The Cult of Personality in Communist Romania: From Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej to Nicoale Ceaușescu

Abstract

The study tries to find the roots and the evolution of the phenomenon called “cult of personality” in the history of communist Romania, from Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, to Nicolae Ceaușescu, the two leaders of the Romanian Communist Party. A research of this phenomenon is initiated in the hope of understanding the mechanisms causing the perverting of power and the stages of its degeneration/distortion. The paper is centered on the concept of “personalized power” and the role of nomenklatura in perpetuating this reality. The phenomenon is as important as it implies a wide range of political and social categories, who are involved, nolens volens, in this system. The study is a comparative one, indicating the difference in personalizing power from Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej to Nicolae Ceausescu. This approach helps the reader to dissociate between two different degrees of “corruption” that involves leadership. A comparative analysis, backed by observations on the evolution of the personality cult, highlights that it was an important factor in communist Romania. It also offers perspectives on understanding and disseminating the dynamics inside the Romanian democratic regime soon after 1989.

Keywords: cult of personality, patrimonialism, official biography, propaganda, psychobiography, communism, paternalism
I. Introduction

The field of psycho-politics is very ill-defined and approached by the Romanian scholars. Moreover, only three major works whose title contains the words “political psychology” have been published (Betea, 2001; Maricuțoiu, 2006; Betea and Dorna, 2008). However, to the extent that these studies exist, they ignore the psychological approach of the Romanian political leaders. On the other hand, psychological studies of any kind on Romanian communist leaders have been relatively scarce. Scholars of communism usually analyze facts, rather than the leaders’ personality. The explanation consists in the lack of archival documents on the Romanian history in the second half of the XXth century. Therefore, at present, there is little information on Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu’s personal patterns, which makes our topic very difficult to approach. Furthermore, both leaders are dead, so there is no theory-testing prediction to be done. Consequently, our study is interdisciplinary structured, trying to combine the factual history with political psychology and, further, with psychohistory. The material used consists of archival documents from The National Archives of Romania, which offer a new perspective on the insights of the political leadership in communist Romania. We also used the leader’s speeches and interviews, as well as various contemporary opinions on how their personality was perceived (memoires, writings of the time). However, the analysis of speeches has several limitations. First, all of them follow a certain pattern, whose main feature is what was called *la langue du bois*. Second, the communist leaders used to write a lot, which makes difficult the selection of the most important materials that could help our research.

The paper is centered on the idea that political and psychological insights coexists. A research of this phenomenon is initiated in the hope of understanding the mechanisms causing the perverting of power and the stages of its degeneration/distortion in the Romanian communist regime. A historical and psychological study on Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej is, taken alone, a large topic. However, the personal bonds between the two leaders makes necessary to follow the evolution of the Romanian communist regime through the analysis of two totally opposite leaders’ personality cult.

There hasn’t been a previous study of this kind. At first glance, however, such approach may seem difficult, due to the consequences that the communist practices have had on the dynamics inside the Romanian democratic regime soon after 1989. Moreover, two decades after the transition from communism began, the former leaders’ personality still remains a taboo. The explanation is that many ex-**apparatchiks** became the new democrat leaders. Moreover, the tendency to place the leading personality above the political parties has been a constant issue during the first ten years after 1989.

II. Theoretical Approach and Methodology

Many scientific works examine the strength and weakness of the methodologies used for political profiling and attempt to answer the question to which extent personality plays a role in politics (Goldenberg, 2011). The bibliography dedicated to profiling authoritarian leaders is very rich. According to an article published in 1993 (Baars and Scheepers), from 1952 to 1987, more than 1200 studies were published on this topic. Although many Western scholars approached this subject, they usually analyzed the personality traits and political behavior of two
important leaders of the XXth century: Hitler and Stalin. On the one hand, the methodology used by the scholars who addressed this topic is very useful for our research. On the other hand, however, they tend to maximize the impact of individual personalities upon larger events. This is actually a heritage from the Soviet manner to approach history. The tendency owes much to G. Plekhanov and his writings on the role of individuals in the making of history (Plehanov, 1956). On the contrary, the present study illustrates the role of cultural and political context that determines political leadership in communist Romania.

Psycho-politics is a recent field of study, thus the research is usually centered on profiling political leaders who are still alive. However, it has been demonstrated that personality can be objectively studied without direct access, by studying political leaders at a distance (Winter, 2005). In this regard, the present study analyzes the Romanian leaders’ personality cult from the psycho-historical and psycho-biographical point of view. In our approach, we are aware of Jacques Barzun’s (1974) statement about the difficulty in creating a psychobiography. The author asserts that everything the psycho-historian uses –his “tools”, his “method”, his “data”, is indirect and necessarily scant: the patient is absent, and the clues he may have left are not the product of chance. Consequently, our approach has several limitations: we can reconstitute facts only taking into account the consequences that the past policies have had on the recent history.

