

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

Felician Velimirovici

Muzeul Banatului Montan, Reșița

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

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

## 1. Preliminaries

The present study performs an analysis 'from above' of a central concept for Romanian communist ideology. The 'historians' front', reckoned to be a constitutive part of a much broader 'ideological front' engaged in a decisive struggle against Western 'capitalist ideology' has been a fundamental notion for Leninist ideologues<sup>1</sup> as early as the 1920s. Obviously, under the late Joseph Stalin, through Andrei A. Zhdanov, the idea has taken new forms.

---

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

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

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

My interpretation is structured into two sections. In the first one, I trace the origins of this concept and I investigate the manners in which it has been engaged in scientific and political discourse especially during the first decade of communist rule. The main sources that I have used, are represented by official materials published in Romania's central historical journal (*Studii. Revistă de istorie*) between 1949 and 1959. I have chosen this academic review, and no other, expressly because of the fundamental purpose *Studii* has had back then: to set up and calibrate the methods and patterns according to which the new Marxist-Leninist discourse about the past should have been produced in Romania<sup>2</sup>. I start from the premises that Romanian Stalinist ideologues and propagandists had taken ideology seriously, because the political regime itself had been an ideological one<sup>3</sup>: the illustrative statements I reproduce in quotes in my text signify not only the fact that they had learnt, in a very limited time frame, to 'speak bolshevik'<sup>4</sup> in order to embed themselves within

---

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

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

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

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

The second section of my study discusses RCP’s tendencies to centralize history-production in Romania on a national scale during the 1970s and the 1980s. Starting with 1974<sup>8</sup>, both RCP’s leader and party structures had begun to pay increasingly more attention not only to general problems of history, beginning to indicate historians how to write about national past, but mainly to bring history-production institutions under a more firmer political control. In mid-’70s, the Stalinist ‘historians’ front’ formula has reentered official vocabulary of party propagandists. As well, a significant number of historians have started to progressively rediscover and reintegrate this early Cold War linguistic vestige into their public discourse.

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The development of the Stalinization process of Romanian culture which was inaugurated that year, the so-called 'cultural revolution'<sup>9</sup> (1) as it was defined then by leading historian Mihail Roller<sup>10</sup>, has chronologically overlapped with the 'Zhdanovshchina'<sup>11</sup> (2).

---

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

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

<sup>11</sup> Alexei Kojevnikov, "Games of Stalinist Democracy: Ideological Discussions in

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

once Zhdanov himself had died<sup>14</sup>, the 'Zhdanovshchina' has rapidly extended to a number of natural sciences, highly relevant from an ideological point of view in the context of the early Cold War, such as biology, modern genetics<sup>15</sup> and quantum physics<sup>16</sup>. In fact, by 1951 the Soviet elites were confident enough to proclaim major ideological achievements in no less than five<sup>17</sup> distinctive scientific branches: philosophy (1947), biology (1948), linguistics (1950), physiology (1950) and political economy (1951). According to one scholar<sup>18</sup>, the attacks against modern physics, carried out during the same period, should not be neglected either.

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

represent the future of mankind. Its most progressive representative was the USSR<sup>20</sup>, a country who was guiding its policies through a permanent inspiration from the only true scientific worldview – the Marxist-Leninist theory interpreted by Stalin. This one and only ‘scientific philosophy’ “provided the foundation for the ideology that underpinned the state and society”<sup>21</sup>.

In this new postwar political and ideological framework, the functions of Soviet writers, artists, philosophers, scientists, historians and economists have undertaken a radical change<sup>22</sup>, able to transform the basic essence of these various professions: in Zhdanov’s view, their mission was to produce a new and distinctive type of Soviet science, culture and philosophy, not only non-Western in its basic features, but even superior and opposed to the Western traditional system of values. Thus, in order to accomplish this groundbreaking task, artists, scientists, philosophers and historians, organized into a highly disciplined ‘ideological front’, were to engage themselves into a war-like ‘ideological battle’ against all Western non-communist ideas, values, philosophical ideas, sciences and arts. Although the origins of this phenomenon can be traced back to the 1920s and 1930s, when it started to take shape, in the postwar it has reached its climax. In that period, “philosophy was not an intellectual process but a means of inculcating the state ideology in whatever form it might assume. This indeed was true of all the humane sciences.”<sup>23</sup> In Zhdanov’s own words, an efficient ‘philosophical front’, for instance, should be designed to function in these terms:

