THE DIFFUSION OF “INVENTED CONCEPTS”
VIA HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN
COMMUNIST ROMANIA (1964-1989)

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Abstract
This study aims to illustrate how various factors such as historians and historical studies, historiography, history teaching, history textbooks design, production and usage, official state ideology, propaganda apparatus, and specific institutions converged in instrumentalizing the knowledge about the past in a long-lasting romanticized, false and counter-productive Weltanschauung among Romanians. The central argument of this article is that the communist leadership officially engaged in the politicization of social and political languages and ideologized the historiography through a specially designed institution with the objective of producing, shaping and reshaping the social and political vocabulary. To this end, the analysis focuses on several Romanian history textbooks and discuss their role in the formation of the “historical consciousness”.

Keywords: national-communism, historiography, textbooks, invented concepts, historical consciousness, ideology.

Introduction
In a study about the psychological profile of Romanians, Daniel David argues that the way Romanians describe themselves, believe to be seen by others and wish for them to be is strongly influenced by stereotypes, school-inculated prejudices and societal-constructed self-images (David 2015). In this article I argue that among the factors which cause the perpetuation of such self-images, transcending political regimes and socio-historical contexts, textbooks and education have a major role. In communist Romania, it was especially the
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historical studies and historiography, which generated a deformed perception over past, history, and society.

For the study of totalitarian regimes, for the theory of ideology, for conceptual history and finally for understanding how textbooks function as ideology diffusion channel, I hold the Romanian example as relevant through its peculiar features among the other totalitarian regimes. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan argue that the communist regime in Romania fitted Max Weber’s ideal-type category of sultanism. Its essence, according them, which I hold as true, is the unrestrained personal leadership (Linz & Stepan 1996, p.54). However, beyond potential methodological benefits, I plead for avoiding generalizing concepts such as sultanism, eastern bloc, former Soviet republics, Warsaw Pact States and so on, which may cause confusions and misinterpretations. Instead, I insist on analyzing the political regime in 1964-1989 Romania, and other totalitarian political regimes in Eastern Europe or outside Europe according their peculiarities and not as ideal types. Considering Ceausescu’s Romania as part of the same category with North Korea, Iran or Central African Republic (Linz & Stepan 1996, p.51) I hold as questionable at least from a cultural and geographical point of view without mentioning further more consistent arguments. I believe that among the totalitarian states Romania developed a sui-generis interpretation of communism and therefore it should be analyzed as such.

Ceausescu’s political regime often called national-communism (Verdery 1991) was characterized by nationalism, autarchy, isolationism, extreme xenophobia, lack of popular opposition and subsequent dynastic tendencies. The causes and factors are numerous and do not make the topic of this paper. Among the main features of the political regime in Ceausescu’s Romania one could mention: the inexistence of a civil society, the traditional gap between the intellectual elite and the population, the privileged intellectuals, the virtually inexistent dissidence, the rehabilitation and reactivation of inter-war extreme right personalities and discourses, the rejection of Marxism, the inexistence of new political party and political actors after ’89 which clearly shows political continuities, the collaborationism of the Orthodox Church, and so on. These peculiarities can be understood only in relation with Romania’s cultural background and political culture which make it worth studying.

According to recent formulations in the theory of education, the basic function of an education system is the reproduction and innovation of societal and cultural structure. It transmits towards the new generations values, competences and knowledge the individual needed for the own development
and for the society. Furthermore, the schooling system generates identities, is source of the political regime’s legitimation, and secures its confirmation and support. Michael W. Apple’s question (2013, p.74), whether education can change society, could easily find its answers by studying the teaching and learning in totalitarian regimes where the school was by law declared and designed as tool of propaganda and indoctrination. As Helmut Fend (2006, p.234) argues, education systems and educational media are always political, especially within totalitarian political regimes.

From the perspective of conceptual history the relevance of a textbook analysis resides in several aspects. First, it should show how the conceptual approach can illuminate the way students of history used language to position themselves towards past historical realities, how were they taught to write, think and conceptualize the past. A second reason is the significance of historical discourse in the Romanian society. The implications of politics in historical studies and the political instrumentalization of history have been shaping the Romanian culture over a century. The present debates over which history should or should be not studied in schools, over the question whether history should refrain to the scholar realm, whether it should be tool for building identities or a medium for conveying values reveal the importance of history discourse. One recent similar thorny issue concerns the religion, how should it be taught or whether it should be a study discipline in school in the first place. Such controversies are peculiar to the former communist states in Eastern Europe, with less consolidated education systems and where the identity discourse based on romantic ethno-nationalist values of race, language, history, religion etc. still finds adherents. A third argument is the broader conceptual history interpretation. This article advocates the importance of studying conceptual meaning and change in textbooks and highlights the impact of historiography and history textbooks over the social and political vocabulary and their importance for the individual and the societal development.

