

Nicolae Ceaușescu and his cult of personality. Key moments in shaping and defining the leader cult

**[Nicolae Ceaușescu și cultul personalității. Momente cheie în formarea și definitivarea cultului de lider]**

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**Abstract:** *Nicolae Ceaușescu was a prominent figure between the years 1965 and 1989 at both national and international level. The leader of Romania had a clear schedule from the moment he came into power: to leave his name in the history of Romania alongside other important historical figures like Ștefan cel Mare or Mircea cel Bătrân. In order to do so, he needed to gain both the love and respect of the people. There were some key moments that pushed Nicolae Ceaușescu into wanting more than just a name in the history books, he wanted to become the one true leader of Romania. The refusal to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968 marked a huge boost for the Romanian leader on both national and international level. After receiving all sorts of praises for his stand, Nicolae Ceaușescu would start to create a different type of persona. The trips to China and North Korea were the catalyst that made Nicolae Ceaușescu switch into this different personality, wanting to be idolatrized by the people as he has seen in this two communist countries. In order to do so he turned to the arts of symbolism and mythology, alongside other different types of nationalistic propaganda that formed around himself a feeling of invincibility. The 1974 Election as President of Romania marked the final moment in the creation of his cult of personality, offering Nicolae Ceaușescu a moment in which he is depicted as the saviour and the one true leader of Romania.*

**Keywords:** *Nicolae Ceaușescu, cult of personality, nationalism, legitimation*

## Introduction

As in the case of many totalitarian regimes, the personality cult obtained a significant role for Nicolae Ceaușescu in the official propaganda. For the leader of Romania, the cult had important national elements that came into hand when promoting specific values of features.

The Romanian historian Adrian Cioroianu traces the roots of the Romanian cult to three main sources: the first one is “The national tradition” which was based upon the King Carol II cult of personality. Cioroianu claims that all authoritarian regimes are a “*fertile ground for personality cults*”. Furthermore, the Romanian mentality was one of willingly submitting to the authority, shaping “*a myth of the leader*” which by itself it’s not toxic, but becomes politically and socially dangerous if the person is alive and asserts himself the characteristics of national predestination<sup>1</sup>.

Second, “*the Stalinist tradition*” finds its roots in the will of Ceausescu to legitimate himself within the country. Also the association with Stalin’s cult is based on the spiritual and social conditions on the two countries and namely how the lack of promotion of a spiritual form of being (God) fed the development of the religious state of feeling which held itself close to the only form of authority that was available. In addition, the two countries had a similar political environment, forming a sentiment of insecurity when relating to the “*outer world*”<sup>2</sup>.

The third pattern is “*the Asian model*” and it is seen as a marking pattern for the evolution of Nicolae Ceaușescu’s own desires. The visits to North Korea and China are seen as a catalyser for the leader’s personality. Interesting is that Cioroianu disagrees with this interpretation, claiming that while the model can be of inspiration for the cult, it does not have the immediate effect of the Romanian leader. He also argues this point by referring to the fact that Ceausescu had already created his own “*cultural revolution*” in 1968, when he took a stanch approach on foreign policy. Furthermore, it is shown that none of the other communist leaders that had visited the Asian countries developed a cult of genius or personality at the heights of the one in Romania.

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<sup>1</sup> Adrian Cioroianu, “Acel Ceaușescu pe care l-am creat (despre o fascinantă – și păgubitoare – “industrie a elogiului)” [That Ceaușescu that we created (about a fascinating – and damaging – “industry of eulogy”)], Available in Romanian on <https://geopolitikon.wordpress.com/2010/03/16/16mart2010-acer-ceausescu-pecare-1-am-creat-despre-un-fascinant-si-pagubitor-cult-al-personalitatii-12/> and <https://geopolitikon.wordpress.com/tag/cutul-personalitatii/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Pavel Campeanu is one of the people who studied the problem regarding the cult of personality in the Ceausescu regime and he identified some basic features of it:

-Ceausescu constitutes his own cult not to impose his legitimacy, because after 1968, he obtained it by attracting the support of the people with his defensive attitude at that time. The people considered him a defender and protector of national independence;

-The identity between the dictator's person and the independence of the country was at the root of the cult;

-Centred around the national independence, the cult of Ceausescu becomes the cult of nation and thus it creates a populist ideology.

