

**PARTY STUDIES IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA.
THE SUPERIOR SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
“ANDREI ALEKSANDROVICI ZHDANOV” (1948-1958)**

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Abstract: *The Romanian Communist Party's accession to the power structures of the state revealed the obvious lack of formal education of the party cadres present in these structures. In order to remedy this flaw, the leadership of the party, taking as a model the experience of the Soviet Union Communist Party, decided to establish the foundations of a system of "party studies". Its purpose was to prepare the cadres for the ideological and organizational activities of the Party. To this aim, a hierarchy within the system of party studies was created, headed by the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Academy and the Superior School of Social Sciences "Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov". The purpose of the latter was to prepare cadres of the higher echelon for ideological work – people involved in party studies and propaganda, editors with the various party newspapers, as well as professors and lecturers to teach social sciences in higher education institutions. The Superior School of Social Sciences "Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov", which was an elite institution of the Communist Party was taken over by the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Academy in 1958. The reasons for this decision can be most likely found in the intention to concentrate within one institution the process of preparing the cadres of the higher echelon of the party and also in the desire to eliminate any form of competition among party schools. Thus, the Superior School of Social Sciences "Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov" was a stronghold for the preparation of the ideological activists of the party; it was an institution which contributed to the creation of a host of activists which played an important role in the strengthening of the Communist Party.*

Keywords: Romania, party schools, communism, the Superior School of Social Sciences "Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov"

Introduction

Communism is a topic that has recently become the focus of interest for Romanian researchers as a complex and highly controversial topic. Vladimir Tismăneanu defined communism in Romania as "a subspecies of Bolshevik radicalism"¹ which in the period between the two wars did not benefit from the support of a bureaucratic apparatus that could secure its success in elections. For this reason, in the period following August 23rd 1944, as it accessed power, the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) had to create its own system for the political and ideological recruiting and training of its cadres. The Romanian communists

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¹ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism pentru eternitate: O istorie politică a comunismului românesc*, Iași, Edit. Polirom, 2005, p. 11.

adopted the soviet model of party studies², which had been created and organized as an integral part of the political and ideological training system, whose aim was to form and develop the socialist activist, revolutionary conscience of the masses³. At the same time, the party studies system was used by the communists in the creation and development of the new political elites of post-war Romania.

The party studies system of Soviet influence contributed to the creation of the communist apparatus for government and control⁴ which would play an important role in deploying, legitimating and consolidating the communist party. Along time, a number of changes were operated within the system, which was determined by the change of the political environment and of the political actors. The classification of party schools can be done according to several criteria, some of which were used by the party leadership; in the course of time, it also decided upon a system of ranking the higher education institutions for party studies. Thus, depending on the level of education of the trainees, there were elementary, middle and higher party learning institutions⁵. Elementary party studies consisted of: current policy groups and courses⁶, evening party studies courses⁷, rural evening party study courses⁸, courses for active party cadres in the rural areas⁹.

Other forms of party studies could be added, that were introduced in the period that followed the accession of the communist regime: schools for cadres, with courses extending over a period of several days; they were operative with

² Eugen Denize, *Propaganda comunistă în România (1948-1953)*, Târgoviște, Edit. Cetatea de Scaun, 2009, p. 59.

³ Central Historical National Archives (infra: Arhivele Naționale Central Istorice, ANIC), Fund Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party – Chancellery Section (Fond Comitetul Central (C.C.) al Partidului Comunist Român, P.C.R. – Secția Cancelarie, File (dosar, dos.) 200/1975, f. 70.

⁴ Eugen Denize, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

⁵ This classification was done by the Department of Propaganda and Instigation of the CC of the Communist Party of Romania and was also adopted by Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *Nomenclatura Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român*, București, Edit. Humanitas, 2006, p.102.

⁶ The current policy groups and courses were started in the school year 1949-1950 with the first level of party organizations; they were meant for the training of the of party members and also of those people who were not party members, being thus the broadest form of party studies. The activity of the groups and of the party courses was organized by the propaganda cadres; it was held on a weekly basis, with a schedule of two hours a week over a period of two years. At the end of the school year, a round of 2-3 closing conversations were held, where the main topics studied and touched upon in the textbooks during the school year were addressed. See *Rezoluții și hotărâri ale CC al PMR 1951-1953*, vol. II, București, Edit. pentru Literatură Politică, 1954, p. 443.

⁷ The next level party studies form, namely evening party courses, were organized in factories and institutions for the party members in leading positions in the primary party organizations, without members being exempted from work. These courses lasted for five months and consisted of 21 lessons. The graduates were appointed to positions of authority within the party cells in factories and institutions, as well as in the state apparatus.

⁸ Rural evening party studies classes had a different schedule than those in factories and institutions. The courses extended to ten lessons over a period of one week. Later, such courses were to be transferred to the middle party schools.

⁹ The courses for the active party cadres in the rural areas were organized during the winter in order to provide ideological training for the cadres in the rural party primary organizations and for the state apparatus in the rural areas.

nearly all regional and county party committees, the schools for trainers¹⁰ that were operative with the Political training departments of the county party committees and lasted between a week and ten days, the propaganda schools¹¹. The intermediate party learning included: the groups for the study of the history of Communist Party of the USSR¹², middle party schools¹³. The higher form of party learning included: evening classes in Marxism-Leninism¹⁴, evening university

¹⁰ The schools for trainers were aimed at training the cadres for the campaign for the elections in the autumn of 1946. For this campaign 20,000 trainers were convoked who had graduated such courses in these short-term schools. See Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, *Articole și cuvântări*, București, Edit. de Stat pentru Literatură Politică, 1955, p.109.

