Culture, Politics and Ideology in the First Decade of the Ceauşescu Regime from the Perspective of Hungarian Theater Life in Romania

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Introduction

After the Second World War, under the decisive influence of the Soviet power, Romania, like other Central European countries, came under the influence of the USSR. A long process of Sovietization and transformation of society began. Cultural and artistic life, including the theater, was subjected to political pressure to become the bearer of communist ideology and propaganda. This ideological pressure was present in various forms (in the context of political and ideological needs) throughout the period between 1948 and 1989. The existence of theatre in this period, as is usual in totalitarian regimes, is characterized by duplicity, a "schizophrenic" mode of being, the medium being constrained, on the one hand, to continue the "traditional" line, its cultural mission, namely, to convey values, aesthetic impressions, or to raise questions about human existence, and on the other hand to serve the regime, to create a new cultural framework for the reception of the ideological messages of the newly established regime. This fragile balance was influenced in different periods of the regime by the ebb and flow of political pressure.

In certain moments (such as the establishment of the regime and the taking over of the Stalinist model in the 1950s, the ideological turn after 1971, or the national communist expectations of the 1980s) the theater faced enormous constraints from the political actors, and in the few moments of ideological respite (the 1960s), the theater had the opportunity to seek and find new ways, new possibilities of expression.

The Hungarian community in Romania during this period developed a rich cultural life, within the limits of the imposed political conditions, based on a well-organized institutional system. As at national level, theater played an important role. Hungarian theaters (sections), together with educational and cultural centers, were some of the most important pillars of Hungarian cultural life in Romania, both from the perspective of cultural

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policy (the theater being, in this case, refurbished as a political instrument) and from the point of view of ethnocultural identity.

In this paper we set out to analyze the evolution of the general political-ideological framework in the context of the policy employed with regards to the Hungarian minority in the first decade of the Ceauşescu regime. We will try to present the stages of ideological evolution, their effect on cultural life, the attitude of the party leadership towards the intelligentsia, and the way in which the RCP (Romanian Communist Party) dealt with the issue of culture. We consider the analysis of the ideological and political framework to be an important one because this factor broadly outlined the limits and possibilities of cultural existence. The theatre, directly or indirectly, was also directly or indirectly related to this general ideological framework, mainly because it had to respond to the challenges, to the stringent demands of the authorities, while also having to conform or simultaneously find a way to oppose (or, at the very least, to minimize the negative effects of) the dominant ideology.

In the Stalinist period, in the 1950s, from the point of view of the ideological authorities, the new theater of the "popular-democratic" Romania aimed to develop the cultural and artistic range of an increasingly wider audience and to instill in the spectators—through the repertoires—the willingness to accept the spirit of socialist democracy. This repertoire was to be centered on the ideological conception defined by the leadership of the Romanian Workers' Party—Romanian Communist Party (the PMR–RCP), so as to put an end to the old theatrical tradition (with its allegedly decadent, mystical, chauvinist, diversionist-evangelist overtones) and to shape a different normative spectator profile. The theater conceived by the party leadership, an important tool in the ideological arsenal meant to be deployed against the remnants of the bourgeois class, by way of educating and entertaining the population, was subject to a twofold approach, implying both ideological purification and institutional support. On the one hand, in the field of theatrical art, there took place an ideological revision of dramaturgy. Political pressure increased, censorship methods were amplified and socialist realism, imported from the Soviet Union, was preferred. In some cases, purges in the staff of theaters were also conducted. On the other hand, in addition to the existing theaters, new institutions were established and given material support for the realization of the tentative "ideological-cultural" goals of the nomenklatura.[1]

Ideological control over culture and theater was exercised by various state institutions, the General Directorate of Press and Printing (DGTP, 1949–1975), which in turn had several sections, including the art section, the Theater-Film Service, the ideological sections of the Central Committee, the State Committee for Culture and Art (CSCA, which in 1971 became the Council for Socialist Culture and Education—CCES). Censorship was focused on dramaturgy and texts, the stage was not yet under ideological control, and the regime did not seem to realize that the stage act was undergoing a metamorphosis, and was, to some extent, transforming itself into a new artistic mode.