The author also presents us with an interesting relationship between the nationalist communism of the regime and the dictators cult of personality. Analysing for example the well-known saying: "*The Party, Ceausescu, Romania*", Campeanu considers that the ordering of the three key elements "Recognized, without wanting, the anti-national character of this nationalism, in the time in which the primacy of the party represented only a fictional ideology<sup>3</sup>"

#### **Elements in shaping the cult of personality**

There are several elements that shaped the cult of personality for Nicolae Ceaușescu. One of the most important ones is aligning himself alongside the greatest leaders in Romania's history. Edward Behr<sup>4</sup> is one of the authors that points out this interesting fact. He analyses the way in which in many histories based writings, Ceausescu appears constantly with these three major figures: Burebista (who was involved in the internal politics of the greatest state at that time-the Roman Empire, as Ceausescu wanted to be a referee in the international relationships), Decebal (the sworn protector of his lands) and Mihai Viteazul (the one who managed to unify under his sceptre, for the first time, the three Romanian States. The author also reminds us that in many comments regarding the rule of Mihai Viteazul, the official historians had found that 4 of Mihai Viteazul's captains had stabilized in Scornicesti, promoting the idea that Ceausescu could be one of their followers.

Victor Frunza is another author that presents a connection between the cult of personality and forms of propaganda, in which he considers that the Romanian dictator was using his public

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<sup>3</sup> P. Câmpenu, *Ceaușescu, anii numărătorii inverse*, Iași, 2002, pp.8-9.

<sup>4</sup>E. Behr, *Săruta mâna pe care nu o poți mușca. Românii și Ceaușeștii: investigarea unui blestem al istoriei*, București, 1999, p. 341.

appearances in order to accentuate national elements of his regime<sup>5</sup>. There were not few portraits in which the Romanian leader was presented with a scarf with the Romanian flag colours and in his hand a golden sceptre. Ceausescu wanted to be seen as both the leader of the state and the successor of the great rulers.

Interesting aspects regarding the Ceausescu leader cult and forms in which it was manifested were the so-called official “myths” of the regime-nation based ideas that were meant to attract the support of the people that were promoted through different methods. Their spectral thematic was very complex. One of the most important myths that dominated this period of time was taken from the XIX century: unity, class war, the ideal democracy, the fear of foreigners.

Ionel Buse in another author who considers that these myths were not only specific for the Romanian case, claiming that the instauration in power of the communist regime in Eastern Europe meant the reinstatement of the imaginary nationalist and totalitarian politic. The author takes into analysis the way in which the Ceausescu regime had selected from the elements of political imaginary the ones who had the most powerful effect on the collective mentality. Because of this, the myth of origins was intensively exploited. There were talks about a Romania who was presented to be one of the oldest civilization in Europe, who touched its peak in the communist regime under the rule of its saviour: Nicolae Ceaușescu. The author presents us that the accents was put on the dacian myth, on archeology and the analyse of Romanian folklore was found even in manifestations that were meant to be cultural and we have for example the festival “*Cantarea Romaniei*”.

The same problem regarding the connection between the national history and official myths of the regime was analysed by Lucian Boia who stops on two other myths: the unity and continuity<sup>6</sup>. Lucian Boia analyses the way in which the official historiography in the Ceausescu regime had promoted unity and continuity as its main principles that drove the Romanian history. The unity is seen by the author as both the unity of the Romanian space in time (despite the fragmented history) and also the unity of the Romanian people around his big leaders: the dacian kings, the Middle Ages rulers and finally Ceausescu, the one who continues them but also the one who creates a new Romania. The continuity was marking a specific problem but was also a general

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<sup>5</sup>V. Frunză, *Istoria stalinismului în România*, București, 1990, pp. 485-501.

<sup>6</sup> L. Boia, *Mitologie comunistă în versiune românească*, în Chantal Delsol, M. Maslowski, Joanna Nowicki, Mituri și simboluri politice în Europa Centrală, traducere de Liviu Papuc, Cartier, București, 2003, pp. 515-529.

interpretation of the Romanian history: the perseverance of the daco-romans and then the Romanians in the north of the Danube on the current ground were Romania stands.