From a methodological point of view, this work should be situated at the intersection between the history of historiography, theory of ideology, and the Koselleckian Begriffsgeschichte. The conceptual approach seeks to provide a historiographical and conceptual interpretation of the social and political discourse employed in and communicated through history textbooks and history teaching. The theoretical premise of this investigation is the observation that, “the discipline of history always performs a political function, albeit a changing one” (Koselleck 2002, p.16).
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The sources to be analyzed are mainly Romanian history textbooks for the secondary study years and high schools in the period 1964-1989. Since the nationalist discourse about the past penetrated in the 1970s and 1980s virtually all sciences, textbooks for disciplines such as the social and political education or civic education will be scrutinized. Several history textbooks for the minorities in Romania (Hungarians and Germans) will be also analyzed, although when compared to those for Romanians they differed only with respect to language. Their content was entirely identical and the Romanian ideological wooden language was occasionally transferred into German or Hungarian through forced translations. The reduced number of the textbooks used for this study finds its explanation in the minor changes occurring in the textbooks from a study year to another. The comparison with the textbooks in the first half of the 20th century or those in the post 1989 years shows the perpetuation of the same nationalist master narrative.

This paper has three parts. In the first part I present in a nutshell the ideological function of history textbooks, I mention the nowadays main narratives and approaches regarding textbooks and I reveal their long term effects of the personality of individuals starting with some examples in present day Romania and Hungary. In the second section I show the role of state established specialized institutions in Romania such as the “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” in the in the design of textbooks as ideology and propaganda tools. I follow the development and continuities of history textbook design in Romania (1964-1989). I further analyze the concepts of nation and people as basic concepts of the national-communist historical and political discourse. In the final section I discuss the role of the national-communist wooden language in the formation of the historical culture and consciousness.

History education and history textbooks in Eastern Europe

In the 20th century Europe history textbooks have been subject of contestation and controversy. Due to their contents and purpose, textbooks address issues which concern both politics and education. They have the bivalent role of educating politics and of being the main tool of education policies. From the point of view of education, textbooks, especially those for humanities have a significant impact on the formation of pupils’ and students’ character. Because of their implications, contents and addressees textbooks could be situated amongst the most complicated type of written texts.

In Europe, the schooling system and textbooks set the bedrock for personal development and for the way of thinking (Fend 2006, p.40). It has become nowadays a truism to assert that textbooks and the knowledge they provide
are a social construct (Marcus Otto 2012, p.91). Through their content, textbooks convey values and cultural peculiarities specific to a certain nation, cultural space or group. They can educate children and youngsters in the spirit of democracy, tolerance, liberalism and diversity as much as they can inculcate xenophobia, exclusivism, intolerance, fanaticism of all kinds, hatred and resentments against alterities or invented enemies (Lässig 2013, p.1). History textbooks have a particular formative role. They construct identities, modulate the individual’s relation with the culture of the area he or she lives in, they fundament the citizens’ attitude towards past and the present realities. Moreover, the importance of textbooks resides in the wide range of effects they produce, the number of readers they address and the long timespans they are in use. Scholars such as Werner Wiater, define schoolbooks as “a didactic medium in the shape of a book used for the planning, initiation, support and evaluation of school information and communication process” (Wiater 2011, pp.37-43). Through the collective identity and memory they produce, textbooks have a social integrative function (Fend 2006, p.47). Schools and textbooks are the zone where a fierce competition of concepts and ideas unfolds, the milieu where the values transmitted by the family find confirmation or collide against those of the society.

From a political point of view, the strength of textbooks resides in their selective character reflecting the socio-historical context which explains a certain selection of content (Markova 2013, p.103). As the conceptual historian Reinhart Koselleck observed, “the difficulties connected with any formation of epochs and periods can be easily perceived in the organization of textbooks, schoolbooks, and reference books” (Koselleck 2002, p.156). Following Reinhart Koselleck’s theoretical framework, I argue that the basic social and political concepts employed in the history textbooks acted both as factors and indicators of socio-cultural change.

By dealing with sensitive historical issues, many of them still unsolved and with a real potential for acrimony, history textbooks, have been always a thorny issue in the Central and Eastern-Europe in particular. Take for example the case of the Sigma history textbook, the first alternative history textbook in post-communist Romania, designed for the academic year 1999-2000. The new textbook offered an updated and rational approach of the past, challenging the clichés of national-communist historiography (Petrescu & Petrescu 2007, p.368). Yet, the new textbooks were characterized as “anti-national”, “subversive” and “reactionary”. One member of the Parliament even condemned the textbooks “to be burned in the public square”. The controversy revealed the public’s sentimental attachment to the romanticized
interpretation of historical past, inculcated during communism. Furthermore, it showed the need of a radical reformation of Romanian historiography in order to cover the huge gap between the Romanian and Western scholarship.

Twelve years later, the 2012 sixth and seventh grade history textbook for the Seklers, a small minority in Transylvania, caused similar reactions. The foreword of the textbook starts with the words “alea jacta est”, a formula the authors use to encourage students to struggle for their autonomy or independence. The textbook declared its mission to reveal the “true history” of the Seklers, a small and allegedly neglected cultural group. It stressed out the historical role of Seklers as the leading elite over the majority of Romanian serfs. Regardless the historical truth, of great importance is the effect such a textbook produced within the public discourse. Feeling offended, some representatives of the Romanian majority reacted against being called serfs. The author of a newspaper article debating this topic appreciated the textbook as manipulative and denounced the indoctrination it causes among fourteen years old pupils, an age which, according him coincides with the “disappearance of innocence and the formation of character” (Diaconescu 2014).