¹¹ The County Agency Iași of the National Archive (infra: Direcția Județeană Iași a Arhivelor Naționale, DJIAN), the Moldova regional committee of the Romanian Communist Party (Comitetul regional Moldova al PCR), dos. 21/1946, f. 1.

¹² The groups for the study of the history of the Communist Party of the USSR were aimed at introducing the party cadres with the Refresher course in the History of the Communist (Bolshevik) Party of the USSR. This particular coursebook was a creation of I.V.Stalin's; it was published in 1938 and was a mere compilation of simplistic remarks on the history of the Russian revolutionary movement and a primitive presentation of Marx's dialectics. The groups for the study of the history of the Communist Party of the USSR were held in the regional centres and the village centres, where the political and educational level of the party members allowed it and where the party could send the adequate propaganda cadres. It was a more advanced form of the elementary party studies; they were attended by the presidents and secretaries of the city councils, by school masters, teachers, agricultural engineers and other party members "with an adequate political and educational backgrounds." When the school year was introduced as a form of organizing the party studies system in 1949/1950, the course A Short introduction to the History of the (Bolshevik) Communist Party of the USSR was to extend over two years. See ANIC, CC al PCR-Cancelarie, dos. 59/1955, f. 19; Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹³ Middle party schools were implemented in the main cities in the country starting 1947-1948: București, Cluj (one in Romanian, another in Hungarian), Timișoara, Iași, Craiova, Galați, Brașov, Constanța, Ploiești, Târgu-Mureș (in Hungarian). In our opinion, during the first decade after the war, this category should also include the three-month and the six-month party schools, which operated with the regional and county party committees. During 1948, 34 middle schools were operating – 21 with the county party committees, 11 with the various party committees in the capital city and two with the party committees within the Ministries. According to the Decision of the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party of September 8th 1953, both types were discontinued, and one-year regional party schools replaced them, their number rose from three in the school year 1951/1952 to 13 in the school year 1956/1957; they were organized around the regional party committees that had an adequate location and qualified teaching staff. The future middle inter-county party schools were to develop and consolidate on this basis. In December 1989, ten such schools were functional in Romania (in Bacău, București, Brașov, Cluj, Constanța, Craiova, Galați, Iași, Oradea, Timișoara). In time, the areas for training grew more diverse. Beginning with 1976, these institutions started organizing refresher courses for the cadres. They were the main reserve for the party's middle echelon.

¹⁴ The evening classes in Marxism and Leninism, as well as the Evening Universities in Marxism and Leninism were established in the school year 1949/1950, with the aim of elevating the ideological level of the middle and upper party cadres, without them being exempted from work; these type of courses extended over a period of two years. Evening Marxism and Leninism classes were started in Galați, Ploiești, Craiova, Constanța, Brașov, Arad, Oradea. During the school year 1949-1950 the Marxism and Leninism evening classes and universities were attended by 3,105 students; they were members of the party leadership and of the state apparatus, representatives of the core groups of active members of the county party committees and of the county state organisms. During the school year 1950-1951, the number of evening classes of Marxism and Leninism rose to 13, as new schools were founded at Baia-Mare, Bacău, Târgoviște, Sibiu, Buzău and Deva. Consequently, the number of students who attended these schools would rise to 1941.

courses in Marxism-Leninism¹⁵, the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party University¹⁶, the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School of Social Sciences.

In our opinion, the following schools for party cadres whose courses extended only for the duration of a few days could be also classified as a form of elementary party studies: cadres schools with several days’ courses active with all the regional and county party committees in the first years after the war; the tutors training schools active with the Political education departments of the county party committees, providing one week to ten days’ courses for trainees and schools for seditionists. Intermediary party studies included: the groups for the study of the history of the Communist Party of the USSR and intermediary party schools. Higher education included: evening classes in Marxism and Leninism, Evening courses universities in Marxism and Leninism, the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party University, the “A.A. Zhdanov” School of Social Sciences. A certain hierarchy did exist at the time even within each category; the latter two institutions definitely held a privileged position within the system.

Depending on the manner in which party studies activities were conducted in terms of the teaching period, two distinct forms can be identified: full time and short time forms. The former category consisted of: current policy groups and courses, evening party studies courses, rural evening party studies courses, courses for active party cadres in the rural areas, groups for the study of the History of the Bolshevik Party, the three-month party schools¹⁷, middle party schools, evening courses in Marxism and Leninism, university courses in Marxism and Leninism, the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party University, the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov”

¹⁵ During the school year 1949-1950 the following evening universities of Marxism and Leninism were founded: the Evening university of Marxism and Leninism with the CC of the Romanian Workers’ Party, the Evening University of Marxism and Leninism with the Bucharest organization of Romanian Workers’ Party, The Evening Universities of Marxism and Leninism with the county committees of Cluj, Iași, Timișoara, Târgu-Mureș (at the last one courses were taught only in Hungarian). For the universities and evening classes of Marxism and Leninism, the school year 1949/1950 started on December 29th and only lasted for a year and a half instead of two years as the CC of the Romanian Workers' Party had stipulated. In November 1976, the universities of Marxism and Leninism would be organized according to The Programme outlining steps for the implementation of the decisions of the 11th Congress of the Communist Romanian Party; they were redesignated Political and Leadership Universities (UPC). While initially the studies took two years, after 1976 the period was increased to three years.

¹⁶ Established in 1945 as the workers’ party university, following the model set by the Superior School of Social Sciences of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (P.C.U.S.), it was repeatedly subjected to extended reorganization and change of name. Thus, from 1945 to the early 50’s, it was known as the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party University, subsequently re-named the Superior Party School and then the Academy of Social and Political Sciences in 1966. This institution trained generations of cadres who contributed to consolidating and legitimating the communist regime. As an institution, the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Academy enabled the social and political elevation of the trainees, contributed to the formation of that “state aristocracy” which was to take over economic and political power in Romania after 1989.