When Ceausescu was elected First Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party in March 1965, his personal priorities were not all clear. He was only 47 and the youngest Party leader in Easter Europe, and not actually a well-known person insider or outside his mother country. It is not strange that within two years he would rise to have both State and Party hierarchy and go to become an omniscient and omnipotent leader in the 1970's. Furthermore, from 1965 to 1967 he appeared to be the most important third of a triumvirate which included Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Chivu Stoica. Then he replaced Chivu Stoica in December 1967 and began to move against his rivals, consolidating his control of the political system in 1968-1969

One of the authors, Vladimir Tismaneanu, considers that mythology is one of the most important elements in Ceausescu's cult and he traces the beginning of this moment to the Ninth Congress of the RCP<sup>7</sup>. We are presented how he was institutionalized and not only a general conceptualization of the leader's power. He argues that without proper institutional framework that managed to link economy, society, culture and the nation to the leader's image, the persons in power in Romania would have not resisted in the 1970'. Vladimir Tismaneanu offers another interest opinion on the subject, claiming that the responsibility for the creation and promotion of the leader and his cult can be traced back to the Ninth Congress of the RCP by creating the image (myth) of Nicolae Ceausescu as a political reformer and a man of the nation<sup>8</sup>.

Since revolutionary prestige, foreign support, and terror were not sources of Nicolae Ceaușescu's strength in 1965, he resorted to a combination of four political strategies: personnel manipulation, policy ambiguity and compromise within the new collective leadership, move towards the institutionalization of the political process both state and Party and participatory populism and reforms, direct appeal to the Romanian people through political mobilization techniques regarding nationalism.

### **Consolidation of power**

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<sup>7</sup> V. Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Volume 11) (Society and Culture in East-Central Europe), 2003.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

The years that followed the Congress of the Party in July 1965 were used in order for Nicolae Ceaușescu to consolidate his power and place as the one true leader of Romania. The key moment that had an essential part in creating all political and institutional instruments for the Romanian leader to seize the total power within the party is the year 1968.

Ion Ratiu describes the accumulation of offices and functions as unique in the Romanian leader's case, presenting his cult as being the basis in the personalization of his official power<sup>9</sup>. Ellen Fisher has a more structured point of view regarding the root of Ceausescu's cult. Although she claims that after 1969 (the Tenth Congress), in the five year until the Eleventh Party Congress in 1974, Ceausescu became the "omnipotent and omniscient rule of his country and the object of a leadership cult", she sustains that in 1969 the cult had not been yet developed. The dominance by Ceausecu of the Tenth Congress in 1969 was a symptom of total power, but it only full emerged in the 1974 Election as the First President of Romania<sup>10</sup>.

Ceausescu's final strategy for reassuring his political power was aimed directly at the broad masses. He attempted to mobilize them by increasing their participation into the political process and by playing on their strong feelings of loyalty and nationalism. His techniques for mobilization were in essence populist.

Coming back to the year 1968 and its crucial meaning for the development of Nicolae Ceaușescu's cult, the refusal to invade Czechoslovakia was not only vehement, but also public. A public meeting was held in Bucharest, which was followed by other such manifestations through the country and visits by Nicolae Ceaușescu to many localities. In the meantime, rumours were spreading through the country that the soviets want to invade and that shots were also exchanged across the USSR-Romanian border, though it would have been unlikely that the Soviet leaders would have used military force against Romania in 1968.

The most important aspect regarding Ceausescu and his consolidation in power was based using different elements and symbols that present him as a true saviour of the people through nationalistic sentiments and means. By refusing to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Romanian leader ensured for a period of time his consolidation in power both at national and international level. For the Soviet Union, this move would have also consequences by strengthening

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<sup>9</sup> Ion Rațiu, *Contemporary Romania. Her Place in World Affairs* (Foreign Affairs Publishing: Richmond, England, 1975), pp. 69-71.

<sup>10</sup> M. Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu, A Study in Political Leadership*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989, p.160.

Ceausescu's power and minimalizing the influence that the Soviets will have in Romania for the next decade.

The final victory for the Romanian leader came in August 1969 at the Tenth Party Congress where every speaker felt obligated to start and end their remarks by praising the leader Party. Most of them attributed Ceausescu with the achievements and economic growth of Romania after 1965. At this time, Nicolae Ceaușescu had become the undisputed leader of the Party and state and would soon serve as the foundation for all knowledge in Romania.