Throughout this period, the Hungarian Theatre developed under the same conditions. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, an institutionally-guided development took place. Transylvanian Hungarians had six Hungarian state theaters (or sections): in Timişoara, Oradea, Satu-Mare, Cluj, Târgu-Mureş, and Sfântu-Gheorghe. Throughout the communist regime, including during this period, the official Hungarian theater and culture had

to carry a double burden. By cultivating a so-called progressive culture (cultural elements that can be categorized as falling under the scope of communist ideological discourse) they served the official line of the regime, conveying direct or indirect communist propaganda, but at the same time, through careful selection, they also contributed to the preservation of ethnocultural tradition and identity. The new Hungarian culture in communist Romania was born out of the interweaving of proletkult reading parameters, aimed at legitimizing the new power, and the cultural and literary traditions of the interwar period, influenced by the Hungarian intellectual movement (nepszolgalat—serving the people), which conceived of cultural production as a service to the community, or rather to the people. [2]

Despite the ideological pressure, the aesthetics of theater in the early years of the regime did not differ much from the interwar period. In their theatrical personnel and mentality, in their working methods, the pre-World War II "remnants" and the new structures coexisted in spite of all the reformation attempts made by the Party.[3] Also during this period a new generation of Hungarian intellectuals emerged, who would play an important role in the organization of cultural life, including the world of the theatre. This young generation, unified by their ethnic Hungarian origins, fascinated by the promises of Bolshevism and the illusions of the leftist movement, believed in the possibility of political and ideological integration without assimilation. The successful career of the most famous Hungarian playwright of this period in Romania, Sütő Andras, can be mentioned as an example of this movement.[4]

The representative plays from this period of contemporary Hungarian theatre are dramaturgically superficial, without real conflicts and oftentimes merely schematic: Sütő Andras and Hajdu Zoltán, "Mezítlábas menyasszony" (The barefoot bride), Kiss László-Kováts Dezső, "Vihar a havason" (Storm on the mountain). At the end of the 1950s, the theaters had limited possibilities to produce more artistically nuanced performances. Some examples include: Novák Anna, "Kovácsékh," (The Kovács family), Szabó Lajos, "Menekülés" (Escape), Balla Károly, "Vádolom magam" (I accuse myself), or Földes Mária, "Hétköznapok" (Ordinary days).[5]

The institution that most convincingly played the role of socialist culture provider (this function also being thought of as a service to the community) was the Târgu Mureş theater, renamed as the Szekler State Theater in 1946. Headed by the famous director Tompa Miklós, with an excellent troupe, it became (in only a few years) not only the most prestigious institution of the city, but also a paragon of national pride, as it proved that one can sustain and produce quality cultural activities from the periphery. The theater directed by Tompa also functioned as a real artistic workshop, achieving the performance of being the closest in artistic and qualitative terms to the Romanian theater, by way of implementing Stanislavski's theory and presenting social messages combined with a strong psychological undercurrent.

The dual mission of the Hungarian theatre in the capital of the Hungarian Autonomous Region (RAM) was obvious: together with the philharmonic, it familiarized entire generations of citizens with classical and Hungarian culture, and at the same time it functioned as a propaganda tool in the villages, with the mission of distracting the population from the influence of religious mysticism. This duplicity is also reflected in the party documents, which show that the party leaders, the ruling bodies of the RAM, were not always

satisfied with the results of the theater from the ideological point of view, considering that many of the plays that were staged did not meet the ideological requirements and had a typically petty-bourgeois content.[6]