¹⁷ Their activity was coordinated by the regional party committees.

School for Social Sciences¹⁸. Here are some of the short time forms of party studies: training courses for journalists, schools for the party cadres belonging to the ethnic groups¹⁹, various seminars for the party cadres in charge with the organization of collective farms, refresher courses for the training of propaganda cadres²⁰. This complex system of ideological training was meant to contribute to establishing the legitimacy and to the reproduction of the communist regime²¹.

In the early years when party studies were organized, depending on the way the teaching process was conducted, there are two distinct sides: permanent and short-term forms. The former class includes: the current politics discussion clubs, the evening classes held in factories and state institutions, the evening classes held in the rural area, courses with the party cadres in the rural area, the clubs for the study of the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, three-month party courses, the intermediate level party schools, Marxism and Leninism evening classes, Marxism and Leninism evening university courses, party studies workshops and information points, the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” University and the “Andrei Aleksandrovici. Zhdanov” School of Social Studies. The short-term party studies include: training classes for journalists, schools for the party cadres belonging to the ethnic minorities, various workshops for the party cadres in charge of cooperative farms, short term courses for the training of propaganda cadres. This complex system of ideological training and advancement courses of the cadres was meant to contribute to the confirmation, the legitimation and propagation of the communist party.

The system of party studies was a pillar of the indoctrination and ideologization apparatus; it was created and perfected in the course of time, following the Soviet model²². These new institutions were meant both to provide the trainees with a cultural and political capital and to facilitate social upward mobility in a country where the political element outranked the cultural one. The teaching staff and the trainees in these schools would become the privileged members of a system that would eventually integrate such institutions into the national educational system. It can be therefore stated that party studies represented a substitute for the state education and thus facilitated the correlation between the political and cultural capital. The training that the privileged party members

¹⁸ ANIC, CC al PCR- Cancelarie, dos. 49/1950, f. 31.

¹⁹ This was a three-month party school in the Serbian language and in German, both organized in Bucharest.

²⁰ ANIC, CC al PCR- Cancelarie, dos. 49/1950, f. 31.

²¹ Mihăiță Lupu, *Funcționarea Academiei „Ștefan Gheorghiu” sau ce putem recupera în folosul mobilității elitelor actuale din România*, „Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului în România”, vol. II, Iași, Edit. Polirom, 2007, p. 269.

²² To this end, delegations consisting of the teaching staff of the various party schools were sent to the U.S.S.R. to impart of the experience accumulated within the Soviet party learning institutions. Moreover, Soviet teaching staff were sent to teach in the Romanian party schools. As Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu mentioned, the history of the party schools in the Democratic Republic of Germany (DDR), USSR, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia has many similar features.

attended in these institutions was meant to ensure “the passage from the revolutionary stage of *class struggle* to the stage of mild symbolic violence in the management and reproduction of communist elites”²³. These party studies institutions would gradually transform to train and promote the new elites, aiming at the creation of a “state aristocracy”²⁴.

Functioning as an auxiliary to the party, the system of party studies can also be found in all the states that fell under the Soviet influence after the war, as well as in several other Western countries such as Italy and France, where the Communist Parties were strong and influential²⁵. Romania was among the countries that, once under the Soviet influence, implemented the school system for the training of party cadres of Soviet model. To attract trainees, initially the party had to offer those who consented to attend these institutions certain social or material advantages that would gradually turn into “party privileges.” Within the party studies system a process of ranking was gradually implemented, similar to that which was operative in the state education system. While in the early post-war period, this difference was not quite so obvious, starting with the 50’s it became distinctly clearer. This difference became more obvious through the very terms used in the party official documents to name the trainees in these schools. Thus, for the persons attending the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” University, the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School of Social Sciences or the Marxism and Leninism universities term “students” was used, while for the persons who attended other forms of party studies, the names “pupils” or “trainees” were used. At the top of this hierarchy of party studies were the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” University (1945-1989) and the “Andrei A. Zhdanov” School of Social Sciences (1948-1958); they were the most prominent instruments of ideological indoctrination, and at the same time various other functions: they were communist propaganda centres, a mechanism for the self-propagation of the communist regime, an apparatus meant to regiment the intellectuals, as well as an instrument for the implementation of censorship²⁶.

From the School for lecturers to the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences

An important step further in the training of cadres that the party needed in the fight on the ideological front would be taken in October 1948²⁷, when the “Andrei

²³ Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 83.

²⁶ Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, *Școlile de cadre ale partidului comunist, instituții totale și instituții bastarde*, in Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, Mihăiță Lupu (eds.), *Mobilitatea elitelor în România secolului XX*, Pitești, Edit. Paralela 45, 2008, p. 217-231.

²⁷ During the period 1948-1949 129 trainees attended the courses of this form of party studies in two classes (See ANIC, CC al PCR- Cancelarie, dosar 49/1950, f. 31; See Robert R. King, *History of the Romanian Communist Party*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, California, p. 75).

Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for lecturers²⁸ was created following the passing of a Decision of the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP). The creation of this school was closely connected with reorganization of the party initiated immediately after the merge between the RCP and the Social Democrat Party (SPD) in February 1948.