Despite this, he was not yet the object of a cult in 1969. He was a true leader and his popularity was at its highest pitch after the events in Czechoslovakia and his stand. He had created a strong popular support for his regime based on foreign policy, and he was in a position to increase his popularity by choosing to develop strategies that would raise the living standards in Romania, thus improving his popularity. However, Ceausescu did not want to choose such strategies. Indeed, looking into his background it would have been a surprise if he wouldn't have acted the way he did. On the other hand, if he had chosen to introduce serious reform, he might have split the party, as the one in Hungary 1956, or even release popular dissent like in the case of Czechoslovakia, bringing the Soviet intervention in each case. However, Ceausescu did not make such choices and as a result he managed to obtain the combination of personalized and nationalized power.

After 1969 his personal agenda and priorities began to emerge more sharply in his statements and in the Party policies. If we are to look in retrospect, the priorities are visible in his early period, but except for his nationalist spirit, he was much more ambiguous before 1969 when he wanted and needed to attract support and pre-empt opposition. In the years from 1969-1979 Ceausescu's was personally the source of all policy initiatives in Romania. Compromise, caution and collective leadership, all had disappeared and also other political techniques changed as well.

The promotion of his clients within the Party turned into a circulation of officials. Power became rather personalized than institutionalized as constitutional requirements for appointing and legislating personnel were more frequently ignored. Perhaps the biggest difference between the era of consolidation and the era of absolute rule involves the populist and participatory techniques. While participatory organizations expanded in the 1970s', such forums became occasions for mass worship and ground endorsement for presidential policies rather than places for discussion. The genuine authority of 1968 turned into a cult of personality.

Both Tom Gallagher and Lucian Boia consider that this type of national communism can be translated by a step by step recovery of the nation based traditional elements, fact which made “*the pleasure of the people*”<sup>11</sup>. Even more, the Ceausescu regime had a significant advantage: promoting the patriotism of the Romanian people, gaining advantages because of the clouded memories of the 1950’s and making other people responsible for the problems, the regime managed, for a period of time, to hide the true problems of the country and creating a sort of continuity.

Ioana Bot present us with the “*Myth of Eminescu*” which sees an interesting evolution in the 1980s: Eminescu is praised as the exponent of a non-class nation, and the interpretations of the official culture modifies older analyses of eminescology regarding the representative character of the national poet for the Romanian spirituality<sup>12</sup>. Dennis Deletant takes as an example the festival “*Cantarea Romaniei*” which was made to be “a new form of talent manifestation, sensibility and creative genius of the Romanian people”<sup>13</sup>.

The years that followed after the 1969 events saw the total formation of the cult of personality for Nicolae Ceaușescu, as he wanted to rival those of Mao or Stalin. Unfortunately, for him, after the Tenth Party Congress, his priorities began to diverge from the goals of the Romanian people. The most important aspect in which the people and the leader would not meet eye to eye was the economy because of some investments that he imposed on heavy industry.

We can then conclude that starting from 1969 Ceausescu needed to direct and shape the public opinion, to persuade the masses and increase his authority, to “woo them by the force of his own personality” into changing their expectations. Here he ran into some difficulties because Ceausescu’s skills were not those of Mao, Castro or Trotsky. He appears impressive on a television show during a crisis, issuing directives to local officials as they deal with earthquakes and floods. However, in a situation like this he is handling individuals and making quick decisions.

When Ceausescu faces a large crowd then he becomes awkward and retreats into formality, reading the speeches in a monotone and underlining important phrases by unrhythmic, fist pounding with the stress all too often falling on the wrong word. He may have total faith in his decisions and abilities but he does not have the confidence and ease in his relationship with the

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<sup>11</sup>T. Gallagher, *Furtul unei națiuni. România de la comunism încoace*, editura Humanitas, București, 2004, p. 50.

<sup>12</sup> Ioana Bot, „*Mihai Eminescu (1850-1889), un mit cultural*”, în Chantal Delsol, M. Maslowski, Joanna Nowicki, Mituri și simboluri politice în Europa Centrală, Cartier, București, 2003, pp. 239-250

<sup>13</sup> D. Deletant, „*Rewriting the Past: Trends in the Contemporary Romanian Historiography*”, în D. Deletat, M. Pearton, “*Romania Observed. Studies in Contemporary Romanian History*”, București, 1998, pp 64-86.



people that is a prerequisite for authentic mass leadership. He may be a first generation revolutionary, but the masses never followed him to revolution. Once the gap between the expectations of the masses and his own priorities became clear to him, the cult began to take shape.