My research adds a historical analysis to the study of personality traits of the Romanian political leaders under communist regime. In particular, the paper focuses on the biographical data about Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu, the two leaders of the Romanian Communist Party between 1945 and 1989. The study is two-fold: first, the aim is to understand the psychological causes of their political behavior. Second, we will try to establish the connection between the leaders’ behavior and personality and the cult which gravitated around them. Accordingly, we subscribe to Anthony G. Greenwald’s (1980:603-604) definition of the “totalitarian ego”. Analyzing the fabrication and revision of personal history, in general, the author convincingly delineates that “ego, as an organization of knowledge, serves the functions of observing and recording/remembering personal experience. Therefore, it can be characterized as a personal historian”. Our research also subscribes to Miles Shore’s (1981:103) theory on the desideratum of a modern biographer. The author emphasizes what he calls “the personal myth” of the individual under investigation. According to Shore, “particular to personal myth, especially in those who lead others, is the role played by guiding ideas. Such ideals are an amalgam of the grandiosity and omnipotent fantasies characteristic of the earliest, primitive precursors of self-awareness and self-esteem”. The paper furthermore tries to discover the deep connections between leaders and the larger collective of which they are part. Accordingly, the research focuses on the development of the inner-Party relations between leader and his supporters and the implication of this “contract” on masses. In this regard, the communist leaders’ cult of personality can be understood studying the psychology of Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu’s followers, as the leader-follower dynamics in the two periods differed radically. At the same time, the paper argues that both the two leaders’ behavior or traits and their cult of personality depend in a high degree on the situation, so that the characteristics of their personality and its *mise en place* (the cult) vary with the situation. Our approach goes even further and tries to find the degree of match between the Party leaders and the template of the situation (Reinhardt:492-500).
Finally, it is worth to mention the mutual interaction between policy and ideology in communist Romania. Analyzing the politics developed under the Soviet regime, Robert Tucker (1956:455-483) observed that theoretical conceptions affect the making of policy and practical considerations affect the content of the ideology. Our analysis indicates that this phenomenon has also had various consequences on the leader’s behavior, respectively, on the dimension of his personality cult. For instance, Barber proposes that a president is best conceived of as “a human being like the rest of us, a person trying to cope with a difficult environment”. According to his analysis, “a president brings his own character, his own view of the world, his own political style” (Qualls, 1997:182-211). We can’t say the same thing about the Romanian communist leaders’ personality and political behavior, because it wasn’t their own view the one which shaped the politics. On the contrary, in communist Romania, both internal and external policies have been shaped according to the path imposed by the Soviet Union.

If in the case of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej we answered to our methodological questions using data from the fields of psycho-history and psycho-biography (Anderson, 1981:455-475), in the case of Nicolae Ceaușescu we used methods that have been developed to profile personality using psycho-biographical analyses and psychodiagnostic approach built upon the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed.). Thus, for the later, we used psychoanalytical theories of pathological narcissism and paranoia for the analysis of his personality. Our survey is permanently regarded in a strong contact with the leader’s personality cult, because this phenomenon is a reaction to the Romanian communist leader’s disorder, behavior, political leadership or personality traits, leading to the exuberance in pursuit of unrealistic and grandiose political projects. This is a work-in-progress paper, thereby our results are presented as speculative, not definitive.

III. The Making of the Personality Cult in Communist Romania – A Methodological Approach

The term “cult of personality” has been used for the first time by N. S. Khrushchev, in his famous “Secret Speech”, delivered to the delegates at the XXth Congress of the CPSU. He used the term kult’ lichnosti, translated as the “cult of the individual” or “cult of personality”, to explain the changes in the Soviet leadership system after 1934: the consolidation of Stalin’s personal dictatorship, the ensuing criminal abuses of power, and the extraordinary adulation of Stalin, which turned him into an omniscient and infallible being. Khrushchev’s term “cult of the individual” placed stress on Stalin’s psychology as an explanatory factor for what followed (Rees, 2004:4)

In understanding the specific traits of the individual’s cult, our analysis is based on Fromm’s basic axiom, which highlights that submission to authorities was a normal phenomenon in “bourgeois” societies. At first, one submits to the father as the authority, and later, to teachers and eventually, to the state. He interpreted this submissive attitude as an indication of weak “Ego” that needed to be compensated by a strong “super-ego” to repress unconscious “Id” drives (Baars and Scheepers, 1993:347). Indeed, it is often emphasized the “father metaphor” in explaining the relation between leaders and their followers (Moscovici, 1984). Accordingly, the features of the personality cult, could be outlined in terms of paternalism, which was
a central point in developing a patrimonialist system in communist Romania. According to the definition provided by the *Philosophy of Law Encyclopedia*, “paternalism” comes from the Latin *pater*, meaning “to act like a father, or to treat another person like a child” (Suber, 1999:632). In terms of politics, paternalism is usually understood as the interference with a person’s liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to the welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests, or values of the person being concerned (Dworkin, 1971:181). Applied to the Romanian realities of the second half of the XXth century, paternalism has been translated in terms of recognizing Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu as “Fathers of the People”. Thus, terms like patrimonialism, paternalism, and the cult of personality represent de keywords of our analysis.