The emergence of a new political entity under the name of The Romanian Workers’ Party (RWP) implied the reorganization of the entire ideological party apparatus. Consequently, the party leadership had to adopt a set of measures to improve the political and ideological training of the party members. Thus, it was decided that political and ideological training should be carried within the central party schools²⁹. This aimed in fact at supplying party cadres with an adequate political and ideological store of instruments meant to be used in the ideological battles to come. This decision was targeted at the members of the higher echelon of the party leadership, the headmasters and teachers at the party schools, the editors in chief of the party ideological journals, the professors and assisting professors at the chairs of social sciences within the higher education institutions, the lecturers at the scientific institutions³⁰. They were the pool from which the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for lecturers would recruit its trainees. The initial duration of the courses was six months, which was considered to be enough for them to acquire the necessary information from the political and ideological party documents.

As a school meant for the RWP cadres, the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for lecturers was an elitist institution which differed in its purpose from the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School, as it was meant to train only those who were directly involved in the ideological and political activity, while the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School was meant to train “the leaders in the party organizations, in the state administration, in managing positions in economy”³¹. Vladimir Tismăneanu therefore considers that the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School was created with the aim of “training the new generation of communists who had never experienced party life and activity in clandestinity or anti-fascist action”³², while the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for lecturers was meant to train and upgrade the party ideological apparatus³³. The trainees of the two

²⁸ The school was named after the head of the USSR ideological apparatus after 1945, Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov; he died on the 31st of August 1948. For further details see Kees Boterbloem, *The Life and Times of Andrei Zhdanov, 1896-1948*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, London and Ithaca, 2004.

²⁹ Mioara Roman, *Dinamica reorganizărilor PMR (1948-1953)*, „Studii și materiale de istorie contemporană”, vol. III, 2004, p. 95-108.

³⁰ *Rezoluții și hotărâri ale C.C. al P.M.R. (1948-1950)*, București, Edit. P.M.R., 1951, p. 124-125; Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

³¹ *Din experiența școlilor centrale de partid*, „Lupta de clasă”, nr. 2, octombrie-decembrie 1948, p. 112.

³² Vladimir Tismăneanu, *op. cit.*, 2005, p. 148.

³³ Vladimir Tismăneanu, Dorin Dobrințu, Cristian Vasile (eds.), *Raport final*, Edit. Humanitas, București, 2007, p. 772.

institutions were also different with respect to the level of previous education, the domains they had been active in before recruitment and the positions they would further hold within the party and state apparatus.

In July 1949, in order to emphasize the role of the new institution and to raise the cadres' level of training, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RWP decided to turn the "Andrei Aleksandroviți Zhdanov" School for lecturers into the School for Social Sciences; also, the training period was increased to two years. The institution was reorganized, with the trainees divided between the two departments: press and propaganda³⁴.

According to the Decision of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the RWP, the recruitment of the candidates fell to a committee specially appointed to this end at the level of each County party committee. The committee had to consist of a secretary of the county party committee as the President, a member of the Department of the leading party organisms, the trade union and the Youth organization³⁵, as well as an active cadre from the Human resources department – the cadres' check-up³⁶. The committee was commissioned to compile a file³⁷ for each candidate and to collect information about their life starting from primary school and up to the moment they joined the party, which should be a reflection of the trainee's political and professional status and behaviour. The file had to contain a detailed analysis of the trainee's activity from the moment he joined the party to the moment he applied, listing the political and professional tasks given and the manner in which they had fulfilled their duties. The opinion of the work group they had been active in had also an important part in the trainee's file. The committee members had to get references on the trainee's and the trainees' parents' past and present properties, as well as his parents' and close relatives' past and present political attitude and preferences. The file also had to include information about the candidate's attitude during the Legionary rebellion and the anti-soviet war. Each file had to contain an account by the County recruitment committee, previously approved by the County party bureau and signed by the secretary of the Agit Prop committee under the County party committee. This account was, in fact, a motivation of the candidate's proposal and amounted to a recommendation.

A candidate's application file had to contain other documents, too, to reveal: his political past, his party commitment, his dedication to the working class, the time spent as a party member (three years at least), his level of political and ideological training (the candidate had to have graduated the three or six month

³⁴ *Rezoluții și Hotărâri ale Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român (1948-1950)*, Edit. Partidului Muncitoresc Român, București, 1951, p. 124-125.

³⁵ In roumain Secția Organelor conducătoare de partid, sindicale și UTM.

³⁶ ANIC, CC al PCR-Propaganda and Agitation Section (Secția de Propagandă și Agitație), dos. 15/1950, f.9.

³⁷ This refers to the well-known cadre files which contained personal information about each active cadre of the extinct RCP.

party school or equivalent), the level of his background knowledge and his age (which had to be between 23 and 26 years old)³⁸. As it can be seen, the selection of this small group which will increasingly differentiate them from the mass of the party members was made according to a set of criteria, the most important of which was the ideological criterion referring mainly to the political past of the candidate and the social layer he belonged to, and less to his professional qualification and experience³⁹. Merit was not among the criteria used in the selection of the new political class which was beginning to emerge in postwar Romania.

Although initially the candidates for the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences were recruited only from among certain party ideological circles, the Decision of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of July 1949 would extend this selection pool to other categories of “ideological active cadres”: the members of the propaganda and AgitProp Departments of the county committees, the assisting lecturers in the six month intermediate schools and the three month courses, the propaganda cadres active in the various forms of party studies, the editors of the local party journals, the assisting lecturers in the cadres’ schools of the mass organizations of the members of Section of Political Education din cadrul county party committee, the members of the county cultural departments of the mass organizations, professors and assisting professors, assisting lecturers with the chairs of social sciences (possibly teachers in the middle schools in state education), the students of the faculties of philosophy, arts, letters and history⁴⁰.

In its new organizational structure the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences resumed its activity starting with the school year 1949-1950⁴¹. 143 students were admitted in the first year, which was 143% of the number of grants decided on through the Decision of the Political Bureau of the RWP of July 1949. Of the admitted candidates, approximately 50% were workers, 34 % were intellectuals and the rest belonged to other social layers⁴².

