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Abstract Doctoral Thesis

The organization and structure of party education system at county and inter-county level (1948-1989)

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INTRODUCTION

Keywords: communism, soviet model, Romanian Communist Party, cadres, party teaching system, party training, party schools, Party-State, propaganda.

The establishment of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, under the influence of the USSR after the end of the Second World War, meant the enforcement of the so-called *Soviet model*, which primarily entailed a forced and artificial synthesis between the communist parties and the still insufficiently modernised states in this part of the continent between West Germany and the USSR.

Party-state regimes were established gradually, by copying as closely as possible the Soviet model of state government by the communist elites in each Eastern Bloc country, i.e. by destroying the old elites and traditional institutions and building new ones through three fundamental elements: *party building, cadre politics and the party teaching system*.

There is a close correlation between all three fundamental elements, since *party building, cadre politics* and *party education* revolve around the central project of all communist regimes: building socialism.

Party education was an instrument through which the Party-State built itself and created its own cadres. Party-building was at the same time both the object and the subject of Party education, an activity which synthesised the communist parties and the state, including cadres politics (recruiting, raising and assigning cadres) and at the same time the subject of study in Party schools and courses.

The radical transformation of society according to the Soviet model, industrialization, collectivization of agriculture and cultural revolution required cadres devoted to the cause, with a "sound social origin", a good file and a superior political-ideological and professional training. To achieve this, the communist parties in the Eastern Bloc, including Romania, had to clearly establish their three strongly interlinked systemic elements: party building, cadres politics and party education.

The study of the preparatory systems of communist party cadres in the Eastern Bloc has been a concern of international political, sociological and historiographical research since the 1950s and 1960s, but it has been confined to the question of communist elites at the upper levels and central party schools in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, with the trajectories of lower-level cadres in these countries occupying a peripheral role in these concerns.

Romanian literature, being far too preoccupied with communist repression, has not paid much attention to this subject so far. However, there are a number of scientific works, studies and articles which make an important contribution, but still at an early stage, to the development of this issue, the resolution of which, even partially, is essential for a deeper insight into the internal structure of communist regimes.

The topic of this thesis deals with the organisation and structure of Party education in Romania at county and intercounty level between 1948 and 1989, i.e. the internal and external organisational analysis of the network of county and intercounty cadre schools of the PCR in the context of the close connection of this cadre training system with the political development of the communist regime in general, with cadres politics and party building in particular and, last but not least, with what the communists called the building of socialism.

The cadres' schools of the PCR, as central institutions of Party education, were organized by the Party-State both at central level, in Bucharest, and in the provinces, at each administrative level (county, regional and district between 1950-1968, municipal, urban and even rural).

As sociologist Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu emphasizes, another function of Party education, and of cadres schools in particular, was to elaborate and reinterpret Marxist-Leninist ideology on a permanent basis, not just to teach it to those who would study in these institutions. Researchers and teachers in Party educational institutions drafted the main Party documents, reports and directives of congresses as well as the speeches of Party leaders, which later became study material for students in Party schools¹.

Intercounty party schools, i.e. county and intercounty cadres' schools, represent the topic of this thesis because I believe that these institutions, political and school at the same time, played an important role in the formation of communist elites at all levels, but especially those in the second and third echelons of the PCR. Graduating from a Party school helped the future activist to improve his cadres' file, which was an essential factor in his advancement in the Party-State hierarchy, or at least ensured stability in the position he held before entering the school.

I also chose this topic because I believe that party education was a foundation for party building and successful cadres politics, which is very important for understanding the emergence and evolution over time of the Party-State and all communist elites in post-war Romania (1945-1989).

Studying the system of training communist elites at all levels and reproducing Romania's social structure according to the Soviet model must start with an understanding of the role of Party education in the complex process of fusion between the Party and the state, analysing not only the influence of the Party on the state institutions through which the latter was transformed into an instrument of the PCR's domination of Romanian society, but also the influence of the state on the Party.

In order to achieve the central goal of this thesis, this approach must start by studying the organization and structure of party education at county and intercounty level, without which the genesis of the communist elites in the lower echelons and the party and state bureaucracy cannot be properly understood.

The implementation of this approach is based on the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods where necessary, i.e. in archival research (central and county archives), research of the press of the time, propaganda materials, works, documents, etc., studied in the cadres' schools, discourse analysis and study of international and Romanian historiography

and by attempting a quantitative evaluation of the students of the intercounty party cadres' schools.

Archival research is the foundation of this project, with particular reference to the analysis of the following archival collections: the Archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Romania, the "Central Committee of the Communist Party of Romania" Collection - Cadres Section, Chancellery, Organizational Section, Propaganda and Agitation Section, and the Archival Collections of the County and Intercounty Party Schools of the County Departments of the National Archives of Romania (ANR).