The Years of Apparent Liberalization

The origins of and the reasons behind the period of relative liberalization in the first decade of the Ceauşescu regime can, to some extent, be found in the events of the last years of the Gheorghiu-Dej era. The political developments after the Hungarian revolution of 1956 gradually changed the ideological framework both in the context of the socialist camp and with regard to Romania. The Dej regime survived the process of destalinization and revolutionary events that had taken place in other socialist states (Hungary, Poland). By eliminating the old Moscow group, the PMR leader consolidated his positions in the party. On the foreign front, Romania began a policy of distancing itself from Soviet tutelage and even obtained the withdrawal of Red Army troops from the country. The whole process culminated in the rejection, in 1964, of the so-called Valev Plan and the declaration of the Central Committee of the PMR, which emphasized, among other things, the thesis that each communist party was free to draw up its own directives and political trajectory. With this document, known as Romania's "Declaration of Independence," the Romanian state effectively declared its independence within the socialist bloc. With this declaration, the PMR transformed the sovereignty and autonomy of the socialist camp into an internal doctrine. The strict and total ideological control exercised over the entirety of society was counterbalanced by these popular foreign policy measures (sovereignty vis-à-vis the USSR and a relative openness towards the West) and later, from the early 1960s, also by a partial reconciliation with society at large. Political rehabilitation and state sanctioned pardons, from 1963 to 1965, were two of the most important initiatives implemented with the intention of promoting partial social reconciliation. Several writers, scholars and public figures who were on the party's blacklists were rehabilitated. The use of national symbols and the reinterpretation of history were other important elements with mobilizing power, being integrated with the party's attempts to gain the large-scale support of society. The party leadership demonstrated a highly refined political flair, managing to capture and appropriate the Romanian national discourse, a dynamic and successful brand of patriotic discourse that had never waned since its emergence in the mid-19th century.[7]

All these events, making up the plan of "reconciliation with the country," marked the beginning of a new stage in cultural life. Emancipation from the USSR also automatically heralded a gradual disengagement of Soviet elements from Romanian culture, a strengthening of the autochthonous, national element, as well as a detachment from the oppressive tutelage of Soviet-style socialist realism. There was also a change in the Party's behavior towards intellectuals. As we have already mentioned, pardons and political rehabilitations were undertaken, and after a period of repression of the intellectual elite, a new openness and paternal bonhomie followed. The PMR addressed a new kind of call, mobilizing intellectuals to forge a sovereign communist Romania, to achieve the emancipation of the Romanian socialist nation. As Ioan Stanomir states, the refinement of discourse and the

cloning of patriotism would be at the origin of this transfiguration, which automatically meant a change of generations. The old fighters handed over the baton to those born in the bosom of the new world.[8]

This call from the party, this new type of discourse would also be addressed to the world of literature and theater through party doctrines and ideologically-framed messages.[9] The coming to power of Nicolae Ceauş escu would revive this type of approach and open new paths in the evolution of cultural and theatrical life. Ceauşescu was elected First Secretary of the PMR on 22 March 1965, shortly after Gheorghiu-Dej's death. In the 4–5 years after taking power, Ceauşescu gradually ousted all his political opponents and created the internal political conditions on the basis of which he could consolidate a new social and economic direction. In 1965, the 9th Congress of the PCR was held, marking the beginning of a new political and ideological period. The first years after Ceauşescu's accession to the leadership of the country were spent devising and disseminating the new ideological principles and directives proposed by Ceauşescu or those already established under Dej. Among these directives were those that would seek to further strengthen the ideological basis of the party line and implement the so-called policy of independence, as well usher in the gradual preparation of the economic-administrative transformations planned in the previous period.[10]

In the field of ideological-cultural policy, the new party leadership would continue the line first drawn in the early 1960s. The congress documents emphasized that the country had entered a new stage of development (distancing itself from the Soviet past), these new conditions leading people of culture to a new approach to reality. Intellectuals were allowed, even encouraged, to leave behind the mistakes of the past, to continue the progressive line of Romanian culture and to deal with the many "important moments in the history of our homeland which have not yet been fully reflected in literary and artistic works."[11] For the first time in the country's post-1949 history, an official document mentions the possibility of "intensifying cooperation with people of culture and those involved with the arts in socialist (as well as non-socialist) countries, and contacts with contemporary cultural life in order to make our country more and more present in the concert of universal culture and art."[12] The "generosity" of the new leadership in the field of theatrical art was also made manifest in the abolition of the one-sided protection of socialist realism. "Any tendency of exclusivism or rigidity manifested in this field must be removed. What is essential is that each artist, in his own style, while preserving his artistic individuality, should show great responsibility towards the content of his work, and should aim to see that it finds its way into the minds and hearts of a great many people."[13]