The results of the school year 1949-1950 in the party school would be submitted for analysis to the Central Committee of the RWP, mainly to the AgitProp Department. The members of this party organism negatively remarked on the reduced number of grants allotted to the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences. Hence, it was decided that starting with the following school year, the number should be increased to 250 (for both students in the 1st and 2nd year) and they would also be exempted from work for the duration of the

³⁸ ANIC, CC al PCR-Propagandă și Agitație, dos. 15/1950, f. 10.

³⁹ Bogdan Ivașcu, *Nașterea unei noi elite: Transilvania (1945-1953)*, Arad, Edit. Gutenberg Univers, 2008, p. 31.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ Starting with the school year 1949-1950, the school year was introduced in any form of party studies through a decision of CC of RWP. According to this decision, all party courses, schools and clubs began and concluded their activity at the same date.

⁴² ANIC, CC al PCR – Cancelarie, dos. 49/1950, f. 30.

courses. This initiative came as a consequence of the decision to develop and extend the party schools network at all levels⁴³.

Between 1945-1948, the activity in party studies was coordinated by the Central Section of Political Education) (SCPE) within the Central Committee. Following the Congress for the unification of the Romanian Communist Party with the Social Democrat Party in 1948 this department would transform into the AgitProp Department of the CC of RWP. The Plenary meeting of the CC of the RWP of January 1950 decided that the structures of the CC should be reorganized and renamed. Thus, party studies fell to the AgitProp Department and the Department of the leading party organisms and institutions, the trade unions and the workers' youth organization (WYO). While the AgitProp Department was placed in charge of the forms of party studies which did not involve exemption from work (the current politics study groups, the reading clubs, the evening classes in the rural and urban areas, the clubs for the study of the Party history, the Marxism and Leninism evening classes and universities, the "Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov" School for Social Sciences, the party offices and information points, the schools of journalism, the courses and workshops for the propaganda cadres, assisting lecturers, lecturers and professors in the party schools)⁴⁴, the Department of the leading party organisms, unions and WYO, through the Department of the cadres' training and advancement took over those forms of party studies whose main declared aim was to unmediatedly train and qualify the party cadres" (the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" University, the six month intermediate schools, the three month courses, the party courses in the rural areas)⁴⁵.

The AgitProp Department of the CC of the RWP carefully monitored the activity within the "Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov" School for Social Sciences. Various committees of the department checked the activity of the institutions according to the standards set by the soviet model; the facts discovered during the inspections were then presented to the Secretariat of the CC of the RWP in reports. As a rule, the inspections were followed by discussions at department level and steps were finally adopted, which were meant to eliminate the shortcomings identified during the inspections. On analysing such a checkup of the institution's activity during the school year 1951-1952, CC of the RWP agreed with the conclusions of the checkup committee which, beside achievements, also revealed a number of shortcomings that marred the institution's activity. To rectify these shortcomings and to improve the quality of the party cadres' training and increase the level of the Marxist Leninist propaganda, the higher echelon of the party leadership decided to increase the training period from two to three years, to

⁴³ *Rezoluții și hotărâri ale C.C. al P.M.R. (1948-1950)*, București, Edit. P.M.R., 1951, p. 256-267.

⁴⁴ ANIC, CC al PCR – Cancelarie, dos. 49/1950, f. 35; Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *op. cit.*, p. 118-119.

⁴⁵ *Idem*, CC al PCR – Organizatoric Section (Secția Organizatorică), dos. 110/1950, f. 109.

increase the number of grants and also to continue the part time studies⁴⁶. This form of training would be “monopolized” by certain classes of party cadres such as: the prime-secretaries of the regional party committees, the secretaries and heads of the departments of the regional committees, the prime-secretaries of the districts and town committees, the directors and managers within the regional management of the mass organizations and of the regional popular councils, the directors and heads of department of the political departments of the ministries (only those who had not graduated the higher forms of two year party studies)⁴⁷. The decision regarding the increase in the training period from two to three years would be enforced starting with the school year 1952–1953. At the same time, the number of grants increased for both the day courses (300) and the part-time courses (750).

The active cadres in the party and state apparatus who held leading positions had to attend advancement courses periodically. Thus, such departments for the advancement of cadres were created. Within the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences two such advancement courses were initiated, one for the active party cadres and the other for journalists, each with 200 trainees⁴⁸.

The advancement course for the active propaganda cadres within the “A.A. Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences continued during the school year 1949–1950; its aim was to ensure adequate political and ideological training to those party cadres unmediatedly involved in the propaganda activity. The trainees were recruited from among the heads of the propaganda departments of the regional, district and town committees; the active cadres in the AgitProp departments; the principals of the evening party schools, party offices, permanent workshops of the propaganda cadres; the consultants, lectors and propaganda cadres⁴⁹. The advancement activity within the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was aimed mainly at the “middle layer” of the “party ideological apparatus.”

The active cadres who wanted to attend the courses for the propaganda cadres had to meet certain requirements in order to be admitted: they had to be RWP members, aged between 25 and 35, to have adequate political background, to be experienced in the propaganda activity, to have graduated a form of state education – at least intermediate school (seven grades). In its new form, the advancement course for the propaganda cadres within the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was reopened on March 15th 1953. The duration of the courses was six months; starting with the school year 1953-1954, it increased to nine months. The candidates for the courses had to be approved by the Regional committees of the RWP.

⁴⁶ This form of party studies was introduced in the autumn of 1951 and 667 candidates were admitted.

⁴⁷ ANIC, CC al PCR-Propagandă și Agitație, dos. 51/1952, f. 15-17.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 23.