Another example is the newly introduced ethics textbook for the fifth grade public schools in Hungary. The textbook teaches children the government’s interpretation of Hungarian history, advocating the religious virtues and the national ideology. From the textbook we learn that the nowadays values of a Hungarian individual are pride, patriotism, religiosity, heroism, and strength. Children also learn that the greatest act of a brave man is to die for his or her country. The textbook is an amalgam of ethics and religious teachings resembling Christian national-conservative doctrines, with strong focus on national(ist) values. Another example is the 2007 controversy around the “myth of Batak” in Bulgarian history textbooks. Such examples of textbooks and the passionate debates they caused are numerous and could be found in most of the eastern European countries. The debate over the interpretation of past in this part of Europe, has been traditionally spilling beyond the academic realm involving multiple layers of society with national and transnational implications.

The evolution of history education in Eastern Europe overlaps with and is a product of the development of historiography. Compared to the German and western European historiography in general, which starting with the 1960s witnessed a process of reformation and redefinition of its methods and objectives (Fend 2006, p.197 sqq.), with some exceptions, east and southeastern European historiography perpetuated the 19th century way of
thinking and writing about the past (Murgescu 2001, pp.266-288). According to the romanticist pedagogy, the role of history teaching was oriented to the present. History was a tool for building identities and for spreading nationalist ideas. The great deeds of national heroes were supposed to give the population self-confidence and pride. Historians were less preoccupied with objectivity, and did not engage a critical and objective approach. They were interested in forging nationalism through myths of origin, unity, virtuous past and heroes of the nation reaching as deep as to mythical times. The national community of the present had its mirror image in the past. The fundamental distinction between history as a past reality and history as an intellectual product of the historian’s mind did not exist. The overall approach of historical facts and events was a political-ideological, anachronistic and nationalistic one.

The goal of teaching history was to build responsible members of the national body by learning from the heroic deeds of people from the past. Having one country, one nation and one destiny required one unitary history. Therefore, a single master narrative of the past, with various degrees of complexity was taught from the primary school to the university level. The article signed by an influential columnist in a Romanian newspaper with the title “How many histories does Romania have?” with respect to the allegedly subversive aforementioned Sigma history textbook, in 1999, is suggestive for the idea of one single and canonical master narrative of Romania’s past. These features of historiography and history teaching are valid for the entire 20th century Eastern Europe reaching beyond the post ’89 period as well (Wilschut 2012, pp.1-31).

The new approach to history teaching regards history textbooks and education as a catalyst for peace, mutual understanding and social cohesion. Textbooks should foster understanding and diminish conflict potential through a transnational and interdisciplinary approach of past realities. The alternative perspectives on national, regional and European history should be implemented and disseminated among pupils and students. The formation of critical thinking citizens should replace prejudice and subjective attitudes. According to Simone Lässig the new approach of textbooks design should be based on the concept of reconciliation:

stands for arduous, complex, lengthy and potentially reversible processes that are dependent on a number of uncertain factors. In the course of these processes, societies, social groups, and states show their willingness and (re)claim their capacity to coexist in peace and to move beyond experiences of violence and conflict, to interact with a minimum of empathy, to overcome
A lab to invent concepts: “The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” in Romania

In this section I show how the communist regime realized the importance of mastering the social and political languages and, with the aid of specialized institutions such as “The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy”, controlled the history textbooks design, the history teaching and the formation of what was called “the historical culture” of the “new man”. I show through a few examples how artificial concepts (invented concepts) were created by the scholars working at “The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy”, how were they employed and perpetuated in the social and political languages via historiography and the educational media.

The “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” was founded in 1966 by the Romanian Communist Party after merging two former existing institutions. Its role was to educate and train the party’s ideologues and the Romanian political elite according to the communist ideology. Starting with the mid 1950s and Gheorghe Georghiu-Dej’s so called “Declaration of Independence”, in 1964, which opened a long lasting ideological and doctrinal conflict with the Soviet Union, for the Romanian communist leadership the need to articulate a national interpretation of communism became imperative. The national-communism emerging during the mid-1960s basically put in the center of the communist doctrine the concept and nation whilst opposing the soviet communist internationalism. According to the Romanian Communist Party, the idea of a borderless communist community had been wrongly interpreted by the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 confirmed and deepened the hostility towards USSR fostering the nationalist dimension of the Romanian communism.

The “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” was to produce political elites meant to fight back all ideologies perceived as threatening be it fascism, nationalism, capitalism, western democracy and soviet internationalism. Grouped in what was called “the ideological front”, a significant number of journalists, historians, sociologists, teachers, translators, philologists, philosophers,

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1 The institution’s history, its formation, evolution and reorganization is a broader topic, which cannot be covered in this study. Similar to other communist institutions “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” witnessed various struggles for power and influence. It had a major role in theorizing and implementing Ceausescu’s often controversial ideological directives. The goal of this section is to give a glimpse into the role the Academy had in the process of textbooks design and their usage as ideology communication channel.
economists, newspaper and magazine editors worked for the communist state and ideology and sought to provide an alternative Romanian (national/nationalist) interpretation of communism. Furthermore, the new school had to instruct politicians and experts, with “healthy origins” (which basically meant sons of peasants with no connection to the leadership prior to 1945). A further objective was to minimize the importance of the Romanian Academy of Science which, despite repeated ideological purges, was still regarded as reactionary and retrograde. The new Academy represented, as Vladimir Tismăneanu puts it, “the doctrinal center of Romanian communism” (Tismăneanu 1992, p.149). A further goal was to provide the party with the corresponding ideology and theoretical argumentation in order to gain the adherence of population to the new regime.