In the process of consolidating and legitimizing his power, Ceauşescu was not satisfied with the ideological messages mentioned above. The re-establishment of the relationship with Romanian society is also reflected in the policy upheld and directed towards intellectuals and culture. Starting in 1965, the first meetings with representatives of different social groups took place, including writers, people of culture and of the theater. During these well-organized and choreographed meetings, the PCR leader had the opportunity to personally convey the new ideological lines, to make a personal appeal and, through a somewhat reciprocal interaction, to outline the limits and possibilities of the cultural sphere.[14] The theaters were allowed to engage in cultural exchange practices not only with the socialist countries, but to some extent also with the West.

A similar action to regain the confidence of the Hungarian intelligentsia was undertaken through the organization of a meeting between the Party leadership at the highest level and Hungarian intellectuals. On 28 June 1968, following an initiative of the leaders of the RCP, the most influential Hungarian opinion leaders (more than 50 writers, poets, editors, artists, teachers) were invited to Bucharest to participate in an event that was organized according to the established conventions of previous meetings. Among the Hungarian intellectuals present on this occasion, there could be found representatives of the theaters—namely, the directors and heads of the six Hungarian theaters in Transylvania, as well as other directors, actors and playwrights.[15] Given the fact that the coverage area of the Transylvanian Hungarian theaters was satisfactory, no administrative, institutional, funding or reorganizational problems were identified or singled out. Problems related to the activity of the Hungarian theaters arose indirectly, through the rethinking of the so-called progressive Hungarian culture in Romania, especially of the kind which was propagated by means of contemporary Hungarian dramaturgy.[16]

In order to strengthen his own positions and to get rid of his old political opponents within the party, Ceauşescu began distancing himself from the policies of the first decades after the Second World War. Thus, alongside the mobilizing ideology, the recourse to socialist patriotism, the possibility of criticism and self-criticism also emerged, this process being reflected in contemporary drama. Through this gesture, by detecting the mistakes of the past, the humanist intelligentsia would now be generously offered a new territory to explore, and would be invested, post factum, with the mission of a proverbial beacon of national consciousness. Contemporary playwrights, these "engineers of the soul," would now take part in rewriting the recent past.[17] Of course, socialism could only be challenged on the level of details and not on any substantive grounds, this space for debate not being allowed to jeopardize the stability of the system. From the point of view of political theater, the rigidity of the 1950s was no longer the issue; the time had come to seduce the spectator with a more elaborate version of party plays.[18]

The new orientation of the 1960s also left its mark on the theaters' repertoires. As it was already established at the PMR congress, and later emphasized by Ceauşescu personally, contemporary drama, Romanian plays, "original" plays had to be present as much as possible on the stages of Romanian theatres. During this period, the number of local plays increased significantly. For example, in the 1965–1966 season, at a national level, contemporary Romanian plays were present with 166 performances, classical Romanian plays and plays from the interwar period with 93 performances, plays from socialist countries with 55 performances, and universal or traditional plays with 90 performances. Alongside the local plays we can also note the relatively high number of plays originating from the West, this category counting 130 performances, which marked the solidification of the policy of cultural openness. Out of a total of 534 performances, 259 were Romanian plays, and out of the 276 premieres, 135 were Romanian plays.[19]

The cultural liberalization of the 1960s also had a noticeable effect on the evolution of the Hungarian theater in Romania. After the ideological restrictions that followed the suppression of the Hungarian uprising in 1956, there was a gradual ideological thaw, which was also reflected in the repertoires of the six theaters. The activity records for the 1965–1966 season show that the number of performances and "foreign plays" increased visibly, in Sfântu-Gheorghe (218 Romanian, 142 foreign), Oradea (56 Romanian, 180

foreign), Satu Mare (71 Romanian, 138 foreign), Timişoara (50 Romanian, 174 foreign). The Hungarian theaters did not abandon the specific mission of minority institutions to publicize Hungarian cultural values, either in classical or contemporary literature. In the mid-1960s about 20% of the plays performed were Hungarian. The most performed playwrights were Méhes György, Sütő András, Molnár Ferenc, Madách Imre, etc. Among the contemporary Romanian playwrights in the Hungarian theaters, the audience could see plays by Baranga, Everac, I. Hristea, S. Fărcăşan, Gellu Naum, or M. Sebastian.[20]

