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PHD THESIS SUMMARY
***HISTORICAL LITERATURE REGARDING THE
ROMANIAN COMMUNIST REGIME
(1990-2015)***

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KEY TERMS: HISTORIOGRAPHICAL INVESTIGATION, POST-COMMUNISM, NEO-COMMUNISM, ANTI-COMMUNISM, ROMANIAN DISSIDENTS, WESTERN HISTORIANS, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL ELEMENTS, PERIODIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME, REAL SUBJECTIVITY, APPARENT OBJECTIVITY.

Selecting a research theme can be a difficult step in the context in which the related field is extremely comprehensive as the historiography of the communist regime in Romania. Since the 1990s, the memoirs, political histories, monographs and fragmentary studies on economic, social, religious aspects, whose authors are both Romanian and Western historians, entered the editorial circuit. Also during this period some of the books published prior to the fall of the communist regime, by Romanian dissidents, were re-edited. One of the main requirements was in this case the selection of the type of study, the chronological delimitation of the interval to be investigated and the application of triage criteria to determine the authors and titles to be analyzed.

The study considers historians who wrote a political history of the communist regime in Romania in the period 1990-2015 (or were republished in this interval), although the application of some classification principles led to the exceeding of the chronological limits by the acceptance of two authors who were published for the first time in the 1960s and 1980s and re-edited after the 1989 Revolution. After a brief introduction in which we present the motivation for choosing the theme, the objectives, the types of sources as well as the methodology, in the first chapter we identify the place of the communist regime in Romania in post-December historiography, then in the following chapters we appreciate the status of the intellectual during the communist regime in Romania, we identify the motivations of the Romanian communist regime's historian and we make a historiographical analysis of the historical literature on the regime, followed by conclusions.

Until now, there are no interpretations of the studies of the respective authors, although they are constantly quoted, being sometimes the foundation in the creation of new volumes about Romanian communism, or reviewed. In order to meet this need, we set 1989 as a point of reference and we started building from there, also regressing when the

situation required and setting up a mixed bibliography consisting of specialized volumes and periodicals in Romanian and in international languages (English and French). Webography, limited in size, was used only in cases where it provided information capable of adding context. However, the interviews of the designated authors were of great importance, contributing to a deeper understanding of both the text and the motivations of the historians, as well as the reviews written by the specialists. We could not, however, implement our intention to watch more media sources in the C.N.S.A.S. because the request was not processed until the completion of this study¹.

In general, the authenticity and credibility of the sources determines the validity of a study, but what gives it originality is the type of analysis applied, more precisely the methodology. Creating a system of interpretation is essential to achieving the main and secondary goals set. For this purpose, we applied historiographical, sociological and biographical research and qualitative and quantitative information processing, benefiting from investigative models applied to historical productions during the communist regime. We sought to delimit the context in which these papers were drafted and published, a classification of authors according to two coordinates: biographical motivations and professional determinations and the realization of a historiographical analysis (elements of shape and content).

1. THE POSITION OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN ROMANIA IN POSTDECEMBRIST HISTORIOGRAPHY. CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The first objective was partly achieved by determining the position occupied by the communist regime in Romania in post-December historiography. As we set the events of 1989 as reference points, we considered it necessary to detect an etymology of the phenomenon in order to distinguish the accepted interpretations among Romanian and Western historians, political scientists and sociologists (François Furet, Timothy Garton Ash, Jeff Goodwin, Lucian Boia, Vladimir Tismăneanu, Catherine Durandin, Dennis

¹Este vorba despre interviuri cu antropologul american Katherine Verdery, istoricul britanic Dennis Deletant și filmul *Dosarul meu de Securitate* regizat de N. Mărgineanu și produs de Agerfilm.

Deletant, Vladimir Pasti, Ruxandra Cesereanu).

Clarification of this issue was followed by a careful investigation of the post-communist historiographical environment. Taking advantage of the recommendations of the historical culture specialist Andi Mihalache, we succeeded in identifying the main historiography schools as well as the research directions of the representatives in the context in which, ten years after the Revolution, there was the question of the existence or absence of a reform in this environment. We considered it necessary to extend the research by monitoring the ideological confrontations of the specialists regarding the evolution of the historiographical approaches of the last twenty-five years because a great part related to the controversies of the study of the communist regime from both historical and historiographical perspective.