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

---

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

<sup>21</sup> Ethan Pollock, *op. cit.*, p. 3

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

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

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

Drawing his ideas from his Soviet colleagues, Romanian historian and ideologue Mihail Roller<sup>25</sup> has argued as early as 1948 that history-writing was not just a simple discipline like any other, but pure ideological activity. For him, not taking full control over national history-production from the very beginning of the new Romanian popular democratic regime, would have permitted the "class enemy" to master a very dangerous "weapon against the working-class."<sup>26</sup> For Romanian historian-activists of those days, "scientific, objective truth can be respected and presented only from the basis of the working class' worldview [...] only by regarding history as a weapon in the service of the fight of the the working class."<sup>27</sup> These anti-Western, anti-'cosmopolitan', anti-'objectivist' and anti-'bourgeoise' ideas, inspired by Andrei Zhdanov, had been most clearly exposed and systematized during Romanian High Stalinism in 1949, in a text authored by Leonte Răutu, chief of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the Central Committee of the RWP, bearing the title *Against the bourgeoisie cosmopolitanism and objectivism in social sciences*<sup>28</sup>. For Răutu<sup>29</sup>, too, just as for Zhdanov and Stalin<sup>30</sup>, a truly objective scientific knowledge of the social world could only be reached by appropriating the perspective of the working class. In this pure, primary Leninist view<sup>31</sup>, one cannot understand *reality-as-it-is* if one is not animated by a strong party-spirit. The party-spirit or party-mindedness manifested in sciences (especially in social sciences), conducive to the imposition of ideological uniformity, is the essence of Lenin's influential 'партийность' principle.

---

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

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

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

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

<sup>28</sup> Leonte Răutu, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-257.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 216-218.

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

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



In order to organize a disciplined 'historians' front', capable of waging a war with both foreign and domestic enemies, Romanian communist political elites needed to carry on a radical process of structural change, a process which, during 1948-1949, has been doubled by massive purges of the Romanian field of historians. Chronologically, the universities and their academic staff were the first to witness the attack, as early as 1947, when a series of laws and decrees both organized their new structures, and established their personnel lists<sup>32</sup>. To illustrate the dimension of this phenomenon, it is sufficient to mention that from the total number of academics hired at the Bucharest University in 1945, only about 10% were still professionally active<sup>33</sup> in 1948-1949.

In addition, in the summer of 1948, another set of decrees have dismantled not only the Romanian Academy, but also the entire network of history-production institutions and their scientific journals. From that moment onwards, the whole national historical research started to be planned, coordinated and strictly supervised by this institution which, according to the law, had become a 'state institution' subordinated directly to the Council of Ministers<sup>34</sup>. The system of planned science has replaced traditional free research, rejected as an "anarchy which permitted initiatives and personal fantasy to choose the problem[s], making impossible the solving of fundamental problems"<sup>35</sup>.

Because this phenomenon of 'breaking through' Romanian historical discipline after 1948 has been discussed in depth after 1989, and a consistent body of scholarly literature related to this topic has been produced since then<sup>36</sup>, I will limit myself here only to highlight what I

---

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

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

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

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

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

believe to be the most significant feature of the newly established 'historians' front': all the members composing it have suddenly converted themselves into both state employees *and* political activists. Thus, during this period, historians – and generally intellectuals – have become more dependant on the (socialist) state than ever before in modern history, just like their Soviet fellows<sup>37</sup>.

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

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

---

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

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

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

On November 17, 1954, the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the CC of the RWP was organizing another meeting<sup>39</sup> with a significant number of representatives from the 'historians' front'. As anyone can easily observe by just reading the transcript of the discussions which had taken place then, the very phrase 'historians' front' occurs no less than seven times in the text. This time again, most of the Romanian historians were speaking bolshevik.