As far as the Hungarian plays are concerned, in spite of these (at times sterile) attempts, the Hungarian critics in Romania were not satisfied with the number and quality of Hungarian plays. In an article he wrote in 1968, Nagy Pál from Târgu Mureş spoke of the dearth of Hungarian plays (one or two plays a year) and called for more plays to be selected for staging from contemporary Hungarian drama, as well as Hungarian and international traditional drama.[21] In the magazine *A Hét*, Kovács Ferenc, in a broader analysis of the state of Hungarian theater in Romania, pointed out that, unfortunately, Hungarian theater had not managed to approach the level of the theaters in Bucharest. The Hungarian theaters had not managed to take sufficient advantage of the possibilities of cultural openness, Hungarian directors had not been able to study abroad, to get into contact with Western theaters, and at the same time they had not managed to create a sufficiently poignant cultural image of the Hungarian theater. Kovács also complained about the poor state of Hungarian critics and the few contacts that Hungarian theater had with Romanian theater. [22]

The Cultural Mini-Revolution and Its Effects on Cultural and Theatrical life

BY THE early 1970s, Nicolae Ceauşescu had consolidated his power. He had succeeded in ousting his political opponents and, thanks to his skillful foreign policy, had substantially increased his popularity both at home and abroad. Through administrative reforms, the country was reorganized into counties under the leadership of first secretaries loyal to the party leadership (an administrative model that would also be more economically efficient). The committees of working people of different nationalities, the Front of Democracy and Socialist Unity, created new forms of social control and new channels of mobilization. The Tenth Congress in 1969 marked the total success of Ceauşescu. All the necessary conditions were created to speed up the implementation of the grandiose projects of social and economic transformation that had been worked out in theory in the 1960s, such as industrialization projects, the administrative reorganization of towns and villages, and the creation of a homogeneous socialist nation.

The first warning signs of a possible turn in ideological and cultural life can be traced back to the materials of the 10th Congress of the RCP in 1969. The criticism of cultural life already foreshadowed the Party leadership's dissatisfaction with the cultural status quo and it decisively drew the lines and the limits that confined artistic creation. The call to writers and artists foreshadowed the increasingly limited thematic terrain that was made available to all forms of artistic creation: "What is required of you, comrades, is to penetrate to the

depths of the people's existence, and, understanding their yearnings, their efforts and their heroic struggle, to portray the grandiose fresco of socialist Romania. In the marvelous language of art, render the creative vibration of the people, who, in transforming the face of the country through their heroic work, transform themselves. Never forget that the purpose of our art is to ennoble man, to inspire him to new great deeds, to the realization of the ideals of socialism and communism."[23]

At the plenary session of the CC of the RCP in July 1971, Nicolae Ceauşescu gave a resounding speech on improving political ideological activity and educating party members in the spirit of Marxism, which has gone down in history as the July Theses. Ceauşescu presented his theses at the CC meeting of 6 July 1971. This was the date when the so-called "mini-cultural revolution" was launched in Romania. The theses proposed an increased interference in political-ideological and cultural life: broader and deeper ideological education and indoctrination, a rethinking of the scope of propaganda, more rigorous selection criteria for party officials, increased social mobilization, the exclusion of Western philosophical and cultural currents from the national media, and a tightening of socialist censorship. [24]

The Plenum of the Central Committee of the PCR, convened on 3–5 November 1971, was devoted almost exclusively to cultural life. The main ideological lines and the whole framework within which cultural life was seen and conceived by the party leadership were drawn. In his speech, Ceauşescu explicitly emphasized that in the period of 1971–1975 the country had reached a new stage, that of multilateral developed socialist construction, and consequently everything, including culture, would now have to be subordinated to these national projects. The bourgeoisie had been abolished, the socialist economy had been forged, great transformations had taken place in the social structures, a real cultural revolution had taken place, and in this vein everything would now have to be subordinated to the formation of the so-called new man. [25]