### **Total creation and affirmation of the cult**

In the years that came, the cult of personality formed by Nicolae Ceaușescu will grow and reach its full potential after the Romanian leader visited other communist countries. Of course, the most important moment that acknowledged Ceausescu as the one true leader of Romania was the 1974 election, but when it comes to forming the cult, the visits that the leader had in China and North Korea would change his vision for the rest of his period of rule.

Conventional academic writings see the roots of Ceausescu and his leader cult as buried deep in the visits to China and North Korea in June 1971. Dennis Deletant makes the case, arguing that: “It is now clear that this visit aroused in him an admiration for the Cultural Revolution and for the grandiose spectacles dedicated to the cult of personality”. The stage managed acclamation and adulation of Mao and Kim Il Sung, so perfectly choreographed, fired Ceausescu’s imagination and he then demanded the same upon his return home in Romania.

Nicolae Ceaușescu, his wife Elena and also people that were close to the leader such as Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Dumitru Popa, Ion Iliescu, Manea Manescu, Aurel Duma and Gheorghe Macovescu left the airport in Baneasa, Bucharest, on the morning of May 31, 1971 with the destination Beijing. The main event that preceded their departure was the launching of a campaign that will accelerate the fulfilment of the leader’s five-year plan 1971-1975. On Sunday May 30 the main organ of the party, Scînteia, carried a full headline page call from the National Council of the United National Front to the people of Romania exhorting all type of groups to fulfil the five year plan in less than they firstly expected<sup>14</sup>.

After a week in Beijing, another in Pyongyang and a few days in Ulan Bator and Hanoi, the Romanian delegation returns home on June 25 1971. Shortly after, on July 6 1971, Ceausescu presented to the Romanian Communist Party Executive Committee a series of proposals to “improve the political-ideological activity of, the Marxist-Leninist education” of party members

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<sup>14</sup> Scînteia, May 31, 1971, p. 1.

and all Romanians<sup>15</sup>. Scînteia published these “*July Theses*” the next day, which, served as the basis for the “*mini cultural revolution*”.

Taken as a whole, the July Theses represent a departure from earlier political ideas promoted by the Romanian Communist Party and represent a milestone in Ceausescu’s ideological approach to politics in both content and form.

All the authorities in the field unequivocally claim that Ceausescu learned something that was of fundamental importance during his 1971. They do not specify, however, what he saw, came to understand, or realize on his journey to the East. Nor do they explain how these learnings influenced his politics that will follow him back to his return in Romania in June 1971.

Another great scholar of the period presents us with a more expansive verifiable explanation. Mary Ellen Fisher causality assumes, stating: “The Asian trip evidently had a considerable impact on Ceausescu, who must have studied Chinese techniques of political and ideological mobilization as well as the extensive personality cult of Kim Il-Son already in operation”<sup>16</sup>. The logic provided by Fisher is that on the trip to Asia, Ceausescu realized that his popularity was based on the independent line from Moscow. Further realizing that it would be hard if not impossible for him to do this regularly do to Romania’s dependence on Soviet inputs and technology, Ceausescu took a page from Kim Il Sung’s book and created the cult as a mean to disseminating the duplicitous myth that he is a maverick to international and domestic audience while staying at the Soviet camp.

Definitive confirmation of the role played by the trip to Asia in the later political developments is practically impossible given the lack of high level government officials who had access to the directives of the leader.

Another crucial moment and the one that defined Ceausescu and his cult of personality was the 1974 Election as President on March 28, where the Romanian leader ties the circle of power by becoming the First President of Romania. Adrian Cioroianu claims that by creating this title, Nicolae Ceaușescu finalizes the process what once was unique and natural in the construction of power into a ritual state represented by the persona of the leader<sup>17</sup>. Furthermore, Adrian Cioroianu sees the events that occur in 1974 as being representative for a process that first began

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<sup>15</sup> Scînteia, July 7, 1971, pp. 1-5

<sup>16</sup> Mary Ellen Fisher, *Ceaușescu: A Study in Political Leadership*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1989, p. 180

<sup>17</sup> A. Cioroianu, *Pe umerii lui Marx. O introducere in istoria comunismului romanesc*, Curtea Veche, 2004, p. 411.

in 1965, with the Ninth Congress, and continued in 1968 with the success in international policy affairs and power consolidation within the Party.