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

Approximately a year later, the 'historians' front' seems to have temporarily disappeared from official political vocabulary. In December 1955, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, when addressing the 2nd congress of the RWP, had explicitly set a new major task for historians - namely, to produce another marxist-leninist synthesis of national history<sup>41</sup>. In referring to them, Dej talked about 'our historians' and our 'historical science', not mentioning even once the Zhdanov-inspired formulae of 'ideological front' or 'historians' front'. No doubt, as it is now evident, by 1955 the Romanian 'historians' front' itself had started to undertake a slow but significant process of internal change. Because this phenomenon has already been thoroughly analyzed by now<sup>42</sup>, I am not going to discuss its implications here. I am only emphasizing the fact alone.

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

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

symptomatic title *For a Consistent Application of Marxist-Leninist Theory in Historical Research*, the material represented a direct reaction<sup>46</sup> developed by a number of Stalinist historians against the recently appointed director of the Academy's Institute of History in Bucharest, Academician Andrei Oțetea, and his critique of Solomon Știrbu's latest book<sup>47</sup> (a young dogmatic hardliner raised by Roller in the first half of the fifties). In a radical parlance, the unnamed authors of the editorial were rejecting once again not only the "rotteness of the bourgeoisie regime"<sup>48</sup> but also, just like Răutu in 1949, the "bourgeois objectivism, which was manifested recently in different works of our historians"<sup>49</sup>. While enumerating the unprecedented achievements of Romanian marxist-leninist science of history together with historians' personal shortcomings, the authors have avoided to use the 'historians' front' phrase, at the same time limiting themselves only to reassert the all-conquering power of the marxist-leninist theory in historical research and the righteousness of the 'cultural revolution' conducted by the party<sup>50</sup>. This particular editorial has been considered (*id est*, proclaimed), during the following years, a very "precious guideline" for Romanian historians<sup>51</sup>.

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

---

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

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

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

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>54</sup> Andi Mihalache, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

important one, the so-called 'leading role of the party' in all spheres of life, has been repeatedly enunciated: for instance, in May 1967, writing about the most important tasks facing the RCP at that moment, the Romanian dictator has clearly stated that "there must not exist even a single field of theoretical thinking and activity of spreading ideas where the party spirit does not make its strong presence felt"<sup>55</sup>. In fact, by just studying his 'theoretical' contributions published during the first years of his rule, one might rightly conclude that Nicolae Ceaușescu *has never given up the basic premises of marxist-leninist ideology*. In fact, he has always viewed ideological problems in Leninist patterns of understanding<sup>56</sup>. Taken together, Ceaușescu's speeches from July and November 1971 clearly mark a shift of priorities and an increased preoccupation towards issues related to culture, education and ideology although, as Kenneth Jowitt has noted, they never become truly "equal in status with industrialization and social change, but [they have been] become increasingly significant at this point in time since it affects the regime's ability to enhance its capacity to direct the continued development of Romanian society."<sup>57</sup>

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

---

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

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

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

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

'cosmopolitanism' and the West as well). Just like Răutu and Zhdanov<sup>59</sup> in their times, Ceaușescu too has emphasized in the same speech the fact that Romanian society recognizes only a *single* true philosophy<sup>60</sup> – the marxist-leninist one, arguing that:

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

On the same occasion, borrowing phrases from the Stalinist vocabulary, RCP's leader has also condemned the 'bourgeois mentality'<sup>62</sup> which, in his opinion, has started to manifest in cultural life, at the same time affirming the right of the party to intervene in *every* field of human activity, even in theater and music<sup>63</sup>. His intention was evident: a more rigid ideological control exercised by the party apparatus over all national cultural matters.

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

---

<sup>59</sup> Leszek Kołakowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 91-105.

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

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

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

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



The last issue of *Studii. Revistă de istorie* edited in 1971 was opening with an unsigned editorial article<sup>65</sup> full of recommendations and instructions for historians, grounded upon the speeches and proposals which Nicolae Ceaușescu has made during the summer and autumn of the same year. This editorial was the first one to be published since Ceaușescu has acceded power, and it inaugurated a series of authoritative articles which will ritualistically demand the fulfillment of potentiality through a thorough application of the 'marxist-leninist' theory in history-production. Such articles will appear increasingly more often, especially after 1975.