Following the association (in some cases) of the university centers with the historiography schools we have come into contact with names such as Pompiliu Teodor, Ioan-Aurel Pop, Sorin Mitu, Ovidiu Pecican, Doru Radosav, Lucian Nastasă and Toader Nicoară who have worked (or still work) in Cluj-Napoca. For Bucharest we have nominated Lucian Boia, Bogdan Murgescu, Mirela Luminița Murgescu or Constanța Vintilă Ghițulescu, and for Iași, Alexandru Zub, Andi Mihalache, Ștefan Gorovei, Florin Platon, Mihai Chiper, without assuming the necessity of a full list of representatives. We have not missed Oradea (Gabriel Moisa), Sibiu (Dan Iacob, Mihaela Grancea), or research centers in Alba Iulia (Iacob Mârza, Laura Stanciu), Târgu Mureș (Cornel Sigmirean, Corina Teodor) and Craiova.

2. ROMANIAN INTELLECTUALS DURING THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN ROMANIA

In order to better understand the present, we considered appropriate a reconsideration of the past, necessary for a lecturer who, due to age, did not feel the constraints of the regime. Some of the Romanian authors selected for this study lived and wrote as dissidents during the communist regime and some of the Western historians carried out study stages in the 1960s and 1970s, in Romania. The steps of ideological control, the impact of censorship and repression as well as the relationship between

emigration, dissent and exile were relevant for identifying motivations in the drafting of volumes. We tried to identify the anti-intellectual dimension of official policy as Florin Müller theorized and how the liberalization and repression functioned, starting from a periodization proposed by historian Gabriel Moisa².

The establishment of these social coordinates creates the necessary context for the achievement of the following objective, which has materialized in the form of a predominantly biographical study, because the proposed historiographical analysis implies not only the investigation of the text (content and shape) but also the context (the motivation for writing).

3. THE HISTORIANS OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN ROMANIA BETWEEN BIOGRAPHICAL MOTIVATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL CONCERNS

The first step was to establish selection criteria that would allow the identification of titles relevant to our approach and the achievement of a classification whose boundaries were considered permeable for veracity. We have identified two categories of authors and established the related typology.

In the case of Romanian historians, dissidents in the country or in exile, we considered revelatory to determine the motivations, to review the ways of manifestation of the opposition, the relation with the nomenclature and the impact of the contact with a democratic West. The work of the foreign authors was monitored from the perspective of the evolution of interest for the Romanian space, in the light of the reactions triggered by the contact with a communist Romania and then with a return to democracy Romania. The biographically drawn picture was the result of the interpretation of testimonies of historians who in some cases are present, as they were considered relevant, in the work on the communist regime in Romania, but also involved an inventory of all representative works related to Romanian space. It was interesting to note how selected authors are aware of each other as they are contemporaries, are mutually reviewing, collaborating, and they

²Gabriel Moisa, *Clio în zodia ideologizării. Interferențe politico-istoriografice în România comunistă*, Cluj-Napoca, Mega, 2013.

recommended one another according to the area of expertise.

The first class was that of the authors with predominantly biographical motivations, which included dissidents from the country who continued to work in exile and historians who only showed their opposition outside. The standard volume was drafted in the country and published in the West, initiated at conceptual level in Romania but edited and published externally, or the realization and publication took place only in exile. We have included in this group the historians Ghiță Ionescu³, Victor Frunză⁴ and Vladimir Tismăneanu⁵ with the mentioning that the works of the first two authors, even if they were published in the 1960s and 1980s, re-entered the editorial circuit after 1989.

The typology of authors with predominantly professional concerns includes Westerners who have studied in academic environments that showed a special interest in the Cold War and the situation of the Central and South-Eastern European countries and who visited Romania in the 1960s and 1970s thanks to the *Fulbright* or I.R.E.X. scholarships such as Keith Hitchins⁶, Katherine Verdery⁷ and Catherine Durandin⁸. Somewhere at the intersection of the two categories, approached as a transitional case, we placed the British historian Dennis Deletant⁹ who alongside Catherine Durandin is an example of the permeability of the proposed classification limits. In order to avoid arbitrary selection, we also took into consideration other aspects such as the context and conditions of the work on the regime, the novelty of the narrative style, the pioneering aspect, and what type of feedback triggered the publication or republishing of the volume.