The party leader launched a harsh criticism of the cultural life which had been predominant in previous years: serious shortcomings were now made manifest in the guidance of literary and artistic activity, such as the tendency to offer a recourse to some general theories, detached from the life of the people, rife with variegated forms of rigidity, enclosure and formalism, or the launching and importation of a series of films and other artistic and literary works of poor artistic quality, laced with harmful ideological-educational content. [26] The party leader, totally abandoning the tolerance of previous years, drew a militant Stalinist-style line for art and culture. [27] It was recommended that the theater return to conveying revolutionary messages: "Also, on the stages of our theaters and opera houses, works of all genres must find a place, as well as contemporary works of a revolutionary, militant character, thus contributing, in the spirit of our progressive traditions, to the education of the great masses of the people."[28] Dumitru Popescu, the main person in charge of cultural life, emphasized that it was inadmissible for artists to fall prey to "the free game of fantasy."[29]

After a few years of respite from the hardline positions of socialism, literature and art were called upon to criticize everything that opposed socialism. Starting in 1971, Ceauşescu gradually introduced new types of discourse, new economic and social orientations, and culture was obliged to follow these steps. It had to follow these guidelines as part of a well-defined mission. The co-existence of two kinds of art, one committed to

Party ideals and another deemed bourgeois and reactionary, on the territory of the same socialist state, was inadmissible. The July Theses can be conceived as a guide employed to exorcize the demons that threatened the happiness of the State built by the Party. The era of talking about mistakes was now over, the tribalization of the working man's existence being enacted in its stead: such avenues or generic mediums would encompass the apartment building, the neighborhood, the football team, the factory. The Party considered it a real danger that, deprived of ideological tutelage and communist guidance, pupils and students could become susceptible to the siren song of protean reactionary thought. [30]

The first conflict between the guardians of ideology and a theater company took place in Bucharest. On 30 September 1972, *Scânteia* reprinted a press release announcing the cancellation of a show directed by Pintilie: "The Bureau of the Council of Culture and Socialist Education has decided to suspend the show [The Reviewer] and to ban it from being performed on any other stage in the country in such an adaptation and will henceforth take measures to ensure that such events will no longer take place in the cultural life of Romania."[31] The play was banned (also in the USSR, in 1971) on the grounds that it criticized the party leadership and alluded to the international diplomatic visits of party leaders. This case provided the baseline for the future interpretation and application of the abovementioned theses. This incident marked the first time when decisions were made against the theaters, after the initial release of the theses.

After these first signals, some people from the Hungarian theater field also took the initiative. Csorba András, the director of the state theater in Târgu Mureş, criticized the Hungarian plays: "Our repertoire had some weaker plays, plays born from philosophies different from Marxist-Leninist principles, plays that reflect a petty-bourgeois perspective and that create a false image of the world we live in, and that also talk about wrong or inferior attitudes to life.... We are aware, and party documents remind us, that art is in fact politics. To create something artistic is to do politics," underlined the director at a meeting organized by the County Party Committee, headed by the first county secretary, Nicolae Vereş. Sütő András, the best-known Hungarian playwright in Romania, also criticized Harag György's acting and directing. "We also talked about some performance problems with theaters. Comrade Harag is here with us, who promised to direct Nagy István's workers' play, a play which the young people would have said was a masterpiece of absurd drama. The old writer almost fainted when he read about his own work being described as absurd. Comrade Harag thought it beneficial to present this play in a modern perspective; he thought that realistic presentation or staging was out of fashion. There are others, both in literature and in the field of criticism, who believe that a play can only be called successful if people are astonished and don't understand anything."[32] The well-known writer and playwright further criticized the modern style of staging, the methodology of the actors, and said that theatres and directors exaggerate when they consider a play to be a success simply because it is expensive or because well-known personalities are present and banquets are organized after the performance.[33]