Between 1971 and 1975 the RCP's central structures have made considerable efforts in order not only to 'creatively develop' problems of theory and ideology, but also to redefine the legislative framework into which cultural institutions were functioning<sup>66</sup>. Both processes were clearly intended to bring the field of cultural production under a more rigid political control. The Ceaușescu version of marxist-leninist philosophy has been codified in the pages of the first Constitution of the party adopted in December 1974 - a document which has started to be elaborated by an ideological commission as early as July 1972 under Ceaușescu's direct supervision<sup>67</sup>. Judging by the reactions generated by its adoption, the party's program has become, soon after, an ideological landmark<sup>68</sup> in cultural matters and especially in those intellectual fields ideologically most sensitive - philosophy, political economy and history.

In concrete terms, the set of the ideologically-shaped laws and decrees promulgated during the same time frame have had the same purpose, namely, to impose a firmer control over national cultural production in order to reestablish a highly disciplined 'ideological front'. RCP's efforts were intended to give effect to Stalinist metaphors and figures of speech such as 'ideological front' or 'historians' front' by operating a thorough centralization of national history-production<sup>69</sup>.

---

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

<sup>66</sup> Cristian Vasile, *op. cit.*, pp. 157-163.

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

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

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

One of the most significant legal change has been introduced by the State Council's Decree no. 121 from March 18<sup>th</sup>, 1970<sup>70</sup>. This act has established and regulated the functioning of a new major institution – the Academy of Social and Political Sciences (ASPS) which, according to the law, was being directly subordinated to the Central Committee of the RCP. Its basic features were similar to those held by the old Romanian Academy up to that moment – in the first place, the planning and coordination of scientific research in humanities and social sciences<sup>71</sup> on a national scale. Starting with the same date, 17 of the Academy's research institutes were subordinated to the ASPS (*id est*, to the Romanian Communist Party<sup>72</sup>). According to the *Encyclopedia of Romanian Historiography* published in 1978, at that time the ASPS was coordinating the main research institutes, centers and laboratories from Bucharest and also those from the most developed cities of the country (Bacău, Braşov, Cluj-Napoca, Constanţa, Craiova, Iaşi, Oradea, Sibiu, Târgu-Mureş and Timişoara).

After the ASPS has been established, in 1974 historical research institutes have reintroduced collective work plans validated through research contracts concluded between the research institutes and the ASPS with the aim to capitalize history-production<sup>73</sup>. As well, the Stalinist principle of “collective responsibility”, a medieval one in fact<sup>74</sup>, has also been introduced at the same time. In order to fulfill their individual work plan, historians had to produce works circumscribed to documents prepared in advance. The emphasis was thus put primarily on the amount of work carried out by historians, and not on their scientific relevance, impact or intrinsic quality. As a consequence, a relatively large share of articles, studies and even books written by them

---

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

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

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

<sup>73</sup> Gabriel Moisa, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

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

remained unpublished<sup>75</sup> once the plan has been fulfilled. Basically, following the establishment of the new political 'academy' in 1970, scientific research in humanities, social and political sciences has been taken away from the Romanian Academy and entered directly under the control of the superior party institutions.

After scientific institutes have been subordinated to the ASPs, the role and prestige of the 'old' Academy has begun to gradually decrease, even if, on July 10, 1985, Ceaușescu was elected its full member, and simultaneously its honorary president<sup>76</sup>. In fact, after 1970 the Romanian Academy has entered into a progressive decline, visible from multiple angles. For instance, this phenomenon can be exemplified statistically only by analyzing the evolution of the number of its members between March 1974 (when the last elections of new members has taken place) and 1989 (the year of the collapse of the communist regime). During this period of 15 years, there has not been chosen even a single new member (except for Nicolae Ceaușescu), although 129 academicians have died in the meantime: from a total number of 228 full and correspondant members the Academy has had back in 1974, in May 31, 1989 it was left with only 99<sup>77</sup>.