⁴⁹ ANIC, CC al PCR-Propagandă și Agitație, dos. 9/1953, f. 1.

The courses for journalists were intermitently held within the same school; their aim was to increase the level of ideological training of the active cadres working in the press and the radio. Starting with the school year 1953–1954 they became permanent and the training duration increased from six to nine months.

The graduates from the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences acquired a certain “political capital” which was subsequently converted into a social capital. As a rule, those who graduated this institution were then appointed to various leading positions within: the central and local party apparatus, the army, the Ministry of State Security and the Ministry of Home Affairs; in the higher education forms of the party schools as assisting lecturers, lecturers, assisting professors at the intermediate schools and at the chairs of social sciences within the state universities; in the press, with the propaganda apparatus; in various central cultural institutions⁵⁰. The graduates proposed for a position within the bureaucratic apparatus of the CC were subject to further ample and detailed checkup by the active cadres in the Human resources checkup department within the CC of RWP⁵¹, who were the true *Securitate* cadres of the party. After the checkup, the actual process of appointing the graduates began. For example, through the Decision of the Secretariate of the CC of the RWP no. 324 of May 13th 1953, a number of the total 146 graduates of the 1950–1953 class of the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences were appointed to various positions. Thus it was approved that some graduates of the party schools should be appointed as follows: 17 graduates at the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School and the central propaganda course within this institution, of which 10 had graduated the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School and 7 had graduated the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences⁵². At the same time, 19 graduates of the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences of the 1952 – 1953 class were appointed lecturers and assisting lecturers at the institution they had just graduated⁵³, while two others of the same class were appointed with the group of lecturers with the AgitProp Department of the CC of the RWP⁵⁴. The various CC committees received 10 graduates⁵⁵, while “Scântea”, the central press organ of the RWP received two graduates⁵⁶.

The monitoring and supervising of the party studies continued in the following years. The staff inspection units of the CC of the RWP regularly visited the party schools of all types. Such an inspection at the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences revealed a number of shortcomings and it was found that there was “a rush to acquire as many participations in courses and

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 44-45.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, f. 43.

⁵² *Ibidem*, f. 15.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, ff 15-16.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 16.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

schools, at the expense of the quality of the training,” a permissiveness in accepting in party schools candidates who had not been thoroughly checked in terms of their political commitment, with unsatisfactory political background knowledge and no experience in party work⁵⁷. In its meeting of September 8th 1953, the higher echelon of the party leadership adopted a number of measures meant to eliminate the shortcomings revealed within the cadres’ training and advancement system, it was therefore considered necessary to reorganize party schools and studies “in agreement with the experience of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and of our party”⁵⁸. Consequently, the “Andrei Aleksandrovici. Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was subject to an ample reorganizing process; the focus was on the training of the ideological cadres of the party⁵⁹.

As the “the ideological cadres of the party” of the higher echelons of the party leadership completed the training programmes at the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences, the selection pool was gradually extended to the lower echelons of the party leadership. Thus, the following came to be selected to attend the courses of this institution: active cadres in higher positions in the leadership of the party and state apparatus; secretaries, heads of departments and vice-heads of departments of the regional party committees; editors at the various newspapers; principals and teaching staff of the regional party schools; heads of the Marxism and Leninism universities; directors of the party offices; propaganda cadres⁶⁰; academic teaching staff at the chairs of social sciences, schoolmasters, teachers and other communist intellectuals. Permissiveness into the selection pool for party candidates and members increased, as candidates who were not among the categories listed above, yet met the requirements in order to succeed to this school for the elites of the RWP were now accepted⁶¹. In spite of this expanded pool of candidates, the number of trainees at the School for Social Sciences would be reduced to 120 for each year; of them, 50% to 60% had still to come from the various classes of party active cadres.

The reorganization of the party studies brought about new entrance criteria for those who wanted to apply for the entrance exam at the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences. Thus, the candidates had first to go through the checkup of a CC of the RWP committee which checked their references and recommendations, as well as the applications in their files. This more thorough checkup aimed at preventing the access of those persons who, through their attitude

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 73.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 74.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, f.77; *Rezoluții și hotărâri ale C.C. al P.M.R. (1948-1950)*, București, Edit. P.M.R., 1951, p. 256-267.

⁶⁰ The propaganda cadres who wanted to attend this school had to have graduated at least a form of intermediate.

⁶¹ ANIC, CC al PCR-Propagandă și Agitație, dos. 9/1953, f. 77; *Rezoluții și Hotărâri ale Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român (1951-1953)*, vol. II, București, Edit. pentru Literatură Politică, 1954, p. 533.

and activity, could have endangered the new political order that was being instituted in post war Romania.

The entrance exam now consisted of exams in the following disciplines: The Romanian language, Geography, the History of the Popular Republic of Romania, Basic knowledge of Marxism and Leninism. Enlisting in the school of the admitted candidates was done only based on a Decision of the CC of the RWP. In the first two years, the trainees studied general disciplines, while in their third year they could specialize in one of the following: Dialectic materialism, Historic materialism, Political economics. The Russian language was obligatory for all the trainees, irrespective of their specialization. To graduate the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences, the trainees had to pass the final exams and to defend a graduation paper in front of a committee consisting of the school teaching staff. Those who had specialised in the domain Philosophy⁶² had to sit for a state exam in the following disciplines: the History of CPSU, Dialectic and historic materialism, The history of Philosophy, the Russian language and had to write a graduation paper whose topic had to be within the domain of either Dialectic materialism or Historic materialism. The trainees who had chosen to specialize in Political economics had to sit for state exams in the following disciplines: the History of CPSU, Dialectic and historic materialism, The history of Philosophy, Political economics and the Russian language and had to choose for their graduation paper a topic from the domain of Capitalist economics or Socialist economics⁶³.