The Academy had three main functions: production of competent elite in key domains, of ideology, propaganda, discourses and languages; diffusion of its products through all possible channels of communication and media; perpetuation and self-reproduction of the political regime through a process of permanent selection and evaluation of the political leadership. Virtually, every member aspiring to a position within the political leadership attended the Academy. The institution resembled any other western elite school of politics or economics. Starting with 1977 it had three faculties, sociology, commerce and journalism and a monopoly over these fields of research. Students graduating “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” became members of an informal network of alumni, an elite group protecting the state’s interests in every domain and corner of the country and, in an equal manner the material interests of the group’s members. Their loyalty was in many cases secured through the privileged status and standard of life they were granted. Yet, against Katherine Verdery’s argument (Verdery 1991, p.191), I believe one should not regard the competition for state resources as the main explanation for the perpetuation of the political system and state ideology in Romania. It should be also stressed that besides its political-ideological function, the Academy trained a significant number of specialists in less ideological fields such as economy, marketing, and management.

The works published under the patronage of “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” twisted, altered, instrumentalized and tendentiously interpreted first hand western literature so that it fitted the ideological demands. Such a literature amalgamated discourses and concepts of western and soviet literature, merged communist and nationalist ideas, melted the various conceptualization of basic political and social concepts without considering the differences between historical periods and contexts. Such works are relevant for they set
The main trends of sociological, historical and political thought research for the entire academic milieu. They communicated ideas and ideological postulates which reached the entire population, from the scholarly to the lowest and simplest level of conceptualization via media, laws, education system and textbooks\(^2\). They were the articulation of theoretical interpretation and medium of diffusion for the ideas formulated by the political organisms and the state apparatus. The structure of the history textbooks, for example, follows with accuracy the “history of the fatherland” sketched by the successive Congresses of the Romanian Communist Party.

The main aspect which to be stressed out here is the interconnection between the state propaganda apparatus, the center for ideological studies at “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” and the population via education system. The theories formulated by the ideologues were communicated especially through textbooks, whilst giving pupils and students virtually no room for alternative reading on the topic studied. Many of the theoretical works published within the “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” were neither known nor read by most of the population. Yet, the ideas they contained managed to penetrate the lowest levels of education. Occasionally such books were sold compulsory together with other books. According to the ideologues signing such theoretical treaties, their goal was to confer new meanings to existing concepts of the social and political vocabulary, such as nation, national consciousness, patriotism, ethnicity, national specificity, and national-communism. By being direct involved in the design of the schooling system and legislation, “The Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” could effectively communicate its semantic and conceptual engineering towards population.

The invented meanings and concepts were inserted in the public discourse and perpetuated through the sate propaganda apparatus, official ideology and more important through legislation and official documents. Their official dimension gave them a compulsory character and was therefore to be used as such. For example, such an invented concept was the socialist nation. It appeared for the first time the Constitution of 1965. According to the state`s fundamental law, “in the Socialist Republic of Romania, the entire state activity has as goal the development and the flourishing of the socialist nation” (Muraru & Iancu 1995, p.159). Basically, the socialist nation designated an artificial and theoretical combination of two opposed and incompatible

\(^2\) Analyzing the Bulgarian historiography during communism, Roumen Daskalov identified similar relations between the historical scholarship, history teaching and textbooks and the “collective consciousness” (Daskalov 2004, pp.252-253).
ideologies: nationalism and communism. The “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” allocated huge human and material resources to remove the contradiction between these two ideologies and to demonstrate the originality and viability of the socialist nation. The goal was the regime’s very doctrinal legitimacy towards both western countries and the other communist states on one hand, and the rejection of the Soviet model of socialism on the other hand.

The socialist nation was the core concept of the national-communist ideology and regime. The scholars in domains ranging from social sciences to physics and mathematics saw themselves forced to accept and use such invented concepts in the papers and works they published. Far more evident was the impact of the invented concepts in the field social sciences and history where concepts such as revolution, nation, state, national consciousness, governed the written or spoken discourse. Since in the Marxist and communist rhetoric, revolution was a basic concept, the ideologues at “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” sought to interpret every historical event as a modern revolution. Another such basic concept is the communist struggle/fight. Through its performative dimension, struggle suggests a dynamics of events and a teleological process of becoming. Everything was regarded as a struggle which produced some controversial formulas. In the official discourse it became a cliché, for example, the paradoxical struggle/fight for peace.