The study is also based on Max Weber’s (1963:228-231) analysis on the types of authority. The German sociologist convincingly delineates that “patrimonialism, and, in the extreme case, sultanism, tend to arise whenever traditional dominance develops an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master”. He observes that under traditionalist domination, the most important posts are filled with members of the ruling family or clan. As a result, the leader’s power tends to accumulate an increasingly personified aspect. Moreover, patrimonialism assumes a personal leadership based on the loyalty for the leader, in exchange of material incentives or other rewards. Notwithstanding the above, it is important to mention that Max Weber’s analysis is based on the “ideal type of patrimonialism”. However, the author’s analysis represents a starting point for our approach.

We evaluated these realities integrating them in the area of the totalitarian movements of the XXth century. In this regard, we consider *practicism* a permanent feature. According to the Romanian scholar Petre Andrei (1997:9), practicism illustrates the greedy desire of gain, the limitation of the intellectual effort and the aspirations for a comfortable financial situation, actions determining “the degradation of the human being”. This equation reached its climax in communist Romania: these policies spread themselves from the nomenclature level, to the regime artists and, moreover, to the level of masses. From this point of view, the study aims to emphasize that these corrupt relations became a factor of life itself and finally, of the Romanian culture. Theoretically, it violates in practice the egalitarianism, which is a particular element of the communist ideology. The logical reaction of such a practice is the flourishing of the individual egoism of both the subject of the cult and his supporters, who understand this as a fundamental condition for maintaining themselves within the informal hierarchy (Gill, 1984:115-118).

Further, it is generally accepted that low levels of competition, either among bureaucrats or among those being regulated, increase the incentives for corrupt practices (Sandholtz, and Taagepera, 2005:111). At first glance, however, such assertion has many in common with Weber’s (1992:10) statement about “the vanity prizes of the demagogue’s adherents”. In some ways, the result could be identified in what Étienne de la Boetie (2001) called –in medieval times- “voluntary servitude”. Also could it be applied to the Romanian politics in the communist era: the constant value in the relationship between leader and followers was a sort of clientelism, whose translation could be seen in the corrupt relation of patron-client type (Birnkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002:3). It was a consequence of the leader’s symbolic action of transforming the Party and a significant part of the society in his own fief, just as masters acted in the medieval period with their vassals and domains. In this regard, Guenther Roth (1968:195) observes that patrimonial rulers endeavor to
maximize their personal control, being continually engaged in a struggle with their staff over ultimate control. Consequently -as he asserts- “patrimonial rulers resort to extrapatrimonial recruitment, which may retain the fiction of patriarchal subordination but may in fact be based on a feudal- contractual, bureaucratic- contractual, or merely personal relationship”. Therefore, the degenerative element in this equation is not the Party, but its composition, its members, who are at the leader’s disposal, being “subjugated”. In practice, this brings an important contribution to corrupting the system and creating a manufactured/spurious leader cult.

As the result of the argument so far, patrimonialism is a corrupt form of power due to clientelism, which implies the existence of unofficial connections between the leader and his clients/followers, which are primary based on mutual favors. At the same time, the relation takes place between actors with different power and status and it is based on the principle of reciprocity. Moreover, clientelist bonds are based on economic interest, more than on personal loyalty. Consequently, the leader’s followers are not guided by sincere feelings but by utilitarian considerations. These bonds can be understood as a sort of instrumental friendship or practicism as we have already defined it. However, our findings indicate that in the case of communist Romania it was not the utilitarianism alone that contributed to the perpetuation of the patron-client relations and, respectively, of the personality cult. Examining the post-revolutionary discourse of the ex-aparatchiks, we found that they couldn’t separate themselves from the personal bonds they had with their “masters”. Their mnemonic exercise highlights a sincere attachment, still present, to their leaders, Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej or Nicolae Ceaușescu (Brucan, 1992; Popescu, 1993; Gaston, 2000).

IV. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej –A Psychobiography

This chapter explores a number of dimensions and axes that are significant to the analysis of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej’s psychobiography. This section also presents the possible impact of his individual characteristics upon his political behavior, leadership style and the emergence of his personality cult. The research invokes both archival and different textual evidence (media, memoires) in depicting the major situations that shaped the leader’s behavior and cult. Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej let no diaries, and few witnesses to his inner life. Moreover, not a single biography was written about the former communist leader. The only information we have about his life and politics developed under his reign owe almost everything to the archival documents, as well as to his official biographies, published in the epoch. On the one hand, the official writings about his life are soaked with propagandistic details, making our research even more difficult. Many data from his biography are false, in order to generate myths, with whom the Leader was associated. On the other hand, the few witnesses who have already published their memoirs, bring a very subjective light on the First Secretary’s personality, behavior and political leadership. Moreover, as Ronald Grigor Suny (1991:48) observes, Bolshevik political culture was hostile to open personal expression and imposed on the leaders an enforced modesty. Thus, the question remains: which is the reality behind the myth?

The early official signs of power personalization in communist Romania date from 1947, when the Romanian Communist Party Publishing House edited the first official biography of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej:1947), text which contained a series of myths the Romanian leader was associated with. At the same time, the media references placed Gheorghiu-Dej in the forefront of events,
and a U. S. Intelligence report in 1949 testified that Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was “the most prominent member of the Romanian Communist Party at the time” (Blanton, 1997:136). Shortly after, the leader’s fiftieth anniversary, in November 1951, borrower the pharaonic dimensions of the other dominant communist leaders’ cult (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej Collection:703). But what made it possible? Who was actually Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej?