The second element of the present thesis is represented by a critical analysis of the contents, of the teaching materials taught at the cadres' schools, of the published propaganda materials, the gazettes published by the county communist newspapers, brochures, manifestos, and other study materials. Approaching the subject from a historical and sociological perspective, seeking to capture the perspective of those who administratively and politically coordinated the process of organising education in these institutions, will involve, on the one hand, a diachronic dimension on how the cadres' schools developed over time and, on the other, a synchronic dimension, aiming at comparative analyses between these institutions. From the point of view of the methodology of work, in the direction of researching the reports and information notes written by the directors of the schools, we have quoted exactly as they were written, with grammatical and spelling mistakes to show their level of education and culture.

CONTENTS

The structure of this thesis consists of four chapters, which analyse the phenomenon of party education from the general to the particular, using both a diachronic and a synchronic method of presenting information. Each chapter deals separately, by sub-chapter, with the themes ordered according to their degree of generality but also according to the links between the different sides of the subjects dealt with.

The first chapter begins by defining the concepts of "party teaching", "party education", "cadres", "party school", defining these terms from the literature but also from the definitions given by the propaganda works of the communist period, making a synthesis between them. A brief history of the Soviet origins of party education follows, highlighting the most relevant moments in the emergence and development of this system of political and ideological training. In the final part of the first chapter I then followed the parallel evolution of the Party-State and party education in communist Romania, trying to establish a link between the two systems that conditioned each other by corroborating the information provided by existing historiography with that obtained from archival sources and propaganda materials, press and periodicals of the time.

After 1945, party schools were created in all Eastern Bloc countries on the model of those in the USSR, both in terms of their function as auxiliary bodies of the communist parties and in

the length of their studies and curriculum. In the 1950s the original model was faithfully followed in all socialist countries, but in the following decades a number of reorganisations were made, but the history of party schools in the Eastern European socialist countries shows certain similarities².

The history of Party education is closely linked to the development of the Party-State over time. This relationship was decisive in relation to the organisational structure and content of the entire system of training and further training of cadres, and in particular its central part - the Party school.

From the point of view of the organizational structure, party education can be positioned between civilian state education and military education, since we find structural elements from each of the other two competing forms in this system of political-ideological education of the cadres and masses of party members.

The Party schools and courses network was set up and developed on the basis of both the decisions and instructions of the CC of the PMR/PCR and the decisions of the regional/county committees, the latter having the obligation to apply the directives from the centre, taking into account the specifics of the region or county, the needs of the local Party work, the available material base and, last but not least, the quantity and quality of the teaching staff (lecturers, propagandists, assistants, but also state education staff) available in the region for Party education.

The second chapter examines the forms and content of Party education, starting from the premise that it is necessary first to understand the transformations that have taken place in the form and content of this particular type of cadres' training in order to understand how and why structural and organisational changes occurred in county and intercounty Party schools. The need to analyse first the form and content of party education and the curricula of county, district, regional and intercounty cadres' schools and only then their external and internal structure and organisation arises from the fact that in any form of education the content determines the structure, organisation and internal functioning of any educational institution of all grades, whether in public, military or party education. Of course, as I have already pointed out, not only did the content determine the organisational development of party education, but it was the primary factor and ideological essence of it.

Another reason lies in the fact that, in my research, I noticed in all the sources I studied (archives, press, propaganda works, etc.) a very great, almost obsessive concern on the part of the communist leaders for the content of party education, for its "ideological and political purity". As we shall see in this chapter, this content would change according to the evolution of the PCR's policies and the transformations that took place at various stages of the communist regime in Romania.

Gradually the content was enriched with new topics and subjects, since it was necessary to prepare the cadres more solidly during the building of the socialist society in Romania. Technological and scientific progress in the second half of the 20th century, although less dynamic than in other countries, brought about profound metamorphoses in Romania's economic and production activities as well as in the socio-professional sphere, which confronted the party leadership with new problems of an objective nature, on the solution of which (in whatever form) the survival of the regime depended. In Nicolae Ceausescu's view,

this solution required better training, both political-ideological and specialist, of party activists and of the management of enterprises.

The enrichment of the content of education and the curriculum of the party schools brought with it the need to reorganize the forms of party education and to redefine these special schools since the 1960s, and in the 1970s and 1980s, the communist leaders became even more concerned with content, adopting in these decades a series of changes and adaptations, not only of party ideology and propaganda but obviously also in the sphere of the content of party education, according to Nicolae Ceausescu's indications but also according to contemporary realities. Nationalist and foreign influences, as well as the distancing by Moscow, led to the creation of an autochthonous Marxism-Leninism (different from the Soviet one) which constituted an ideological eclecticism, a so-called "creative application" of Marx, Engels and Lenin's theses.