Szőcs Kálmán's 1972 theater survey in the *Vörös Zászló* newspaper shows that the theater management was trying to accommodate, at least rhetorically, the new ideological requirements. Director Csorba András Csorba said that the new repertoire had been carefully conceived, taking into consideration the party documents. In the rhetoric of the "spectators" who were asked about their preferences and expectations from the theater,

we find elements pertaining to the official State narrative. Bartha Pál Pál, a civil servant, wanted to see some plays in which a man could recognize his everyday colleagues, while also expressing dissatisfaction with the absence of plays written by Bartha. The worker Antal József also wanted local plays to be staged alongside the classics. Borda Dorin, a librarian, said that local drama was at its most prolific stage, and that "it would be good if playwrights paid more attention to the permanent changes in social and spiritual life."[34]

In the beginning, the July Theses were seen as an ideological shift rather than a sign of an entirely new political direction. Most intellectuals believed, in this first period, that they would be able to formally adapt to the demands of the new ideological turn and that it could be thwarted, except for the case of certain literary works, plays or themes of general interest. The long-term implications of the theses visibly changed the course of party ideology. Instead of the liberalization that emerged at the end of the Dej era and the beginning of the Ceauşescu era, a new period of ideological constraint was now instituted. Putting the new ideological control measures into practice would have increasingly harmful consequences for Romanian society as a whole, especially beginning with the late 1970s. The effects on dramaturgy and repertoires will coalesce gradually, until the mid-70s. It is obvious that a new stage had also begun in the life of the Hungarian theaters of Romania. As a primary consequence, these ideological constraints would, from this point on, enforce expectations of strict adaptation, and the changes in the Party's attitude and policy towards the Hungarian minority would invariably put the Hungarian theater in a different position, namely, in a struggle for survival.

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Notes

1. Cristian Vasile, "Politicile culturale comuniste în timpul regimului Gheorghiu-Dej," Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011, 186–232. Angelo Mitchievici, Ioan Stanomir, "Comunismul INC. Istorii despre o lume care a fost," Bucharest: Humanitas, 2016, 15–101.
2. A telling example could be the cult of the two Bolyai mathematicians in Târgu Mureş, who on the one hand were presented as scientists and scholars who fought against reactionary dogmatism and mysticism, but for the local Hungarian community they also stood for a kind of continuity, conceptualized in terms of cultural heritage. On this phenomenon see: Stefano Bottoni, "Transilvania roşie. Comunismul român şi problema naţională 1944-1965," Cluj-Napoca: Editura ISPMN, 2010, 179–189.
3. Kötő József, "Politikum és esztétikum. Színház a totalitarizmus markában (1945-1989)," in *Színház és diktatúra a 20. században*, ed. Lengyel Gyorgy, Budapest: Corvina-OSZMI, 2011, 278–301.
4. Novák Csaba Zoltán, "Epoca de aur? Ceuşescu şi maghiarii. Politica Partidului Comunist Român faţă de minoritatea maghiară în perioada regimului Ceauşescu," Târgovişte: Editura Curtea Veche, 2020, 215–238.
5. Kötő József, "Politikum és esztétikum," 278–301.
6. Stefano Bottoni, "Transilvania roşie," 185.
7. Novák Csaba Zoltán, "Epoca de aur," 21–31.

