București: Humanitas, 2010.
- Verdery, Katherine. *National Ideology Under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania*. Berkeley/Calif. [u.a.]: Univ. of California Press, 1995.
- . *Transylvanian Villagers: Three Centuries of Political, Economic, and Ethnic Change*. Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California press, 1983.
- Volovici, Leon, and Sandu Frunza. *De la Iasi la Ierusalim și Inapoi: pornind de la un dialog cu Sandu Frunza*. București: Ideea Europeana, 2007.
- Vultur, Smaranda, and Fundația "A Treia Europă." *Lumi în Destine: Memoria Generațiilor de Început de Secol din Banat*. București: Nemira, 2000.
- Vultur, Smaranda. *Germanii din Banat prin Povestirile lor*. București: Paideia, 2000.
- . *Istorie Trăită - Istorie Povestită: Deportarea în Bărăgan (1951 - 1956)*. Timisoara: Ed. Amarcord, 1997.
- . *Memoria Salvată: Evreii din Banat, Ieri și Azi*. Iași: Polirom, 2002.