He was born on November 8, 1901 in Bârlad, a city in the North-East of Romania. His official biographies are very poor in details regarding his parents. His father is said to have been a poor industrial worker. Consequently, all the money he earned had to be spent on food. According to the text, due to the food shortages, in Gheorghiu-Dej’s mind grew up the hatred against exploiters. Therefore, when he was eleven, even though he didn’t graduate but the first three primary classes at school, he started to be a daily worker at different factories. At the age of fifteen and a half, he became a railway electrician at “Steaua Română” factory, in Moineşti (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej Collection:8). Consequently, as his biography underlines, even though he wanted to continue his studies, it was not possible, because he was constrained to work for having something to eat. However, he used to read a lot. These are actually the only things we really know about his childhood. The other references to his life use to present a Gheorghiu-Dej who is already eighteen years old. Thus, taking into consideration that the first several years of life are crucial to the development of healthy self-esteem, what do we actually learn from these few details on his childhood?

First, it is nothing stated about the existence of certain conflict moments within his family, thereby, using only the information from this propagandistic text, one may not admit the existence of the Oedip complex. On the other hand, the fact that Gheorghiu-Dej left home for work at the age of eleven, give rise to some interesting questions concerning the real reason which determined this action. In our opinion, at least two motives could be identified. Firstly, it might be possible that his father didn’t work enough so he wasn’t able to feed his family. As a consequence, Gheorghiu-Dej had to confront life very early, thus he begun working, even though he liked at school. On the other hand, the second version is more likely to have happened: the fact that Dej’s family didn’t have enough money to feed him is a reality, indeed. However, they could have sought to find a certain method to feed an eleven year old boy. But, the same as many other young boys of his age who didn’t like to study at school, he had to start working. Our opinion is also strengthened by the data found about his grades at school. Thus, Gheorghiu-Dej didn’t abandon school because he had to, but he started to work because he didn’t want to continue his studies anymore. Then why does his official biography highlight his love for studying, his love for reading? We may understand it as an indicator of a certain complex which developed in the case of Gheorghiu-Dej later on. As we could observe from different letters written by him (Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej Collection:173; 184; 185; 219) in the 1930s, he didn’t have solid knowledge of Romanian grammar and he was doing many mistakes in his writings, as well. This became a genuine complex after 1944 visavis the other important leaders of the Party, who had a high degree of education, who even studied abroad. It is known the case of Lucreţiu Pătrâşcanu, a very appreciated communist lawyer, who has been removed from power soon after 1944 and even murdered later on (Betea, 2001).

On the other hand, the fact that he had to work at a young age let a certain footprint on his future personality. He became tougher, and more relentless regarding the others he had everyday contact with. However, Gheorghiu-Dej was not the single
case of a child who begun to work at a fragile age. Most of the peasant and workers’ children at the beginning of the XXth century didn’t finish their studies because it wasn’t of great value for them and their future. Consequently, they began working. This could represent the shutter moment regarding Gheorghiu-Dej’s hatred towards those who had money. Later on, this incipient feeling was transformed in hatred against the bourgeois, seen as a “dangerous” class. These images are actually relevant for all the communist leaders’ childhood, because they follow the same pattern (Post, 2007:1-11). Therefore, it is a certainty in the fact that Gheorghiu-Dej cultivated the image of a lower-class child rising to the height of political power. The image contributed to his popularity, as the major part of the Romanian population of the time consisted in peasants and workers.

According to his official biography, Gheorghiu-Dej’s first contacts with the revolutionary movement began when he was at the age of eighteen. He finally joined the Communist Party of Romania in 1930. A railway electrician by trade, he was arrested for taking part in the Griviţa Strike of 1933 and sentenced to prison in the same year. In 1936 he was elected to the Party’s Central Committee and became leader of the prison faction of the Party. He was imprisoned for more than seven years, which had a profound consequence on his future personality. It is the prison the place where the future nucleus of the communist group who will take power after 1944 was formed. Gheorghiu-Dej became the leader of the communists imprisoned and he was recognized unanimously in that position. We can also confirm this aspect using the archival material, which covers declarations of different prisoners of the time. Moreover, even though he was imprisoned, he didn’t lose contact with the outside leaders of the Party: he received many letters, food and newspapers from his friends outside. A sociological study realized by one of the Party’s members at the time, analyzing Dej supporters’ behavior in prison, demonstrates the creation of a leading mechanism personified by an indisputable leader. He argues that Gheorghiu-Dej’s position was in fact based on authentic legitimacy (Câmpeanu, 2002:51-68), which has undoubtedly been perpetuated after 1945. The archival documents strengthen this argument: the evidences indicate that Gheorghiu-Dej had the tendency to surround himself with people he met in prison only (CC al PCR- Cancelarie, 78/1948:1-2).