The year 1975 is also highly relevant from yet another point of view. Soon after the closing of RCP's 11th Congress, the Political Executive Committee of its CC has issued a decision to form a party and state commission charged with the editing of a new national history treatise<sup>78</sup>. In fact, the real stake behind this decision to produce another massive academic work was the reaffirmation of the principle of collective work and of the system of planned science, two fundamental ideas clearly expressed in 1976 during the first congress of political education and socialist culture<sup>79</sup>.

---

<sup>75</sup> Apostol Stan, *op. cit.*, pp. 319-320.

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

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

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

<sup>79</sup> *Congresul educației politice și al culturii socialiste*, București, Ed. Politică, 1976.

RCP's leadership tendencies to extend and accentuate its control over the entire field of historians have also manifested through its efforts to concentrate historians' work in order to produce a number of four massive synthesis capable of reflecting the new historiographic canons pushed forward by political power: a treatise of military history of the Romanian people, a general history of Romanians in ten volumes, a treatise of universal history in six volumes and a treatise for the history of the RCP in five volumes. A document kept in the archives of the Propaganda and Agitation Department of the CC of the RCP, dating from May 21, 1980, details the stage of each project<sup>80</sup>, and it also enumerates another set of eight great projects which should have been completed as soon as possible – a history of the Romanian language (six volumes), a history of Romanian literature (six volumes), a history of the international communist movement, a history of the international antiimperialistic movements, a history of education in Romania (four volumes), a history of Romanian scientific and technical thought (four volumes), a history of Romanian law and a history of Romanian philosophy (each of them in two volumes).

Of all these projects meant to reflect the place occupied by historical research in Romania only a few have materialized, most of them recording major failures<sup>81</sup> even though, for example, the manuscript of the first volume of *History of Romanians* has been completed<sup>82</sup> at the end of 1978. The official history of the party, on the other hand, although it was completed in the winter of 1980 (in a single volume consisting of more than 700 pages), obviously, based upon the recommendations<sup>83</sup> made by the RCP program in 1974, has not been published ever, since Nicolae Ceausescu considered, without any further explanation, that its publication "is not possible"<sup>84</sup>.

---

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

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

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

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

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 40.

The 'centralization' and 'militarization' of Romanian historical field in late 1970s and early 1980s can also be traced by just analyzing the discursive practices adopted in the public space by both party officials and social agents (historians). In May 1980 for example, Nicolae Ceaușescu has organized a meeting with the most prominent historians of the day<sup>85</sup>. Most of them, while talking about themselves and their work, were referring to the 'historians' front', not forgetting that their profession was representing an important element on the 'ideological front'. Academician Ștefan Ștefănescu for instance, director of "Nicolae Iorga" Institute in Bucharest, has even highlighted the idea that "this double hypostasis of political activists and scientists blends perfectly into the investigative work of the Romanian people's past. Romanian historiography has a strong tradition of political activism."<sup>86</sup>

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

---

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

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 12-13.

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

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

however, was the “lagging behind” of the “theoretical activity, ideological, political and educational as against the productive forces”<sup>89</sup>, just as he did in 1971 (when he formulated the “July Theses”) or in 1976 (when he opened the first Congress of Socialist Culture and Education) or, more recently, in 1979, when he presented the CC report to the 12th congress of the party<sup>90</sup>. But this time, additionally, he set out a series of concrete proposals regarding the development of the political and ideological consciousness of the “masses”. One of them has explicitly highlighted the need to intensify the work in order to complete a new “history of the Romanian people in the spirit of dialectical and historical materialist world view”.

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 18.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 19.

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

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

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

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

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

---

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 25.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 26.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 25.



In accordance with the project of the decree that established its functioning, the CINH would have been managed by a Scientific Council consisting of 25 members (which, in turn, should have appointed an executive bureau, composed of 7 members, in order to coordinate the activities of the institution on a daily basis). The chairman of the Scientific Council would have acted as a director general. He was to be assisted by two Vice-Chairs of the Scientific Council (one of whom was secretary of Party organization and institution), a deputy director general and a scientific secretary. Both the two directors and scientific secretary were to be appointed by the National Committee for Science and Technology<sup>100</sup>.