The role of “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” the core of state ideology production is revealed by its presence in the laws education issued in the timespan 1964-1989. The 1948 and 1968 education reforms stipulated the reorganization the Romanian state schooling system according to the political and ideological demands. The role of education was to form the communist consciousness and culture. Free and obligatory education was guaranteed by law. The Education law in 1968 clearly specified the compulsory character of the 9th Congress directives of the Romanian Communist Party on education. The goal of education was to form the materialist-dialectic conception of life and society among citizens (Legea nr. 11/1968), to contribute to the development of the socialist nation and to cultivate the love for fatherland and people. The Education Law of 1978 condemned the education reforms in 1950s which, according to the communist leadership in the 1970s, had applied soviet models disregarding the Romanian traditions and realities.

The Education Law in 1978 (Legea nr. 28/1978) deepened the interference of the state ideology in the education policies and oriented the entire schooling system towards nationalism. The law is an example for the institutionalized instrumentalization of education for political purposes. Accordingly, the
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schooling system had the mission to create and educate the new man in the spirit of the Romanian Communist Party’s ideology and politics. It emphasized pupils’ and students’ obligation of contributing to the country's development and their readiness of any sacrifice for the fatherland’s independence and sovereignty (Lege nr. 28/1978). The secondary school, especially the high schools, had to inculcate the political-ideological education among students and to foster the formation of the socialist consciousness. According to the teaching methodology textbook for pedagogical high schools in 1980s, history “should not be taught only to be known, but to be emotionally lived by children” (Bărbuleanu 1988, p.18).

The Education Ministry in close cooperation with “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” had the responsibility to permanently train teachers and school staff in ideology teaching competences. Moreover, renowned scholars employed by the academy were involved in the textbook contents selection and production process and controlled strictly the manual’s final design. The third section of the 1978 Education Law was dedicated to the “educational-political activity and the study of social sciences”, regarded each school as a center for socialist and communist education (Lege nr. 28/1978). The main objective of the social sciences studies was the transmission and appropriation of a communist Weltanschauung. Along its whole content, the education law stressed the ideological mission of teaching and its role in inculcating values and characters. It also aimed to build a voluntary attachment to communist values, fatherland and sacrifice resembling the credo of a political religion. The importance of “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy”, as the main ideological authority was repeatedly and explicitly specified by law.

The “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” was dissolved in January 1990. Its properties were split between three new founded faculties – psychology sociology, journalism and the faculty for higher political studies. Many of the scholars and teachers at “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” were included in the teaching staff of the new faculties whilst many others became part of the Romanian political and intellectual elite after 1989. In the following section I analyze several history textbooks and show how the “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” used them as a channel for ideology diffusion.

Communicating history, inventing concepts
As in other non-democratic regimes (Knopke 2011; Deyanova 2013, pp.91-100), in communist Romania, schoolbooks were a tool for securing and consolidation of power. They were produced and designed exclusively by the Ministry of Education and Teaching in collaboration with the “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” were published by exclusively by the publishing house Editura Didactică și
Pedagogică and had a compulsory status. Successive generations were taught the same obsolete interpretation of the past whilst the unitary character of the school curricula provided a discursive tradition and therefore a more effective indoctrination. The master-narrative of national ontology and the teleological paradigm of historical interpretation remained virtually unchanged from the beginning of the 20th century until the Sigma alternative textbooks in year 2000.

The history textbooks designed by Nicolae Iorga, one of the most influential figures in the Romanian politics, identity discourse and historiography in the first half of the 20th century were the main models for the all Romanian schoolbooks to follow both as structure and interpretation. Nicolae Iorga was among the first southeastern European historians interested in the non-national history, historical philosophy, historical theory and methodology. Nevertheless, he remained a practitioner of historicism and a fervent nationalist politician. The history textbook published by Nicolae Iorga in 1910 (Iorga 1910) and those in 1930s (Petrescu 1935; Lambrino 1939; Ilie 1936; David 1937) opened with the formation of the Romanian people and nation and continued according the main pillars of romantic conceptualization of the cultural nation – territory, language, continuity, specificity etc. Although oscillating in strength according to the mutations within the social and political context, the nationalist dimension of the history schoolbooks discourse remained a constant feature of Romanian history teaching and schooling concept in general. From the historiographical point of view, all Romanian textbooks, during the entire 20th century, approached history from the same historicist Rankean perspective. During the communist regime, the authors assured the reader that everything was objectively presented, “the way it actually happened” yet without any theoretical or methodological background. The authority over an interpretation or another was given by the name of a famous historian appearing among the authors of the textbook. The construction of a singular interpretation of the past, with no alternatives, has

3 The perpetuation of a national identity master narrative with roots in romantic nationalism and interwar organist right wing racial discourses is a feature shared by most of eastern European states. The role of rightist interwar authors such as Nae Ionescu in Romania, Yanko Yanev in Bulgaria or the influence of Vuk Karadzic’s Serbianism in Yugoslavia as source for the identity discourse during communism is a further common feature (Daskalov 2004). Jasna Dragovic-Soso highlights the key-role long durée structures have in the perpetuation of traditional identity discourses over different political regimes and historical contexts in southeastern Europe (Cohen & Dragovic-Soso, 2007).
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been traditionally one of the political regime’s goals. The history of the people
had to be unitary, to depict the process of unification of the national state and
to produce unity. Furthermore, through the history treaties the Romanian
Academy periodically published, under the Communist’s Party keen control, a
“canonical” and singular interpretation of past was advocated causing a quasi-
sanctification of national heroes and historical past. In a higher and more
detailed form, such treaties provided the same narrative as the school
textbooks and were the main academic reference on historical research.