8. Ioan Stanomir, "1964: ştafeta nevăzută," in Paul Cernat, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, Ioan Stanomir, "Explorări în comunismul românesc," III, Bucharest: Polirom, 2004, 102–137.
9. "Congresul al III-lea al PMR, 20-25 iunie 1960," Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1960, 92.
10. Novák Csaba Zoltán, "Epoca de aur," 31–47.
11. "Congresul al IX-lea al PCR, 19-14 iulie 1965," Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1965, 92.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 96.
14. Alina Pavelescu, Laura Dumitru, ed., "P.C.R. şi intelectualii în primii ani ai regimului Ceauşescu (1965-1972)," Bucharest, 2007, 22.
15. Rappaport Ottó (director, Cluj), Senkálszky Endre (actor, director, Cluj), Nagy István (writer, Cluj), Farkas István (regizor, Oradea), Vitályos Ildikó (actress, Oradea), Csíki András (director, Satu Mare), Dukász Anna (actress, director, Sfântu-Gheorghe), Mag Péter (literary secretary, Timişoara), Sinka Károly (director, Timişoara), Sütő András (writer, Târgu Mureş), Kovács György (actor, Târgu Mureş), Gálfalvi Zsolt (literary critic, director, Târgu Mureş), Lohinszky Loránd (actor, Târgu Mureş). National Archives of Romania (NAR), coll. CC al PCR, Secţia Propagandă şi agitaţie, file. 18/1968. fols. 98–102.
16. Novák Csaba Zoltán, "Epoca de aur," 85–93.
17. Ioan Stanomir, "Simfonia patetică: montaj dramatic, în două acte şi un prolog," in *Explonări în comunismul românesc*, vol. I, eds. Paul Cernat, Ion Manolescu, Angelo Mitchievici, Ioan Stanomir, Bucharest: Polirom, 2004, 326–329.
18. Ibid.
19. Târgu Mureş State Theater Archive, Hungarian section, box 1965.
20. Ibid.
21. In Târgu Mureş between 1961 and 1966, only two of the 24 premieres were Hungarian plays. Ferencz Éva-Keresztes Franciska, "Marosvásárhelyi Állami Színház 1961-1978. A magyar tagozaton bemutatott előadások történetének legfontosabb adatai," Târgu Mures, Marosvásárhelyi Nemzeti Színház-Kutatóközpont, 2017, 26–91.
22. Kovács Ferenc, "Valamit tenni kell," "A Hét," Bucharest, 9, 1970.
23. Ibid.
24. Novák Csaba Zoltán, "Epoca de aur," 125–128
25. "Plenara CC al PCR, 3-5 noiembrie 1971," Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971, 11–24.
26. Ibid., 25–27
27. Ibid., 68.
28. Ibid., 69.
29. Ibid., 121.
30. Ioan Stanomir, "Un pământ numit România," 263.
31. Cristian Vasile, "Viaţa intelectuală şi artistică în primul deceniu al regimului Ceauşescu, 1965–1974," Bucharest: Humanitas, 2016, 86–118.
32. National Archives of Romania, Mureş County Division, coll. Mureş County Party Committee, file 2/1971, fols. 20–64.
33. Ibid.
34. "Vörös Zászló," Târgu Mures, no. 206, 1971.

Abstract

Culture, Politics and Ideology in the First Decade of the Ceauşescu Regime from the Perspective of Hungarian Theater Life in Romania

During the communist era, theatre is characterized by a duplicity and "schizophrenic" situation. On the one hand, it continues the "traditional" way of the cultural mission, transmitting values, aesthetic impressions, asking questions about human existence, and on the other hand, it serves the regime. Throughout the communist regime, including this period the official Hungarian theatre and culture had a double load. By cultivating the so-called progressive culture (cultural elements that can be framed in the communist ideological discourse) they served the official line of the regime, transmitting direct or indirect communist propaganda, but at the same time, through careful selection, they contributed to preserving the tradition and the ethnocultural identity. At the beginning of the 1960s in the domestic and international political context, there is a change of cultural policy in Romania. The party addresses a new type of call, mobilizing intellectuals to build the sovereign communist Romania, to achieve the emancipation of the Romanian socialist nation. This change was the basis of the cultural policy in the early years of the Ceausescu regime. During the years of relative liberalization, the theatre from Romania, including the Hungarian one, benefited from some new opportunities compared to the Stalinist period: new artistic currents other than socialist realism, some openness to contemporary socialist and Western theatre, changes in repertoire politics, etc. This opening period will end in the early 1970s, after the publication of the July Theses. The long-term implication of the theses visibly changed the course of the party ideology. Instead of relaxing at the end of the Dej era and the beginning of the Ceausescu era, a new period of ideological constraint has been established. The effects on dramaturgy and repertoires will appear gradually, until the middle of the 70s. It is obvious that it has started a new stage in the life of the Hungarian theatre in Romania, as well. First, the ideological constraints will force an attempt to adapt, then the changes in the attitude of the party and in the policy towards the Hungarian minority will place the Hungarian theatre in another hypostasis, that of the struggle for survival.

Keywords

theatre, cultural policy, communism, ideology, intellectuals, Hungarian theatre