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

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

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

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

---

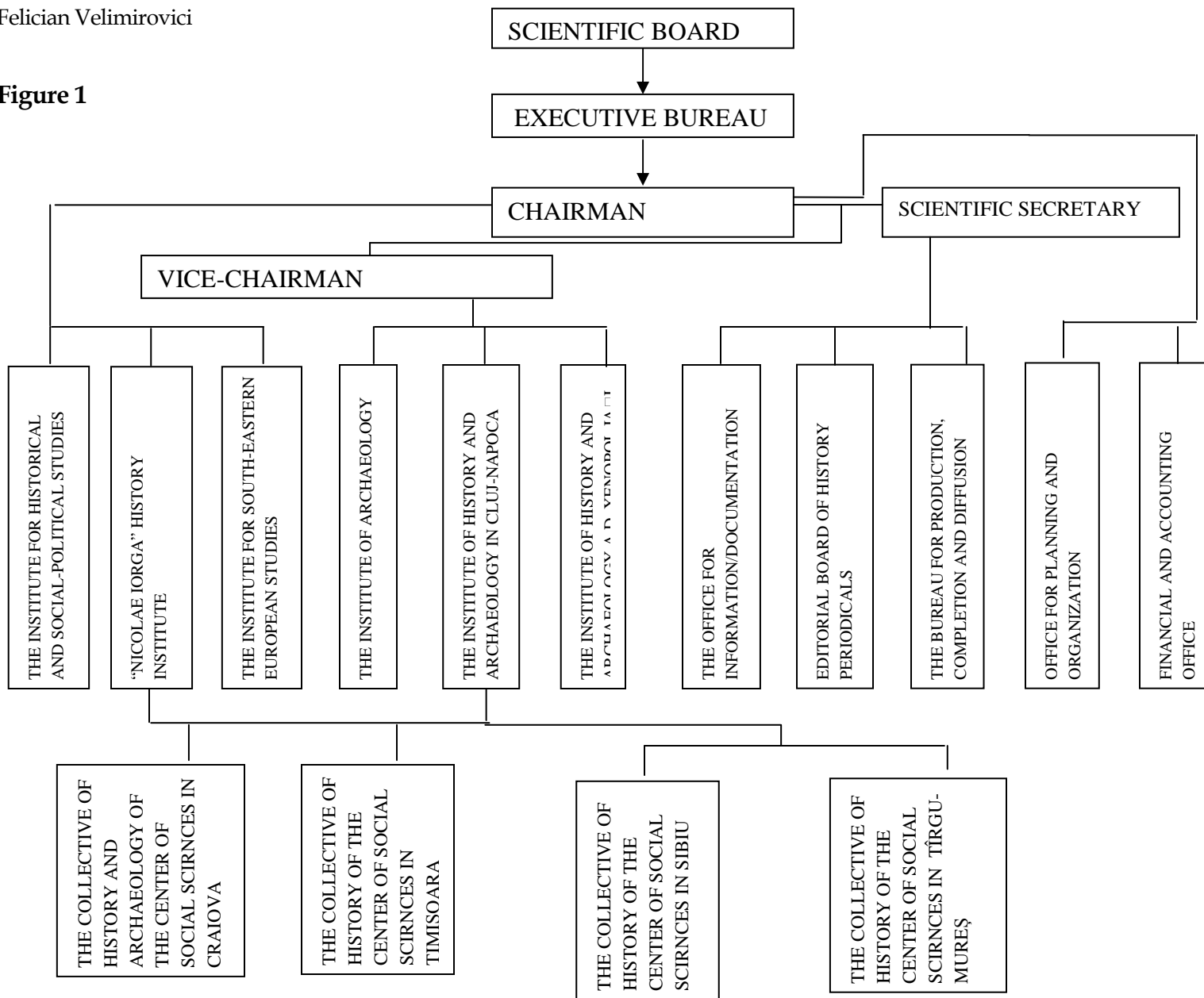
<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 29.

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

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

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

Figure 1



**Table 1**

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