The historiographical paradigm promoted by the bulk of historians was what
Eric Hobsbawm called “orthodox history”, that is “great public actions, battles,
cabinets, treaties” (Hobsbawm 1984, p.41). Society was reduced to nation and
nation-state whilst the object of historical research was a “constructed history”
outside society and the history itself. The entire Romanian historiography,
without counting the role of ideology or censorship, has been traditionally
rejecting alternative or opposed historical interpretations out of the historians’
personal creed and professional formation. Thus a scholar writing “a history”
against the mainstream was swiftly tagged as a “fifth column activist” and in
most of the cases excluded. That nowadays a large part of the population has
vehement rejection reactions towards any negative remark with respect to a
personality from the past is a further argument for the long term effects of the
ideology charged historical discourse over the population via schoolbooks.
Relevant here is the fact that, during communism, especially in the 1980s a
literature for children amalgamating fairytales and legends with historical facts
and personalities endorsed even more the sentimental attachment to a
deformed interpretation of the past. Such personal convictions with respect to
personal values and virtues constructed via ideology charged literature during
childhood proves nowadays in most of the cases difficult to challenge through
rational argumentation and critical interpretations.

The Soviet model
The education reforms in 1948 changed the whole teaching and learning
approach according to the soviet model. Marxism and its interpretation
became the omnipresent feature of society until the end of the 1960s. During
the period 1948-1951, according to the official numbers in the period, allegedly
around 590 new textbooks were designed and printed in about 28 million
copies (Tismăneanu 2007, p.488). The reforms in 1948 introduced unique
textbooks for disciplines of study in all schools in the country. The main
objective was a clear cut with the previous teaching paradigm which was to be
condemned and replaced. All history textbooks, including those edited in the
languages of the minorities highlighted the historical importance of the
October Revolution as the most important event in history whilst presenting Marx and Lenin as the most influential personalities of the 20th century. The history textbook for the fourth grade German schools exacerbated the importance of Slavs in the formation of the Romanian people and culture during antiquity, positively assessing their peaceful agricultural occupations in comparison to the war-oriented tribes in the same period. Furthermore, the allegedly abundance of Slavic words in Romanian was an extra reason of Romanian-Soviet friendship and justified the study of Russian in the Romanian schools (Almaș & Petric 1960, pp.28-29). In the same manner, the history textbook for the tenth grade German schools declared the crisis and dissolution of imperialism as the last stage of capitalism and its replacement with socialism appreciated as the most evolved and successful stage of society (Almaș & Vianu 1960, p.5).

The history textbook for the eleventh grade published in 1966 interpreted the historical past according the historical materialism and Marxism. The main factor of historical development is the production of material commodities and the class struggle. The textbook revealed the merits of the Marxism in “removing the chaos and arbitrary which had governed the historical and political conceptualization” (Almaș & Georgescu-Buzău 1966, p.3). The main concepts occurring in the historical discourse are struggle, class, production forces, revolution, progress, retrograde forces, bourgeoisie, proletariat, exploiting classes, workers class, etc. The concepts and notions suggesting movement are abundant on every page of the manual and refer to evolution, revolution, development, progress etc. The core message communicated towards students was the joint Romanian-Soviet effort in eliminating fascism and the evolution in a progressively accelerated pace of society towards socialism and communism. The history textbook for the 12th grade in 1968 (Daicoviciu & Constantinescu 1968) had significantly fewer references to Marxism.

The rebirth of nationalism
After the soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Ceaușescu’s so called “cultural revolution” in 1971 the history textbooks were purged of Marxism. In the 1970’s and 1980’s the communist regime turned to the revival of old national mythology dating from the 19th century transferring the conceptual apparatus of those times both in form and meaning. Starting with the “July Theses” in 1971 and Ceausescu’s “cultural revolution”, the protochronist ideology provided the discursive framework for the articulation of ethnic exclusivism, cultural differentiation and cultural sovereignty within the official political discourse. Its presence in the public discourse was in the years 1970-
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1980 massive. Hence concepts such as nation and its entire semantic field became in the 1970s and 1980s a meta-discourse of the newly emerged protochronist ideology.

The analysis of history textbooks and teaching reveals the increasing role of the nationalist discourse in the Romanian communist ideology. The traditional national master narrative replaced the materialist paradigm. According to the history textbook from 1972, the role of history education was to show how the Romanian people and language appeared, to advocate its Latin origins, to demonstrate its uninterrupted continuity on the territory it occupies, Moreover history education is, according to one of the objectives present in all textbooks, one of the main tools for the formation of responsible and dedicated citizens. The ‘real history’ was to be only the work and fight of masses (Florea et al. 1972, p.4) which were regarded as the only forces making history.