The third chapter examines the central and local structures responsible for organising and coordinating the party schools and the sinuous evolution of the network formed by these schools, trying to establish the causes of these changes in the modifications of the function of these schools and the curriculum/programme of study. Both the coordinating structures and the network of party schools have also undergone transformations and reorganisations over time in all respects, i.e. organisationally and functionally. Sections and sectors were reorganised and their leadership changed, new tasks and functions were given to the leading structures, the number of schools was increased or reduced, in accordance with the needs of the Party cadres for training, or their reprofiling, the change of function or simply at the wish of the communist leaders.

The last chapter focuses on the organization and internal functioning of county and intercounty Party schools, analyzing one by one the structure and composition of the leadership and teaching staff of these institutions, the rules, criteria and recruitment of students, the pedagogical, practical and cultural-sports activities carried out in these institutions, the examination and distribution of graduates according to the Party's cadres politics, which has also evolved synchronously with that of the entire regime.

The organization and internal functioning of the county Party schools were, at least in theory, based on CC decisions and instructions until 1971, when they came under the coordination of the "Stefan Gheorghiu" Academy of the Party General Bureau, i.e. directly under Nicolae Ceausescu.

Revisions in the content area of party education, changes of function and the reprofiling of the county cadres' schools constituted the fundamental causes of its evolution and also had an impact on the party schools. The changes in the school curriculum (the school syllabus, as it was called at the time) and the content of party education led to the reorganisation of schools into new departments and required the employment of more highly educated teachers (which also raised the level of teaching and the quality of education). Scientific and technological progress and the ever-increasing concern of Party leaders for Party schools led to the purchase and equipping of more modern teaching materials and equipment, as well as to the improvement of school premises and student maintenance. The biggest investments were made in particular in the case of the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Academy, which after 1974

received a new, ultra-modern (for those times) building, but also in the case of the intercounty Party schools, which in the 1970s and 1980s functioned as local branches of the Academy.

The organisation and functioning of the Party middle schools was never perfect, especially in the early years, but this does not mean that the schools did not function at all and that they did not achieve their purpose - to train Party activists for a higher political rank - but also to acquire more general or specialised knowledge - and that, as in any educational system, there were problems and deviations.

The lack of access to the archives of the former "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Academy did not allow me to follow the exact dynamics of the organization and functioning of the intercounty party schools, but from the few available sources it can be stated that they specialized by disciplines and that they were better equipped in terms of facilities and teaching materials and technologies used in the teaching process.

Conclusions

The creation of the Party-State, the gradual accentuation of the Party's control over the state and the merging of the two entities until homogenization was the desire and the general tendency of the communist regime in Romania. In this complex process, the state forced the Party to reorganise itself from a cadres party to a mass party in order to be able to encompass the entire state and administrative apparatus, mass organisations, trade unions and gradually the entire working population of the country.

A fundamental instrument in the achievement of this "intertwining" of the Party and the State was the Party education system, through the possibilities it offered in the verification, training, specialization and distribution of cadres according to the Party's line, the will of its leadership centres.

Together with Party building and cadres politics, Party education made a decisive contribution to the synthesis of Party and State by creating the reserve of cadres necessary for the implementation of communist projects and for the functioning of this institutional colossus, generically called Party-State.

Faced year after year with shortages or new tasks, Party education was constantly subject to adjustment and restructuring. Every year it was decided which staff would be selected for the network of Party schools and courses and what syllabus they would study. I believe that the speed with which the various changes were made to the organisation and content of Party education was rather counterproductive. Although it was normal for a niche form of education to keep pace with the rapid changes in the political-economic sphere, this too rapid dynamic vitiated the quality of the educational act. Of course, this is not to say that Party education did not deliver the desired results, as the contribution of this education system to the formation of communist elites was very important.

The form and content of Party education underwent various transformations between 1945 and 1989, from a large number of schools, but with relatively similar content, to a smaller number but with a more varied content and divided into specialisations since 1971. Between 1971 and 1989 there were 10 intercounty party schools which, together with the "Stefan Gheorghiu" Academy, formed a broader system of training not only party cadres but also state and economic cadres.

Central party schools in communist Romania had a structural and content evolution closely linked to the political, social-economic and doctrinal changes that Romanian society went through between 1945 and 1989. If initially these educational institutions were supposed to achieve a "political literacy"³ of party activists, later, after obtaining academic recognition of the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" School in 1966, the tightening of the selection criteria for students as well as changes in the syllabus, the system of training and further training of party cadres became a hybrid form, belonging to the party and the state

At the same time "Stefan Gheorghiu" Academy was also a competitor of other higher institutions of state education. The monopoly on social sciences and journalistic training that it obtained in the late 1970s also ensured it a central role in the system of recruiting and training Romanian elites, and not only those in the party ranks.