The reorganization of the party studies and implicitly of the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences would bring about a set of administrative changes as well. To increase the efficiency of the activity, new chairs were created within the institution: the History of the CPSU, History, Political economics, Economic and political geography, Dialectic materialism, Historic materialism, International relations, Party Structure and Organization, the Romanian language and literature, the Russian language. Similar forms of education were attempted to those existing in the state higher education; this was doubled by the import or the retaining of soviet professors as heads of these chairs.

In order to offer a high quality ideological training, *aspirantura*⁶⁴ (a form of study preparing graduates for research or future academic career, similar to postgrad or M.A. studies) was created; the duration of the courses was three years, in the following specializations: the History of the CPSU, Dialectic materialism and Historic materialism, Political economics. Exceptionally, certain classes of active cadres were to activate with the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences in the *aspirantura* programme for one year in the part time

⁶² Only the trainees who attended the courses the disciplines Dialectic materialism and Historic materialism could have an *aspirantura* in Philosophy.

⁶³ *Rezoluții și Hotărâri ale Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român (1951-1953)*, vol. II, București, Edit. pentru Literatură Politică, 1954, p. 534-535.

⁶⁴ The soviet Ph.DOS. system.

form without being exempted from work. In the first year this was operative, 17 candidates were admitted in the full time form and 60 in the part time form⁶⁵.

According to the decision of the higher echelon of the party leadership to reorganize the party school system, within the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences a one year core course for the training of propaganda cadres, of the active cadres in the AgitProp departments with the regional, district and town committees continued to function. This course had the same curriculum as the one at the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School; however, the trainees at the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences were to study in more detail issues related to propaganda work. At the end of 1954–1955 school year, this course was discontinued.

Starting with the school year 1955–1956, by decision of the CC of the RWP, the course for propaganda cadres at the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was replaced by a one year course that trained propaganda cadres for the party offices, for the Marxism and Leninism evening universities, evening party schools, the permanent workshops for the propaganda cadres, as well as cadres for the groups of lecturers of the regional party committees. The trainees admitted to this course were party activists, intellectuals who were party members and who had graduated a form of two year party higher level party courses, as well as propaganda cadres who were already highly experienced in propaganda work and an adequate ideological backgrounds. These trainees would attend the following courses: Political economics, the Basics of Marxism and Leninism, Issues related to industrial and agricultural economics, Issues of party life, Contemporary international relations; Current issues in science, arts and literature, a set of courses on the methodology in teaching party studies⁶⁶.

Following the reorganization of the party studies, the part time form of party studies within the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was transferred to the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School, where it became a distinct department with four year courses. The trainees at the part time courses who had no adequate background education would be recommended to attend other forms of party studies, suitable to their level of education. There were 100 grants at this department. The entrance requirements at the part time form were identical with those at the full time form with the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School⁶⁷.

On March 31st 1954, the Political Bureau of the CC of the RWP decided on the transformation of the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences into an Institute of Social Sciences directly dependent on the CC of the RWP⁶⁸. In

⁶⁵ ANIC, CC al PCR- Propagandă și Agitație, dos. 27/1954, f. 13.

⁶⁶ Idem, dos. 17/1955, f.59

⁶⁷ Idem, dos. 9/1953, f. 76.

⁶⁸ *Hotărârea Comitetului Central al Partidului Muncitoresc Român cu privire la îmbunătățirea propagandei de partid și întărirea legăturilor ei cu practica construcției socialiste*, București, Edit. de Stat pentru Literatură Politică, 1956, p. 26; Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *op. cit.*, p. 117; A.N.I.C., C.C. al P.C.R.- Propagandă și Agitație, dosar 27/1954, f. 12.

tems of reorganization, that implied giving up the training of cadres for the domain of propaganda, as this was transferred to the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School beginning with the school year 1954–1955. The party leadership also decided that beginning with the school year 1954–1955 no more trainees should be recruited for the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences, and that the institution would continue only with the 2nd and 3rd year and with a core course for the training of propaganda cadres. At the same time, the party leadership considered that greater focus should be on the *aspirantura* section. Thus, it was decided that the quality and the number of the candidates for the 1st year of the PhD programme should be increased. Therefore, in the school year 1954–1955 “30 of the best graduates of the state higher education institutions, as well as 10 to 15 active cadres with an adequate qualification” were admitted to the full time *aspirantura* form⁶⁹.

Recruiting the candidates for the *aspirantura* system within the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was usually a long-drawn and tortuous process. Thus, the selection process by the CC Secretariate of the RWP for the candidates to be admitted in the school year 1955-1956 started as early as February 1956. The regional committees had to forward a list of proposals by March 1st 1956 to the AgitProp Department of the CC of the RWP. The proposals had to be accompanied by the following documents: a personal application; the decision – recommendation of the regional party committee; the party committee evaluation of the candidate’s activity; the checkup account issued by the Human resources department of the regional party committee; a certificate of health to certify that the candidate is apt for attendance. The candidates who were admitted for the full time form were also given a monthly stipend; those who were not residents of the capital city would be given free accommodation in hostels (however, their families would not)⁷⁰.

Although the former training system was discontinued and the new one focused mainly on advancement programmes for the cadres through the extension of the *aspirantura* programme, the members of the CC of the RWP did not give up the idea of having Soviet professors as heads of the Philosophy and Economics chairs, they actually requested another one as the head of the chair of the History of the CPSU department⁷¹.