The propaganda machine highlights the General Secretary’s role in the riots organized by workers in February 1933. Actually, Gheorghiu-Dej was presented as the main leader of the riots. The reality, however, is different. Indeed, Gheorghiu-Dej was one of the most important personalities of the moment, but he has been arrested shortly before the beginning of the stikes, thus he couldn’t have had the most important role in the events. The central role belongs to other figures, like Constantin Doncea or Constantin Petrescu. So why did the propaganda machine present him as the central hero? The answer is that after 1944, Gheorghiu-Dej had to legitimate his position within the Party so he appealed the February 1933 moment. However, it is at present known that he has always been frightened by the authority and popularity enjoyed by the real organizers of the riots. Therefore, in 1958 they have been removed from power, as they were undermining his authority. Apart from the myth of the young revolutionary, Gheorghiu-Dej also benefit of other mythical images, which changed according to the situations. Among these, were the Educator, the Worker, The Father and Brother.

Little details about Gheorghiu-Dej’s personal life we learn from his biography. He was married for several years with a woman with whom he had two daughters. His wife left him short after he was imprisoned, which could be framed as a genuine
trauma for Gheorghiu-Dej. Gheorghe Apostol (Bălaeţ, 2010) says, in his memoires, that “his wife was very beautiful and Gheorghiu-Dej loved her much”. After 1944, he was never seen together with other women, contrary to Nicolae Ceaușescu, who actually ruled the country together with his wife, Elena. It could be interpreted as a sign of force, as Gheorghiu-Dej was really perceived as pater familiae. Gheorghiu-Dej loved his daughters. He was the one that, after he got out of prison, raised his girls. Given this reality, one may consider that Gheorghiu-Dej was actually loved by his parents. Our theory is underlined by other opposite cases. For instance Mao, turned out to be a harsh and distant father to his own children because he internalized his father’s values and attitudes. The same did Stalin with his sons. In case of Mao and Stalin, none of their surviving children were present at their deathbed. In the case of Gheorghiu-Dej, the images of the period presented his grieving daughters crying at his catafalque. Nicolae Ceaușescu had another faith. He was shot but the historical data allows us to conclude that if he died of natural death, his children would have mourned him with great honors.

When writing their memoirs after 1989, all Gheorghiu-Dej’s supporters kept the official version of their leader’s biography. Not a single fact is denied. Their attitude underlines, in our opinion, the power his personality emanated in the epoch and his strong position inside the Party. One of his close collaborators, Gh. Apostol, shows that the Romanian communist leader benefit of genuine respect not only inside the Party but also outside this organism and abroad, as well. The General Secretary is usually presented as very popular, human, and modest. Indeed, Gheorghiu-Dej didn’t have the megalomania of Nicolae Ceaușescu but it is explainable. First, until the 1960s, in communist Romania the cult of the Soviet leaders prevailed. Gheorghiu-Dej had to be a faithful disciple of Lenin and Stalin, thus his cult was reduced on purpose. Thereby, the dimension of the phenomenon had certain limits, imposed by the Light which was coming from the East. On the other hand, Gheorghiu-Dej’s cult was manufactured, thus it couldn’t be taken into account a real charisma in his case. Only beginning with the 1960s, when the defiance of the Soviet Union produced, he became both a popular and a populist leader.

In the 1960s, however, the newspapers of the time succeeded in fabricating a totally different image of the First Secretary, who was regarded as a populist leader. Besides the fact that newspapers presented himself in permanent contact with the people, his visits in different industrial sites of the country were also highlighted: at “Electroputere” Plants in Craiova, at Hundoara Still Mill, at Galați, Constanța, in Suceava, Botoșani and so on (Scânteia, 4537, 4618, 4645, 4657). Thus, one may take into consideration a change in the image of Gheorghiu-Dej, as he was presented strongly involved in “the socialist construction of the country”. The visits undertaken by him prefigure those of Nicolae Ceaușescu in the 1970’s, and they could be considered a constant of the 1960s. Indeed, media no longer presented the crowd cheers or the emotion caused by his public appearance. His stature has been artificially lowered. For instance, the Party leader was portrayed as an ordinary man, who was participating to the “socialist reconstruction” of the country together with the Romanian people.

The death of Gheorghiu-Dej has been the last but the most glorious moment of his personality cult. A great number of poems and, respectively, themes have been approached by both the regime poets and ordinary people. The dimension of his cult has been exacerbated in such a manner, that many common points between Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu may be identified. People composed thousands of poems in the honor of “the great man who has gone, the most glorious hero of the State” (Gh.
Similarly, there have also been identified connections between Gheorghiu-Dej and his “millenary mission” (Ibid, 5). At the same time, his eternity was imagined close to the greatest leaders of the Romanian medieval history: Vlad Țepeș, Ștefan cel Mare, Mihai Viteazul and Mircea cel Bătrân (Ibid, 30). The comparisons have gone more deeply so that Gheorghiu-Dej has been considered “the first great Romanian since Dromichetes” (Ibid, 47). Although these metaphors prefigure those used by the poets in shaping Nicolae Ceausescu’s legitimacy, the difference is that in the case of Gheorghiu-Dej, they have never been published. It is worth to mention the phenomenon of spurious charisma which has been manufactured by the artisans of the Romanian propaganda around Gheorghiu-Dej. The process was actually an artifact of the press, which created the false appearance of charisma in the absence of a genuine adulation. This phenomenon, which consists in the combination of glory-hungry leaders and state control of the media, was observed by Robert C. Tucker (1997:389): the historian gives the example of the pseudo-cult of Stalin, which evolved in the Soviet Union during the 1930s.