As a result of my research I came to the conclusion that not all party education as a whole has become an alternative to public education, but only certain forms of it - the Stefan Gheorghiu Academy and the party middle schools. I must also state that, in the language of the time, these institutions were not really part of party education but of the system of training and further training of cadres, a form of intermediate education between the two systems of education, the state and the party.

In terms of the content taught in these county and intercounty schools and courses, we can observe an evolution from a purely ideological-Stalinist syllabus in the 1950s to an increase in its quality in the 1960s and 1970s, followed by a decline in the last decade of the communist regime. This improvement consisted in the inclusion in the content of party education of topics related to general economic and specialist issues (industry, agriculture, etc.), general cultural knowledge and even Western aesthetics and philosophy.

The Party-State structures responsible for coordinating the network of Party schools have also been restructured or simply exchanged with others for organisational and functional reasons. This was due both to changes in the area of cadres politics and party building, and to the sinuous evolution of the network of cadres' schools, which in turn was due to internal causes, such as the fluctuating needs for cadres' education, and to political and socio-economic developments in communist Romania, as well as to external causes related to changes in party education in the USSR and other socialist countries.

First of all, it can be said that the internal organization and functioning of the school was never perfect, especially in the first decades, when the staff training system was faced with various shortcomings, superficiality on the part of some students, but also of the so-called "teachers", bureaucracy, nepotism, internal conflicts, alcoholism and absenteeism.

Despite these organisational and disciplinary problems, it was possible to train the cadres in sufficiently good conditions and with satisfactory results for the party leadership. But with

the increase in demands and the concern for the content of education and the the syllabus of the cadres' schools, which has undergone various revisions and additions over the years in response to changes in ideology and the progress of science and technology, the modernisation of equipment led to the improvement of school premises, the more careful editing of teaching materials and, last but not least, the recruitment of highly trained teachers to the teaching teams.

An important moment for the organization and structure of county and intercounty Party education was the creation of a unitary system for the training and further training of Party, state and economic cadres, consisting of the "Stefan Gheorghiu" Academy and intercounty Party schools for the "training of cadres leaders", not only for those holding positions in Party or state bodies, but also for the leaders of enterprises and cooperatives. While until then these Party schools were under the care and control of regional or county Party committees, after this restructuring they were placed under the direct supervision of the "Stefan Gheorghiu" Academy of the CC of the PCR, these intercounty schools becoming local branches of the "Stefan Gheorghiu" Academy. That is why I considered that the "Stefan Gheorghiu" Academy and the 10 intercounty Party schools became a hybrid system of Party and state education, officially called the "Unified System of Training and Development of Party, State and Economic Cadres".

The distribution of Party school graduates, another important theme of this thesis, was done according to criteria set by the Party leadership, requirements that increased until the late 1970s, when the promotion principles of the 1950s were returned. Generally, graduates of Party schools returned to Party organizations or state positions in higher positions, but some cadres returned to their previous positions, or were demoted, depending on the recommendations in their graduation files or for other reasons.

The promotion of cadres has generally been marred by three problems with negative effects on the Party-state structure: bureaucratism, formalism and subjectivism. In spite of indications from the CC or even Ceaușescu, these problems were never completely eradicated, and after the appointment of Elena Ceaușescu as head of the Council of Party and State cadres in 1976, there was a return to Stalinist-type criteria, which seriously affected the political and administrative apparatus.

Party education in all its aspects, forms and structures was intended to be a system for "raising" cadres and popularising Party ideology and policy among the masses of its members, but gradually after 1956 it became a substitute for state education for those without education but who needed cultural capital to convert it into political capital. Despite what the communist project claimed (building a classless society), and as an irony of history, party education, along with other causes specific to the extremely complex machinery of society and the communist regime, contributed to the perpetuation of social inequality. Ideological and political education was designed to strengthen the status of the single party by eliminating any non-partisan attitudes. If it was necessary to eliminate cadres on whom certain suspicions, even if unfounded, were hanging, then the party apparatus prepared scenarios aimed at the security and stability of the state, facilitating irrational administrative and political decisions, not to mention the dreaded court sentences ordered from the centre. In order to achieve these goals and to educate the working masses and the youth in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist ideology, there was a need for dedicated, well-trained party activists, capable of implementing

the tasks drawn up at central level, under the close supervision of the party and state leadership. In the spirit of the tragicomedy of Romanian communism, however, it happened not infrequently that some elected comrades became good agitators and organisers in their workplaces, but at the same time there were hilarious situations in which comrades carried out instructions in a mean-spirited or irresponsible manner, only formally following the *line of the Party*.

Like other forms of education, in party education there have been good and mediocre students, more or less prepared teachers, high demands but also overlooked, shortcomings as well as achievements. But what characterised this type of education was its very function, the rapid dynamics of its organisational structure, the complexity of the network of party schools and courses and the dual nature of its content, a political-ideological and a pragmatic side, emphasising the first side.

