



ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ

SCOSAAR

Anexa nr.6

SUMMARY OF THE HABILITATION THESIS*

TITLE – Cultural Policies and Mechanisms of Power in Communist Romania: The Bicephalous Dictatorship, Industrialization, and Corruption in the Late Communist Period

Field of expertise: **HISTORY**

Author: POPA COSMIN

*în cazul în care teza va fi redactată într-o limbă străină, textul în limba română va fi adaptat

SUMMARY

The habilitation thesis is structured into five comprehensive sections, each aiming to synthesize the author's scientific pursuits and achievements during the period following the conferment of the doctoral degree in history, while also delineating, with increasing clarity, the envisioned directions for future research.

The **introductory section** offers an overview of the author's primary areas of inquiry, reflecting the dominant research trajectories during various stages of academic activity. It also provides a systematic review of the contributions deemed significant for advancing knowledge in the field, situating them within the broader historiographical and methodological debates that have shaped contemporary studies on Eastern European communism.

The **first section**, *The Construction of Socialist Humanist Intellectuality during Nicolae Ceaușescu's Regime*, synthesizes research addressing the complex relationship between political power and the humanist intellectual elite under Ceaușescu. Between 1969 and 1970, Romania's research system underwent a profound and large-scale reorganization, designed to establish direct connections between science and "production," which, in the regime's terminology, included education and culture. Specialized councils and committees, economic research bodies, and the social sciences were subjected to structural reforms intended to enhance the role of scientific expertise in political decision-making.

This reconfiguration culminated in 1970 with the creation of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences, conceived as a "super-ministry" under the Communist Party's direct control. Subordinate to the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR), the new institution was entrusted with the formulation of research plans, the design of strategies for cadre training, and the production of comprehensive works—treatises, monographs, and encyclopedias—all rigorously aligned with the official ideological line. By transferring key institutes from the Romanian Academy to this new body, the regime centralized resources and research agendas, relegating the traditional Academy to a secondary position. The establishment of the Academy of Social and Political Sciences marked a turning point in Ceaușescu's cultural policies, as it institutionalized a tighter ideological oversight of intellectual activity. This section

traces the evolution of these new organizational structures throughout the various phases of the communist regime, up to its collapse in 1989, and critically examines their long-term effects on Romania's academic and cultural landscape.

The **second section**, *Anatomy of a Clan Dictatorship and the "Elena Ceaușescu Factor"*, explores the political and institutional consequences of the emergence of a second center of power within the communist regime. Particular emphasis is placed on the new forms of control and the transformations in state institutions, focusing especially on the architecture and functioning of Romania's cadre system during the 1980s.

A substantial part of this section examines the phenomenon the author has termed the "Ceaușist feminist diversion." This strategy served a dual purpose: on the one hand, it created a political framework that facilitated Elena Ceaușescu's unprecedented rise to power, closely connected to Nicolae Ceaușescu's broader efforts to consolidate his control over central and local power groups. On the other hand, it enabled the transfer of a significant female labor force into the industrial sector to meet the growing demands of extensive industrialization. Despite these efforts, the evolution of gender dynamics in Romanian society remained largely organic, with no significant increase in female representation in higher education, academia, or decision-making structures. This reality, documented through internal statistical data, provides a foundation for a critical discussion on the "diversion" of feminism in late Romanian communism and its instrumentalization for political purposes.

The **third section**, *Corruption – Informal Mechanisms, Resistance, and Political System under Ceaușescu*, analyzes the dual nature of corruption in communist Romania between 1965 and 1989, examining both its functional and dysfunctional aspects. The primary objective of this inquiry was not merely to compile an inventory of corruption cases—although many are striking and illustrative—but to investigate how Ceaușescu's regime strategically deployed corruption as a tool to reinforce political control.

From this perspective, policies such as the administrative-territorial reorganization of the 1960s acquire new significance. Far from being purely economic measures aimed at improving efficiency, these initiatives also served to dismantle entrenched power networks formed during Gheorghiu-Dej's leadership. The analysis of corruption in collectivized agriculture highlights the regime's inherent dilemma: while certain measures encouraged development by introducing

elements of private incentive, they also risked amplifying informal networks of power and patronage, without producing tangible improvements in agricultural productivity.

The **fourth section**, *The Second Communist Industrialization (1965–1983)*, extends the analysis of economic mechanisms and reflects the author's contribution to ongoing historiographical debates on communist modernization. The study of Romania's industrial system during the 1970s and early 1980s builds on the concept of a "second communist industrialization," formulated to underscore the distinctions between this phase and the earlier period of 1951–1960.

This second wave of industrialization was anchored in a consolidated political platform, where economic development was conceived not merely as a modernization strategy but as a critical instrument for reinforcing the regime's power. Its strategic objectives combined an intensification of inter-socialist trade with a growing integration into the global economy. However, the mounting technological and financial pressures, especially after 1975, prompted a redefinition of the communist state's role in society. The introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1979 formalized a process already underway—the gradual withdrawal of the welfare state from the social sphere under the guise of industrial efficiency. This policy shift, however, exacerbated structural imbalances and compounded the social crisis that unfolded alongside the economic downturn.

Ceaușescu's policies ultimately transformed Romania's economic crisis into an autonomous phenomenon, distinct from regional trends in Eastern Europe. The analysis of this period allows for the formulation of preliminary conclusions regarding the contradictory nature of Romanian communist modernization: despite notable quantitative advances, the regime failed to significantly reduce structural disparities compared to neighboring states, and its prioritization of industrial growth came at the expense of popular consumption and social progress.

The **fifth section**, *Professional Development Plans*, outlines the author's proposed research directions and teaching objectives, in the event of habilitation. Among the projects envisaged are studies on the social and humanitarian consequences of Ceaușescu-era economic policies, within interdisciplinary frameworks that combine historical and medical expertise. The author also intends to resume investigations into the history of the USSR and Romanian-Soviet relations, particularly from a cultural perspective, and to expand comparative analyses of left-wing totalitarian regimes.