4. HISTORICAL LITERATURE REGARDING THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN ROMANIA. A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Achieving objectives such as the analysis of the post-communist historiographical

³Ghiță Ionescu, *Comunismul în România*, București, Litera, 1994.

⁴Victor Frunză, *Istoria comunismului în România*, ediția a III-a, București, EVF, 1999.

⁵Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism pentru eternitate. O istorie politică a comunismului românesc*, Iași, Polirom, 2005.

⁶Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

⁷Katherine Verdery, *Socialismul. Ce a fost și ce urmează*, Iași, Institutul European, 2003.

⁸Catherine Durandin, *Nicolae Ceaușescu. Adevăruri și minciuni despre un rege comunist*, București, Nemo, 1992.

⁹Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, ediția a III-a, București, Fundația Academia Civică, 2010.

environment, the identification of historiography on the communist regime in Romania and the application of selection criteria for the period 1990-2015 (with two justified exceptions) as well as the realization of biographical studies that highlight the reasons for writing a political history has brought us very close to the end of our scientific approach. The difficulty was to identify the right model for the analysis of selected volumes. We excluded the discourse analysis which, by its challenges, may be the subject of another study, and opted for a historiographical inquiry. In the latter case, however, a clearer definition of the working methods or purpose was necessary, so we again paid attention to the representatives of the main historiography schools which, through their research activity, offered several interpretations of texts drafted during the communist regime. So, we have first studied how specialists belonging to several generations of historians, such as Alexandru Zub¹⁰, Lucian Boia¹¹, Andi Mihalache¹², Florin Müller¹³, Gabriel Moisa¹⁴, Felician Velimirovici¹⁵ analyzed the communist historiography to discover two approaches: the periodization of the works of this period in accordance with the political transformations and the analysis of the highly ideologicalized historiographical discourse and the "wood tongue", sometimes surpassing the limits of the model offered by Françoise Thom¹⁶.

With this experience, we have succeeded in developing a similar analysis grid, but adapted to another type of text, this time not complying with the policy directives, setting as the criteria of the investigation: the predominant theme, the way the content is

¹⁰ Alexandru Zub, *Clio sub semnul interogației. Idei, sugestii, figuri*, Iași, Polirom, 2006; idem, *De la istoria critică la criticism (Istoriografia română sub semnul modernității)*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2000; idem, *Istorie și finalitate. În căutarea identității*, Iași, Polirom, 2004; idem, *Discurs istoric și tranziție. În căutarea unei paradigme*, Iași, Institutul European, 1998; idem, *Orizont închis. Istoriografia română sub dictatură*, Iași, Institutul European, 2000.

¹¹ Lucian Boia, *Pentru o istorie a imaginarului*, București, Humanitas, 2006, idem; *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească*, București, Humanitas, 2011; idem, *Strania istorie a comunismului românesc (și nefericitele ei consecințe)*, București, Humanitas, 2016; idem, *Jocul cu trecutul. Istoria între adevăr și ficțiune*, București, Humanitas, 1998; idem, *Mitologia științifică a comunismului*, București, Humanitas, 2011; idem, *Mitul democrației*, București, Humanitas, 2007.

¹² Andi Mihalache, *Istorie și practici discursive în România democrat-populară*, București, Albatros, 2003.

¹³ Florin Müller, *Politică și istoriografie în România 1948-1964*, Cluj-Napoca, Nereamia Napocae, 2003.

¹⁴ Gabriel Moisa, *Directii și tendințe în istoriografia românească 1989-2006*, Oradea, Editura Universității din Oradea, 2007; idem, *Clio în zodia ideologizării. Interferențe politico-istoriografice în România comunistă*; idem, *History, Ideology and Politics in Communist Romania*, Budapesta, Eötvös Loránd University, 2012.

¹⁵ Felician Velimirovici, *Istorie și istorici în România comunistă (1948-1989)*, Cluj-Napoca, Mega, 2015.