The textbook of modern history for the 9th grade, edited in 1977, and 1979 related the historical events in the first half of the 19th century with the accomplishments of the Romanian Communist Party and the socialist society during the 1970s. According to it, history education “reveals the glorious past of the Romanian people and educates the love for fatherland, praises martyrdom and celebrates the heroes of the people” (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.6). The first lesson in the textbook presented the formation of the Romanian nation during the 19th century. In the regime’s official interpretation the concept of nation was understood as a “social and ethnic community historically formed on the common territory, economy, and language, with common psychological and spiritual characteristics expressed through the national consciousness and culture” (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.8). It reproduced the romantic-nationalist nation understood as blood, people as race, territory, nature, common past and specificity. The formation of the nation was regarded as a natural, necessary and compulsory process occurring in the history of every people. The crystallization of nation was caused by the existence of a consciousness of kin, by the belief that all Romanians belonged to one unitary ethnic group, with common ancestors, traditions and destiny.

Thus, the romantic and interwar meanings of the concept of nation were transferred by the Communist Party’s ideologues in the 1970 with no substantial alteration. The conceptualization of nation highlighted especially the exclusion of everything regarded as foreign and therefore dangerous. The overall interpretation of history was a teleological one, a chain of events and circumstances developed under the impact the people’s permanent fight,
which culminated with formation of the nation. The lesson in the textbook ended with a quotation from Simion Bărnuțiu, one of the leading Romanian political thinkers amid 1848s. According to him, “nation is the most powerful urge of action for the happiness of human spirit. The one who does not feel the need to act for the glory and happiness of his nation, is nothing but a selfish a for the humanity lost person” (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.12). The tasks at the end of the lesson required students to be able to demonstrate the formation of the nation as the result of a long lasting process and to trace back in the following lessons the evolution of the nation. The master narrative was to be memorized as such without much room for interpretation or debate.

**Basic concepts: “nation “and “people “**

The history textbooks communicated to students the official definition of nation as it was formulated in the Program of the Romanian Communist Party in 1975. The nation was defined as “an ethnic and social human community, historically formed on a common territory, with a common economy, language, with common psychical and spiritual features expressed through the national culture and consciousness” (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.8). Whereas in the past the formation of nation was one of the fundamental historical phenomena, a “historical permanence” (a concept coined by the great interwar Romanian historian and nationalist Nicolae Iorga), during the communist society the socialist nation, the textbook argued, gained the central role in the progress of the communist Romanian society (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1977, p.12). The implementation of the concept of socialist nation invented by the ideologues at “Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy” was more obvious in the 1988 edition of the same textbook. It clearly showed that the theoretical background for the historical research and knowledge are the Communist Party’s documents and the works of Ceaușescu (Hurezeanu, Totu & Smarandache, 1988, p.6). The Romanian national interpretation of the socialism, as a sui generis version corresponding to the local realities was extended to a universal dimension with the argument that it influenced the destiny of other peoples and nations.

A further omnipresent and core concept of the historical and political discourse during communism with a sematic field even more specialized and with a higher degree of exclusion than the concept of nation was the concept people (Romanian - popor). During the interwar period it denoted a collective individual in an ethnical sense that is Romanian by blood and orthodox Christian, with meanings resembling the German concept of Volk. The national-communist ideology removed the religious connotation of the concept people and utilized its meaning as a collective national organism. During communism, the concept
of popor (people) had almost no social or a class meaning, in the sense of the proletariat, but it was used with its exclusive ethnical connotation. In relation to other ethnic or cultural minority groups the meaning of people (popor) set clear-cut boundaries, excluding those people of origins other than Romanian. The notion people (popor) was used on almost every page within the history textbooks and become an all-encompassing collective person yet selective and exclusive, which removed the idea of individual responsibility or opinion. The textbooks instructed pupils about the people’s fight, will, destiny, welfare, culture, language, specificity, history, consciousness and so on.

Relevant for the ideological function of education, worth mentioning here, was the textbook for social and political education designed for high schools and professional teaching in 1975 (Ardeleanu 1975, pp.7-9). It provided a more complex type of discourse with the objective of initiating students in ideological and political training. The first pages highlighted the obligation of every member of the society to take part to and be familiar with the state’s internal matters and foreign affairs aiming a sort of civic participation. Obviously, as in all “popular democracies”, the suffrage and the population’s consultation was a formal one. However, students were required to act as an active member of the socialist society and to develop a socialist consciousness. It should be noted that its authors, the otherwise among the top ideologists of the regime in social and historical field, were aware of the importance of notions, concepts and categories for the social and political language in the new designed communist world. A further interesting aspect can be observed in the lesson on religion and science, a real plea for atheism dubbed with an almost pejorative depiction of religions. Religion, according the authors, was a deformed and false reflection in the mind of people on natural phenomena and society. Thus, religion was opium for the masses, equal to superstition and a token for the retrograde classes (Ardeleanu 1975, p.149). Yet in the second half of the 1980s, the atheist state ideology started to explore the possibility of strengthening the populations’ adherence to the regime by introducing a form of political religion. Based on the interwar national ontology it had at its core a constructed spiritual relation between nation and territory/nature. After 1989 no major change in the design of the history textbooks or a reevaluation of their role and mission could be observed. Instead, the rebirth of post-communist nationalism made the political language of the interwar context the core of the political discourse once again.