Another important feature that is linked to this Election is the image creating of the leader as a direct descendant of great heroes in the Romanian history<sup>18</sup>. After the forced retirement of Gheorghe Maurer, who until that point was Prime Minister, Ceausescu becomes the only person that controls all political power in the country. “In his position as President of the Republic he informally substitutes the Prime Minister’s power, remains General Secretary of the Party and President of the State Council, while at the same time creating the image of the unique leader of the Romanian People”. As Lucian Boia identifies in the collective mentality of the Romanian people, Ceausescu hoped that such a move would help him legitimize his personal rule and put him straight in the company of the important Romanian historic figures like Decebal, Stefan cel Mare, or Mihai Viteazul<sup>19</sup>.

Another important part that shows how Nicolae Ceaușescu wanted to implement himself in the memory of the Romanian people as the one true leader was the official ceremony. The event was prepared to its fullest details and it included important aspects such as a coronation rather than a republican inauguration ceremony, including a sceptre, which would be remembered in the Romanian memory through its glorification as a symbol of power. The mise-en-scene was presented in television, newspapers and had an important impact of future visual representations of Ceausescu as a leader. According to sources, Ceausescu himself oversaw important elements regarding the preparations of his election<sup>20</sup>. Rodica Chelaru quotes Cornel Burtica (member of the Assembly that was present at the ceremony) by saying that:

“The idea with the sceptre was Ceausescu’s and I remember that he inspired himself from history, if I am correct from Mihai Viteazul [‘s example], the sceptre representing the symbol of power. The production of the sceptre was entrusted to the State Council and the Bureau of the Grand National Assembly, respectively to the president of the Grand National Assembly, Nicolae

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p. 438.

<sup>19</sup> For further details on the persistence of Romanian founding myths see Lucian Boia, “Cele două fețe ale mitologiei comuniste” [The two faces of communist mythology] in *Miturile romunismului românesc*, ed. LucianBoia, pp.11-18. Also, see Boia, *Romania*, pp.111-16.

<sup>20</sup> Mocănescu, Alice Carmen Rodica, “*The leader cult in communist Romania 1965-1989: constructing Ceauescu's uniqueness in painting.*” Durham: University of Durham, Department of History, 2007, p. 217.

Giosan<sup>21</sup> who actually handed it to Ceausescu at the ceremony. Historians and specialist in heraldic were consulted”<sup>22</sup>.

Lastly, Nicolae Ceaușescu’s speech is in all newspapers, journals, and profile magazines, together with visual representation. The most stunning picture is presented in Flacara, a magazine for educational life and culture. From that point on, it will dedicate in almost all its editions certain sections to the upheaval of the Presidents and his family. In addition, this aspect was not a habit before the Election in the major newspapers, as only the speeches of Ceausescu from radio and television were constantly presented in editorials.

The year 1974 as a whole managed to create the proper framework for the protochronism and its expansion in the country, which in turn will lead to the expansion of the national values and representation of Romania’s “*greatness*” in cultural life<sup>23</sup>. This was achieved mainly by the presentation of the new directives by Ceausescu at the Eleventh Party Congress in November. The presentation of the national values, however, began earlier in the press, being given priority only after the 1974 Election.

A main focal point was the one-year anniversary of the Election. Before the election in 1974, there were few or none significant articles that can relate to Ceausescu’s personal appropriation for national symbols. In the aftermath though, one can rarely relate to the leader of Romania without associating him with the nation. In this sense, the emphasis that is built on “*national pride*”, “*Romanian Marxist-Leninism*”, and the “*symbol of the nation’s will*”<sup>24</sup>. The Election’s importance does not deny the press construction being linked to other events, such as the July Theses in 1971, but it rather completes them, as the Election was a pretext that was necessary for the regime to build the myth/image of the leader as the true embodiment of national symbols.

## Conclusion

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<sup>21</sup> Actually, it was Ștefan Voitec who handed the sceptre to Ceaușescu, as his last gesture as President of The Grand Assembly. Nicolae Giosan would become the new president of the Assembly on July 26, 1974.