Then, is the Gheorghiu-Dej before 1944 different from the leader after 1944? It is unlikely, because he did many efforts to prepare his place at the time he was imprisoned (see the removal of Ștefan Foriş in 1944). Moreover, all the comrades who have been close to him in the prison received important places in the Party hierarchy or State. Among them was Nicolae Ceaușescu, who has been Gheorghiu-Dej’s cell-mate for a year. The present historiography usually refer to Gheorghiu-Dej’s personality using terms like “Byzantinism”, “cruelty” or “cunning”. However, most of his supporters underline the fact that responsible for the Romanian policy during Gheorghiu-Dej was not his personality, but the social and political context of the time. According to the data we have, one may conclude that Gheorghiu-Dej was a very intelligent and able leader. Not surprisingly, he was called, in the period, “the Fox from the Carpathians” or “Machiavelli of the Balkans”. He knew when to make peace with his enemies and when to remove them from power. This is actually the reason why he succeeded to remain at the head of the Romanian Communist Party for almost two decades, which makes him the most longest-serving leader in the Eastern Europe. Of course, his experience and role inside the Romanian communist movement before 1944 had its core place in shaping Gheorghiu-Dej’s political personality, even though his followers usually avoid recognizing it. Above all, his political behavior and cult of personality have been shaped by the complexes his personality developed in childhood and as a young adult. However, even though he has been imprisoned for eleven years he continued to believe in the same cause: Communism

V. Nicolae Ceaușescu: Mental Disorder and Cult

Many biographies of Nicolae Ceaușescu have already been written (Ianoși, 1993; Kunze, 2002; Paraschiv, 2007). His personality and the type of internal and external policies developed under his reign incited many Romanian and Western historians. However, unlike the other works on his personality, our analysis of Nicolae Ceaușescu uses psychoanalytical theories on pathological narcissism and paranoia (DSM IV, 1994) to examine the behavioral pattern of Nicolae Ceaușescu and the emergence of his personality cult.

Nicolae Ceaușescu was born on January 26, 1918 in the village of Scornicești, Olt County. He moved to Bucharest at the age of eleven to work in factories, then
joined the illegal Communist Party of Romania in early 1932 and was first arrested, in 1933, for street fighting during a strike. He was arrested again, in 1934, first for collecting signatures on a petition protesting the trial of railway workers and twice more for other similar activities. These arrests earned him the description “dangerous communist agitator” and “active distributor of communist and anti-fascist propaganda” on his police record. He was captured and imprisoned in 1936 for two years at Doftana Prison for anti-fascist activities. While out of jail in 1940, he met Elena Petrescu, whom he married in 1946 and who would play an increasing role in his political life over the years. He was arrested and imprisoned again in 1940. In 1943, he was transferred to Târgu Jiu internment camp where he shared a cell with Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, becoming his protégé. After World War II, when Romania was beginning to fall under Soviet influence, he served as secretary of the Union of Communist Youth (1944–1945). Ceausescu’s father was the descendant of a family of shepherds. He was for a while mayor of Scornicești. Some people from Scornicești who knew their family claimed he used to beat his wife and children, while the Romanian media alleged that he was an alcoholic. Ceausescu’s mother was a very religious woman, and after his parents died, Nicolae Ceausescu ordered that a church be built in their memory in Scornicești; their portraits still adorn its walls.

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej died in March 1965: his physical and political death made his legacy be interpreted by his successors. However, it was during Gheorghiu-Dej the bases of patrimonialism have been set. As the regime has been perpetuated under the inspiration of a leader with higher aspirations, patrimonialism has taken more pronounced shapes. It seems all the more paradoxically as Nicolae Ceausescu formally detached from dejism, by public criticism against his mentor. However, as Nikita Khrushchev did in February 1956, Ceausescu pointed his criticism against dejism, and not against the communist system, as a whole. The 1968 Plenum was nothing but a “myth substitution” (Tismăneanu, 1995:50). As a consequence, Nicolae Ceausescu amplified his image of “socialist legality establisher”: Using an explanation given by the social psychologists, the power transmission from Dej to Ceausescu, could be explained appealing to the “father metaphor”: after droving him, the sons regretted him, thus each of them thought about replacing his memory with someone else (Moscovici, 1997:121). In fact, it is the transitional period from Dej to Ceausescu that explains the most accurately the patrimonial valences in communist Romania: it highlights the existence of a central parental figure who guides the followers towards the right communist path.