¹⁶ Françoise Thom, *Limba de lemn*, București, Humanitas, 1993.

structured, the types of sources used and the drafting process. We aimed at identifying the type of periodization applied to the communist regime in Romania, nominating the classifications made with reference to political, economic, cultural and social phenomena, establishing the weight of qualitative and quantitative analyzes and the type of approach (subjective or objective), continuity (or its absence) between Dej and Ceaușescu (from a political, economic or social point of view) and (where appropriate) the presence in the Tismăneanu Report.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The bankruptcy of totalitarian systems is indisputable. But the collapse of such a regime can last decades or more. In this case it is essential to inform about the dangers it involves and how it can lead to the irreparable economic, political and social destruction of population. Studying the volumes of the *Romanian Historical Bibliography* we have found with satisfaction that the number of related studies on the communist regime in Romania and those about the Revolution of 1989 (syntheses, memoirs, articles) have increased considerably from year to year. And if at the beginning the memoirs prevailed, after having gained access to the archives of the Securitate and the Romanian Communist Party, the political history of the regime became the object of study of many historians or intellectuals of various other groups, in the context in which Western historiography condemned totalitarianism while it still dominated Central and Eastern Europe.

For the study of historiography during the communist regime, the specialists used the historical-political productions of the period (volumes, periodicals, brochures, party documents, minutes) and materials after 1989 (memoirs, journals, statistics, interviews). In time archive documents from the country (Securitate and P.C.R.) or from abroad were accessed. The authors of the literature on the regime started from the same types of sources, depending on the time and place of the work. Western historians have had an advantage over the exiles who wrote before 1989 and the dissidents benefited from being able to write in exile. Those who published before the Revolution came with adjustments and additions after the fall of the regime. Despite the measures taken by the regime to discourage any form of dissent, it was intimately linked to exile. More specifically, the

declared dissent was followed by investigations, sanctions, imprisonment or leaving the country for a state that received Romanian refugees. Undeclared dissent is more difficult to quantify, but is manifested by the refusal to publish or to participate in certain public events, the use of double language, the proliferation of political jokes and other seemingly permissible strategies to avoid over-saturation and the outbreak of riots similar to Hungary or Czechoslovakia. On the other hand, neither the extent of exile is easier to determine. There have, of course, been several categories of emigrants from World War II that have arrived in countries such as France, Germany, the United Kingdom or the United States. Victor Frunză declared that he had very little connection with the Romanian exile, because many individuals sometimes raised suspicions and seemed to have a secret agenda, which led him to a very withdrawn existence, even after 1989, despite the temporary involvement in politics. On the other hand, Ghiță Ionescu did not experience the totalitarian life, but he was extremely active in denouncing the regime abroad, finally settling in London, being claimed as a "British political scientist of Romanian origin". Vladimir Tismăneanu considers himself an exponent of the inner dissent until he left the country and then an opponent strong enough to challenge in the international press the "wooden" articles of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

They all had a personalized experience with the communist regime, even if Ghiță Ionescu only fought it from the outside. The fact that they wrote a political history of the regime, sometimes in extremely difficult conditions (Victor Frunză), using a huge collection of memories (Vladimir Tismăneanu) or foresaw the succession of Ceaușescu (Ghiță Ionescu) turned them into perfect candidates for this study. As far as the Western historians are concerned, their volumes were born after systematic documentation, but were also the result of the first contacts with the communist regime. We can mention Dennis Deletant's first conversations in Romanian with a Securitate officer, the collapse of Katherine Verdery with the moped in the fence of an armaments factory, another Securitate officer and the short skirt of historian Catherine Durandin, Keith Hitchins' affinity for our national identity.

Conscious of the existence of other works that may partly correspond to the created profiles, we consider that the selected authors are unique cases through the context of the drafting and the narrative style. A volume was special because of the predictive character,

another because of the Bible sheet on which it was written, from the perspective of a dissident from the country or from exile. We can not forget the British married to a Romanian who wrote his work with important information from the inside, the American anthropologist who visited the villages of Transylvania, the French historian who accompanied the young and the old Ceaușescu, like a shadow, while the studies of another American author evolved chronologically, starting with the modern era until the post-communist period.

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