Discussion and conclusions
This article showed the extent of the politicization of history and the perpetuation of one and the same master narrative of the national identity. I
choose to open this short study with a quotation from Victor Klemperer’s *Lingua Tertii Imperii* for I find it relevant in highlighting the key-role political regimes, of all kinds, be it totalitarian or democratic gave to language. As I showed in this paper, the language used in textbooks had the role to inculcate the communist regime’s interpretation of reality. In his diary, the German linguist Viktor Klemperer accounted with great finesses the totalitarian discursive strategies and linguistic mechanisms used to invent a new language whilst replacing the existing one. Similar patterns could be identified in the Romanian national-communist historiographical discourse I approached in this study.

Named by Françoise Thom, *La langue de bois* (1987) or “newspeak” by George Orwell, the “wooden social and political language” emerged in Romania during communism had several general features valid for the rhetoric practiced by most of the socialist states in Eastern Europe. Among these one should remind the long term effects of the repetition of single words, idioms, and sentence structures, recurrence, replacement of existing meanings with new ones, the corruption of concepts’ meanings, the usage of concepts and meanings from the past, the irony, the abundance of the notion enemy, the historical and mythical heroes, the permanent fight, the uniformity of the written language which explains the homogeneity of the spoken language, the standardized form of the written text, the permanent threat, the dichotomy we-they, the inclusion and exclusion of various groups, the obsession for specificity, self-differentiation and self-definition.

In the Romanian case, the social and political language had to cope, as the Romanian communist ideology in general, with what was called the “dialectic dilemma of continuity and discontinuity”. This meant basically, melting together the opposed doctrines of *nationalism* and *socialism* whilst finding the proper theoretical support. The ideologists responsible for inventing and communicating the “new language” fused old concepts with new meanings, produced new concepts for anachronisms, replaced the future oriented Marxist discourse with the past oriented 19th century nationalism.

The role of history textbooks was significant especially through their uniformity, selective and monopoly character. One single master narrative

4 The Romanian linguist George Pruteanu defined the “wooden language” as the modality of telling less with as many words as possible. Its purpose was to give the impression of a real communication between the political elite and the population whilst no clear message was transmitted.
regarding the national identity perpetuated via textbooks was shared by succeeding generations of students. As shown, school was by law designed as a part of the “ideological apparatus”, a channel of communication for the invented concepts. The invented and ideologically charged notions and concepts are still in use nowadays causing occasionally confusions and conflicts. A further important effect of the linguistic engineering practiced by the communist ideology was the amalgamation of the political left and right, both as political languages and doctrines. This is aspect has nowadays a clear negative influence over the political culture and performance of the political leadership. From a historiographical point of view, the analysis of history textbooks reveals with some moments of superficial change obvious continuities. Most of the history textbooks in the 20th perpetuate the same 19th century romantic interpretation of history which is symptomatic for the Romanian historiography as a whole.

The communist propaganda succeeded in creating a historical culture and consciousness. The two concepts overlapped in the communist conceptualization and were understood through their strong voluntary dimension. The historical culture had to produce reactions, convictions and beliefs deeply rooted in the individual personal set of values and professional formation and to stimulate the individual to endorse the collective individual which was the nation. The obsessive occurrence of the notion “consciousness”, attached to a significant number of basic concepts of the social and political vocabulary suggests the interest the state ideology had in gaining voluntary adherence to the political regime. The communist ideologists understood the “historical consciousness” not only as knowledge about the past, but rather with a wider meaning i.e. as a human asset for the orientation in life and the world, a Weltanschauung of the “new man”. The formation of the “historical consciousness” merged the “literacy” and “awareness” involving in the same proportion history teaching, historical academics and public history (all means for communicating and diffusion such as press, radio, cinema, television with a key-role in shaping successive generations of people).

However, the “historical consciousness” created by the communist ideology has a strong negative dimension through its forced past orientation. It opposes the pragmatic dimension of the concept of “historical consciousness” employed by scholars as Jörn Rüsen as an analytical category (Rüsen 2004, p.66) for it endorsed a retrograde “temporal orientation”\(^5\). From a

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\(^5\) Jörn Rüsen argues that the historical consciousness should be conceptualized as an “operation of human intellection rendering present actuality intelligible while
historiographical point of view, the *historical consciousness* implied a transgenerational mental orientation and exchange and the aptitude of thinking back and forth in time.

Yet, in the communist Romania, the making sense of the past was not used for constructing expectations for the future but was confined to the present. The instrumentalization of the past via textbooks and historical education did not focus on communicating values and moral examples for the future development of society instead it insisted on traditions, ancestors, and preservation of “true values” for the sake of an eternal continuous present. Applying Jörn Rüsen’s idea of “hierarchical development of *historical consciousness*” (Rüsen 2004, pp.70-78), it becomes obvious that in communist Romania the *historical consciousness* did not evolve to the stages of *critique* and *genetic understanding*, which correspond to a society with a higher and educated level of knowledge. Instead, the communist *historical consciousness* persisted in the *tradition* and *exemplariness* lower phases. After being shared by a homogenous population within the national state for a long period of time the communist *historical consciousness* turned into an obstacle for the development of the nowadays Romanian society, hindering inter-group relations and the adaptation to the accelerated changes of the 21st century.

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