If until 1967, Nicolae Ceausescu kept the old dejist guard in their key-positions in the Party, things changed after 1968, when the new communist leader has created a mechanism for the promotion of his close collaborators (Marin, 2008:580). Consequently, a new elite has come to power. However, it didn’t represent a turnover in the course of the regime. On the contrary, the formal and informal institutional mechanisms have been perpetuated. Moreover, the history had to be changed and, in this regard, Nicolae Ceausescu erased Gheorghiu-Dej’s central place in the history of the Romanian communist movement of the inter-war period and he allocated to himself the core place: he became exclusive reference for both writers and historians. Ceausescu’s second decade was characterized by an increasingly brutal and repressive regime—by some accounts, the most Stalinist regime in the Soviet bloc. It was also marked by an ubiquitous personality cult, nationalism and a deterioration in foreign relations with the Western powers as well as the Soviet Union. Thus, analyzing the patterns of the new Ceausescu regime, this section concludes underlying that the Romanian First Secretary was afflicted by narcissistic and
paranoid personality disorder, which was responsible for the external shape embodied by his exacerbated cult of personality. Among the nine diagnostic criteria listed in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Nicolae Ceaușescu accomplishes five of the criteria. Thus, he could be diagnosed as a patient with narcissistic personality disorder. I will highlight the symptoms of Nicolae Ceaușescu and analyze them through the perspective of the manifestation of his personality cult.

First, he had a grandiose sense of self-importance. Short after the death of his predecessor, his image was omnipresent in the newspapers of the time. He constructed around himself the image of a popular leader, as he was visiting permanently various sites of the country, being in contact with people and asking about their needs. Moreover, Ceaușescu was greatly concerned about his public image. Not surprisingly, nearly all pictures presented him in his early 1940s. Romanian state television was under strict orders to portray him in the best possible light. Additionally, producers had to take great care to make sure Ceaușescu's height—he was 5 feet 5 inches tall—was never emphasized on screen. Therefore, the pictures which presented him close to other leaders taller than him were either modified, or not published. The stature of an individual is closely tied to his success, to his performance. Applied in politics, it could lead to various disadvantages, for instance the reduction of one’s authority at a certain point. To extrapolate, Szarkossy’s measures is a clear example on the importance of this issue. Not only Ceaușescu confronted this problem. Lenin, Stalin and even Mao felt inferior from this point of view. However, this shortcoming was limited through the iconography manufactured.

Second, he was preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, and so on. The architectural projects under his regime remain a standing proof. Likewise, contrary to his forerunner, Nicolae Ceaușescu seemed open to dialogue: his position regarding the invasion of Czechoslovakia, in August 1968, strengthen his power. He also enjoyed popularity at the international level. Therefore, the apparent thaw mislead many members of the Party and society. Initially, Ceaușescu became a popular figure in Romania and also in the Western World, due to his independent foreign policy, challenging the authority of the Soviet Union. In the 1960s, he eased press censorship and ended Romania's active participation in the Warsaw Pact (though Romania formally remained a member); he refused to take part in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact forces, and actively and openly condemned that action. He even traveled to Prague a week before the invasion to offer moral support to his Czechoslovak counterpart, Alexander Dubček (Cătănuș, 2005). Although the Soviet Union largely tolerated Ceaușescu's recalcitrance, his seeming independence from Moscow earned Romania maverick status within the Eastern Bloc. Nicolae Ceaușescu’s formal subordination to the Soviet Union must have caused discomfort. This characteristic amplified in the second part of the 1980s, when the tremendous theoretical and political divisions between the Romanian leader and M. Gorbachev erupted. Thereby, the question which rises is as followes: is Ceaușescu’s disobedience a consequence of his father banishing? From the psychoanalytical point of view, we may respond affirmatively to this question. Moreover, not a single Eastern European leader dared to follow the same path. On the other hand, however, one may also take into account his paranoia. This disorder was, in our opinion, the only one which determined his actions in the last part of his life. As mentioned earlier, he was frightened of a both capitalist and socialist encirclement, which could have plotted against his position at
the top of the party. According to different witnesses of the time, he actually saw enemies everywhere, not only insight the country, but also in the exterior.

Third, he required excessive admiration. After Ceausescu’s visits in North Korea and China and the “mini cultural revolution” of 1971, the veneration of Nicolae Ceaușescu also incorporated religious proportions: he was officially called “The Demiurge of the New Romania” and his biography has been completely manufactured (Cioroianu, 2004:46-55). These attributes of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s power bring a new light on the new characteristic of paternalism under his reign. Being recognized as the “Father of the People”, he has been identified as the primary source of the population’s welfare. Media presented him visiting working sites and the documentary movies of the time, always presented him when shaking hands and speaking to workers. Ceaușescu visited the People's Republic of China, North Korea, Mongolia and North Vietnam in 1971.

On 6 July 1971, he delivered a speech before the Executive Committee of the RCP. This quasi-Maoist speech, which came to be known as the July Theses, contained seventeen proposals. Among these were: continuous growth in the "leading role" of the Party; improvement of Party education and of mass political action; youth participation on large construction projects as part of their "patriotic work"; an intensification of political-ideological education in schools and universities, as well as in children's, youth and student organizations; and an expansion of political propaganda, orienting radio and television shows to this end, as well as publishing houses, theatres and cinemas, opera, ballet, artists' unions, promoting a "militant, revolutionary" character in artistic productions. The liberalization of 1965 was condemned and an index of banned books and authors was re-established. The Theses heralded the beginning of a "mini cultural revolution" in Romania, launching a Neo-Stalinist offensive against cultural autonomy, reaffirming an ideological basis for literature that, in theory, the Party had hardly abandoned.