<sup>22</sup> Translation found and cited in Mocănescu, *The leader cult*. The original source in Romanian is Rodica Chelaru, *Culpe care nu se uită. Convorbiri cu Cornel Burtică* [Faults which cannot be forgotten. Dialogues with Cornel Burtică] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche Publishing, 2001), p.204.

<sup>23</sup> See Verdery, *National Ideology*, 167-210.

<sup>24</sup> See *Știința*, November 11 (1974): 3-4, *Munca*, March 29 (1974): 2, and Flacăra, Number 1109, April (1976):1-4.

Nicolae Ceaușescu wanted to be remembered by the people of Romania as the nation's saviour and the one true leader that can lead them to glory. In order to do so he needed to implement different methods of manipulation that, in the end, transformed into a cult that centred on the leader's persona. A persona that had to be presented having all the national values and also one that is the embodiment of all the other great Romanian leaders in time. In order to do so, Nicolae Ceaușescu used mythology, a practice that was traced to the early moments of his rule, at the Ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party.

Furthermore, a key moment that shaped the cult of personality for the Romanian leader was the year 1968 and his refusal to invade Czechoslovakia, a moment that would weigh heavily in the years to come as his popularity will continue to grow both at national and international level.

After the Tenth Party Congress in 1969, the Romanian leader could not be contested by anybody as every guest there felt compelled to present their profound adoration for Ceaușescu. This moment marked an important milestone for the leader in becoming the undisputed leader of the Party and state and the founder of all knowledge.

In the years that came after 1969, Nicolae Ceaușescu had important visits to different communist states that would leave him wanting to make the same changes when he comes back to Romania. Through the visits in China and North Korea, the Romanian leader would understand the principles of creating a cult of personality one that would rival those of Mao or Stalin. After he managed to obtain total control within the party, the one thing left is to be recognized by the Romanian people as the one true leader.

Ceausescu's most successful populist movement was directed straight to Romanian nationalism. Indeed, his impassionate position of the Romanian nation against the interference of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia brought him the final consolidation of his power and, for the moment, his authority in August 1968. Ironically, for the Soviet Union, the move into Czechoslovakia not only strengthened Ceausescu's power but also minimized the influence of the Soviets in Romania for the next fifteen years.

The role of these speeches were not enough analysed because they had a crucial role in the consolidation and prolonging of the Ceausescu dictatorship in the sense that the national-communist image lied upon a history of traditional feelings. From this point of view, the nationalist communism was the one that continued the nationalist mythology, which offered him credibility in his seek for legitimation. Also there were several nationalist elements that were introduced by

Ceausescu such as “*Cantarea Romaniei*” which was a series of shows that were distributed all over the country, gathered all together in the festival, most of them promoting the idea of the people protecting “*the liberty, independence and national unity*”. The conception of the Bucharest leaders the “*Romanian born poet*” myth combines with the one of the kind and well devoted Romanian in creating socialism.

The struggle for legitimacy is one of the main factors which motivated the usage of the nationalistic symbols and rhetoric. The leader has used examples of Romania’s troubled past in Bessarabia and Transylvania to appeal to national emotions and sentiments and to cultivate support for his regime. The sources of Ceausescu’ cult to three main important factors: his independent foreign policy, the leader’s strategies for internal economic development and his personality.

Ceausescu and his journey to the East is one of the most important factors in creating the cult of the leader and through that, another method to legitimize his power on his return home.

The 1974 Election as President was the key moment in Ceausescu’s total affirmation as supreme leader and his total legitimation in power. An important feature that is linked to this Election is the image creating of the leader as a direct descendant of great heroes in the Romanian history. The 1974 election represented the key turning point in the process-making of Ceausescu and his leader cult. In addition, it represented a return to the ceremonial and visual patterns of veneration that had its roots from the medieval tradition. This is the main argument why the 1974 Moment has been displayed as the main and critical point of expression in the cult of Ceausescu.

Nicolae Ceaușescu struggled in the beginning to legitimate himself in power but managed to implement his plan, step by step, using elements of symbolism and mythology, forms of nationalistic propaganda and, probably the most important of them all, creating a personality cult in order to legitimate his rule.

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