The new status of this party school would bring about a number of changes regarding the specializations that the accepted candidates could follow. The domains for the trainees who were seeking the title of “candidate in sciences” were the following: the History of the CPSU, the history of the Popular Republic of Romania, Philosophy and Political economics⁷². In the summer of 1957 the first

⁶⁹ ANIC, CC al PCR – Propagandă și Agitație, dos. 27/1954, f. 12.

⁷⁰ Idem, dos. 23/1956, f. 3.

⁷¹ Idem, dos. 27/1954, f. 12.

⁷² Idem, dos. 23/1956, f. 2.

class – 8 candidates in sciences – graduated the institute of Social Sciences under the CC of the RWP. Half of the graduates were awarded a diploma in the specializaition Philosophy⁷³, while the rest graduated in Political economics⁷⁴.

Aiming at creating a unified institution that would include all the forms of training and advancement in party studies, as well as for the unions and the Working Youth Union (WYU), the Secretariate of the CC of the RWP decided the merge of the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School with the Institute of Social Scicens; the new institution would be named the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School through the Decision no. 588 of August 26th 1958. Through the same decision, both the Central School under under the CC of the RWP and the Central School of the Central Council of the Trade Unions and they were transferred to the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School, which was to work in the training and advancement of the WYU and trade union cadres⁷⁵. Thus, starting with the school year 1958–1959, only one superior school in party studies remained, the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School. In the first year, the following courses were taught in the resulting institution: a three year superior course in party studies, with 340 trainees; the four year *aspirantura* programme, with 57 *aspirantura* trainees; the two year course for journalists, with 71 trainees; in 1958-1959 this course trained only first year trainees; a one year course for propaganda cadres, with 100 trainees; the one year advancement course for the teaching staff with the social sciences chairs within state higher education institutions, with 30 trainees; the advancement course for the WYU cadres, with 100 trainees; the advancement course for the trade union cadres, with 100 trainees; the five year part time superior course in party studies, with 581 trainees; the five year part time *aspirantura* programme, with 40 trainees⁷⁶.

All these courses were attended by a total number of 1482 trainees, of which 861 attended the full time form and 621 attended the part time form. Startig with the year 1958 – 1959 only one higher education institution organizing training and advancement courses for the party cadres, the trade union and WYU cadres existedos. The competition between the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School and the more select “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was desistedos.

Conclusions

In its first years after no longer being in clandestinity, following its Soviet model, the Romanian Communist Party sought to create its own propaganda apparatus and to train a number of active cadres committed to the party who would

⁷³ ANIC, CC al PCR-Cancelarie, dos. 31/1957, f. 15-16; Nicoleta Ionescu-Gură, *op.cit.*, p. 385-386.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ ANIC, CC al PCR-Propagandă și Agitație, dos. 27/1958, f. 3.

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.

support the consolidation of the regime which had been installed by force and to contribute regularly to the reassertion of its ideological legitimacy. A system of training the cadres was necessary to accomplish that, which should be different from the state system in order to contribute to the creation of the party and state apparatus that the Communist Party needed to consolidate the power acquired with the help of the Soviet tanks. Thus, the system of party studies emerged; it was an “instrument” used by the communists to prepare the new elite, to create a new “aristocracy” who would seek to eliminate the older aristocracy by any means available.

Party studies represented a necessary stage in the process of forming the new elite. The aim was to transform everybody included in it in instruments capable of promoting the party policy and guidelines. At the same time, the cadres trained in these ideological laboratories had to be transformed in fanatic worshippers of the General Secretary’s personality.

The creation of the party studies system was long, laborious and prolonged, even though the Romanian communists benefited from the experience and support of the similar institutions in the USSR. The attention that the party leadership gave this cadres’ training system is more than obvious. Cadres in the higher echelon of the party leadership openly supported the party studies system, which was seen both as an instrument for ideological training and one to test it.

The “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was one of the important elements in the complex machinery of party studies. Having the right to train cadres from the higher echelon of the party leadership for ideological work, the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School was an institution for “ideological intoxication”, a seminary of the communist propaganda accessible only to the cadres who were dedicated to the party.

The training of the “experts in ideology” within the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences would be abruptly ended in 1958, when the party leadership decided on the merge of this institution and the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School. The merge is the consequence of the decisions made during the Plenary meeting of the CC of the RWP of June 1958, whose outcome was that the entire party ideological apparatus was subject to an ample process of “ideological purging”. The party studies system was not exempted from the cleaning process and all those who had, one way or the other, colluded against the party.

The history of this ephemeral school coincides with the period of consolidation of the communist regime in Romania, when the new regime was in deep need of “ideological experts” to advance the success of the new regime in a country which had made itself conspicuous through its anti-communist feelings. The “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was an institution which served the purpose of enlightening and ideologically training the future cadres, a stronghold of ideological propagandism, the place where the

trainees, who had been recruited according to the criteria stipulated for the application file, would complete their ideological training and wherefrom they would leave to implement the party policy.

The “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences was ranked as a university and was one of the institutions that awarded their graduates diplomas which ensured them political and professional recognition. In most cases, this recognition would result in the social and professional promotion of those who continued to prove their commitment to the party and the values of the new society. Those who did not fit this profile were marginalized and removed from the positions they had held in the party and state hierarchy. In our view, the role of the party schools, the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences and the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Party School included, was that of brainwashing the trainees and of forming a group of active cadres whose duty was to implement the party policy.

Under the circumstances of the dissolution of the “historical conscience” and the revivification of the neoMarxist movement, the appeal to recent memory, to the presentation of the instruments that contributed to the establishment, consolidation and self-propagation of the system is worth at least some consideration on the researchers’ part. Consequently, the retrieval of the history of the “Andrei Aleksandrovici Zhdanov” School for Social Sciences is essential for the understanding of the communist period, which alienated Romanian from the democratic principles and values.