Fourth, it is worth to mention his sense of entitlement, that is, unreasonable expectations of especially favorable treatment or automatic compliance with his expectations. The difference between Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu is that during the first, the existence of a cult for the Party members was possible and therefore, we may claim the bipolarity at this level. While, in the case of Nicolae Ceaușescu, his cult had monumental dimensions, making impossible the flourishing of a cult of the local elites. Moreover, party familiarization was so high, that a cult for his family members has developed, especially for his wife, Elena Ceaușescu. Likewise, if during Gheorghiu-Dej the party members received a broad collection of titles and medals, during Ceausescu’s reign, most of them have been offered to his family members. Moreover, not a single Party member received the same distinctions as Ceaușescu. As a consequence of this “‘new order”, the members of Ceausescu’s family have been installed in key-positions in the Party and State. His wife, Elena, was in charge of the Cadres Commission of the Party, supervising science and culture. His son, Nicu, was appointed both secretary of the Great National Assembly and general secretary of the Union of the Communist Youth. In fact nepotism was a general rule. It also developed in other communist countries such as Albania or Korea, for instance. Further, other signs of power personalization such as mass manifestations dedicated to him and his wife as well, generated a great but false enthusiasm among the Romanian people.

Fifth, his lack of empathy, his unwillingness to recognize or identify with the feelings and needs of the others. Especially in the 1980’s, people was starving, while Nicolae Ceaușescu did all his efforts to pay the external debts.
According to Derksen (1995:89-90), such disorder finally takes two forms: grandiosity and inferiority. Both have been characteristic for the Romanian leaders. However, in case of Nicolae Ceaușescu, we can speak about his personality cult in terms of his narcissistic personality. But how do we argue the presence of this phenomenon in the case of Gheorghiu-Dej? Indeed, only four of the nine criteria are accomplished by Gheorghiu-Dej, thereby one can’t confirm his disorder. However, we could identify a certain tendency for this disorder, which has also been reflected in the dimension of his cult. Specific for both leaders’ pathology was the co-existence of grandiosity, and inferiority. The first is generally perceived as a defense mechanism against the latter. In this regard, we may conclude that their cult of personality has been, from a certain point of view, a defense mechanism. However, it wasn’t pointed only to defending their inferiority, but it has also been used as a weapon against real or unreal enemies of the society, against any possible alternative to power. Ceaușescu was haunted by fear of disloyalty of the ranking leaders of the RCP and also of the plot organized by other countries against him. His last days are the most edifying in this sense. He feared the possibility of a *coup d'état*, therefore demanding fanatic loyalty from his supporters. He didn’t dialogued with them about the danger. On the contrary, he continued applying his policies and demanded completely faith in him. His paranoia amplified constantly in his last years of life.

According to DSM IV (1994:634-635), the essential feature of Paranoid Personality Disorder is a pattern of pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent. This pattern begins by early adulthood and is present in a variety of contexts. Individuals with this disorder assume that other people will exploit, harm, or deceive them, even if no evidence exists to support this expectation. They suspect on the basis of little or no evidence that others are plotting against them and may attack them suddenly, at any time and without reason. They often feel that they have been deeply and irreversibly injured by another person or persons even when there is no objective evidence for this. They are preoccupied with unjustified doubts about the loyalty or trustworthiness of their friends and associates, whose actions are scrutinized for evidence of hostile intentions. Because individuals with Paranoid Personality Disorder lack trust in others, they have an excessive need to be self-sufficient and a strong sense of autonomy. They also need to have a high degree of control over those around them. They are often rigid, critical of others, and unable to collaborate, although they have great difficulty accepting criticism themselves. They may blame others for their own shortcomings. They may be perceived as “fanatics” and form tightly knit “cults” or groups with others who share their paranoid belief systems. Finally, it is worth to mention that the nomenclaturists also created a cult around them, thereby the phenomenon spread from center to periphery.

**VI. Conclusions**

In general, communist leaders rule at least two times longer than presidents of a democratic state or prime ministers. Gheorghiu-Dej, for instance, has been the head of the State for no less than twenty years and Nicolae Ceaușescu for other twenty-five. Thereby, time gave them the opportunity to leave a consistent mark on the history of the XXth century Romania. The theoretical argument emerging from our research was directed towards a better understanding of certain aspects of the personality cult in communist regimes. Of course, Romania was not the sole case where the phenomenon developed and led to corrupt practices from top to bottom.
However, despite the common pattern of all the totalitarian regimes, our analysis developed a different way of interpreting the origins and evolution of the personality cult in the case of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Beginning with Gheorghiu-Dej, there has been a familiarization of the Party, inducted by the long-time relations between the leader and his supporters, by the longevity of the elites and the existence of family relations during Ceaușescu. Once the nomenclaturists have been changed, the relations between leader and Party members, as well as the patron-client bonds, modified themselves, but kept the same matrix. Therefore, the cult of personality served as psychological needs of leaders and their followers. For leaders, the adulation of followers was intoxicant and gave the individual a great sense of strength and power. The cult of personality has been used as a means of imposing order on a certain socio-cultural situation, as a means of regulating, controlling, and restoring the intimate structures and relations of the Romanian communist society. However, the people became the practitioners of the cult due to the existence of certain decisions taken from above. Thus, the “followers” mass subscribed to the official rules, being created a spurious cult of personality around Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu.
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