

The Image of King Mihai in Post-1989 Romanian Society: The Survival of Communist Ideology

Marina ROTARU

Romanian-American University, Bucharest
E-mail: marina.rotaru77@gmail.com

Abstract

After the fall of the dictatorial regime in 1989, revisiting the recent past of the country proved a challenge for Romania. Much of the difficulty came from the fact that during communism Romanian society suffered an intense process of Sovietization. The survival of communist ideology in the collective memory of the Romanian people could be illustrated by the manner in which King Mihai was perceived by the Romanian society in the early 1990s. Until 1997, when King Mihai could finally return to Romania without any incidents, the monarch made several attempts to come home, of which only one was successful: the Easter visit of 1992. While the general public seems to be getting rid of communist dogma, gradually discovering the real role King Mihai played in Romania's recent history, the present president of the State, in calling the king "a traitor", still appears to manifest communist ideological reminiscences.

Keywords: *Mihai I, post-communism, critical analysis*

Introduction

This article deals with the image of King Mihai in post-communist Romanian society. Such a theme is worth investigating for at least two reasons: first, it helps demonstrate the effects of forty-three years of communist ideology on the Romanians' collective memory. Second, it proves that the simple overthrow of the communist regime in 1989 has not managed to change the mentality of the new, self-proclaimed democratic political class. My investigation focuses on the consequences of communist ideology on the understanding of landmark personalities of the Romanian history such as King Mihai. The analytical framework is provided by Critical Discourse Analysis. As a resource in social research, CDA reveals that language is a salient element of social life. Changes in social life also manifest in language, which is in a dialogical relationship with other elements of social life, therefore in a position to influence them and be influenced by them. Fairclough's leftist approach to the neo-liberal view of the world may read provocative when used in order to defend a liberal position in post-communist Romania (King Mihai's position). Following Fairclough's example, my analysis is turned against the re-appropriation of another worldview in the past, the communist view, by the so-called democratic political forces after 1989. In spite of its sometimes relativistic approach, CDA as a method of investigation helps uncover how ideology may insinuate itself at the textual level without being detected by a non-specialist reader.

Ideological Manipulation and its Results before 1989

In the early 1990, when King Mihai made his first attempt to return home after a forty-two-year exile, few Romanians knew exactly who he was and how the Moscow-instructed Romanian communists¹ forced the king to abdicate, thus overthrowing the monarchy without prior consultation of the population. This small segment included contemporaries and supporters of King Mihai, the hardcore monarchists, for whom the monarch was still the rightful sovereign of the State. During the communist regime, they managed to keep the memory of the king alive by saving and hiding royal memorabilia (stamps and coins with the effigy of King Mihai, banknotes, medals, postcards and even books) in spite of the dangers of being turned over to the Securitate, if exposed. In revealing to the younger members of their families who King Mihai was and how the Romanian royal dynasty identified with the birth of modern Romania, these people gave their children and grandchildren a different type of instruction, which ran counter to the official discourse disseminated by the communist system of education: “a secret education, parallel with the school, and this task was usually assumed by women: mothers, aunts, grandmothers, blending in the same nostalgia the kings of the old days and their childhood memories.”² However, decades of manipulation and Marxist-Leninist indoctrination have left their mark. The image of Romania’s last legitimate head of State seemed to have been wiped out from the collective memory. Hence, when faced with the living symbol of the country’s recent history, the Romanian society reacted heterogeneously: some, very few, hailed the king, others, a bit more numerous welcomed the king out of their desire to get to know him, while the rest, quite a large part, either opposed the king openly, considering him a foreigner or simply did not know what to make of the situation.

This confused attitude of the Romanian society towards King Mihai may be the result of the implementation of communist ideology in all fields of human activity in the country in the past decades. In order to understand the attitude of the Romanian society towards King Mihai in the early 1990s, one should perhaps try to investigate what happened before 1990 when entire generations of Romanians were brainwashed in order to become uprooted individuals molded after the Soviet prototype.

First, the Soviet-oriented regime beheaded the country by forcing the king into exile and by destroying the intellectual elite. For instance, many members of the Royal Academy, founded in 1866 by the first constitutional monarch, King Carol I, were soon removed from their seats and the institution was revamped into the Academy of the Romanian Popular Republic by decree no. 1091 of 9 June 1948. The body of university professors experienced a similar purge, justified by budget cuts³. Another decree⁴

¹ For a thorough description of the way in which the Moscow-instructed Romanian communists planned and managed to overthrow the monarchy and transform Romania into a communist republic, see Mircea Chirițoiu, ed., *Lovitura de Stat de la 30 Decembrie 1947. Preliminarii militare, consecințe politice* (București: Fundația Academia Civică, 1997) and Dinu C. Giurescu, *Lichidatorii. România în 1947* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 2010).

² Andrei Pippidi, “Monarhismul,” in *Doctrina Politică: concepte universale și realități românești*, ed. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (Iași: Polirom și Societatea Academică din România, 1998), 104.

³ Giurescu, 199, my translation. All translations in the article are mine if not indicated otherwise.

⁴ Decree 175/1948, in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitory], no. 177, August 3, 1948, regarding the reform of the system of education.

turned the system of education into one of the avenues of indoctrination. By reforming it, the new leadership aimed at creating a type of personnel willing to implement the Soviet ideology in all domains. A new elite made of Stalinist ideologists took over. One of them, who was going to play a key-role in the corruption of the Romanian historiography and the falsification of the national past, was Mihai Roller, a Moscow-educated activist of Agitprop (the Department for Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee of the Communist Party)⁵. Starting with Roller, the Romanian historiography, traditionally attached to Western values, was forced to embark on a new course.

Roller's aim was to rewrite Romanian history in accordance with the precepts of the Marxist-Leninist science. Romanian historiography was subjected to a new methodological approach, historical materialism, "rooted in the belief that the structure of society and human relations in all their forms are the product of material conditions and circumstances, rather than of ideas, thought or consciousness."⁶ Hence, the evolution of society was the result of the class struggle between the bourgeoisie (who owned the means of production) and the proletariat (the labor force exploited by the upper classes). In this irreversible conflict, the masses played a paramount role since they alone could lead society to progress, guided by the communist party.

A look at the table of contents in a communist history course book (be it for the primary, secondary or high school education) indicates that the traditional periodization of history, which followed the earlier development of the Romanian society, highlighting the landmark moments of the country's historical evolution, was replaced with a standard periodization in communist fashion according to which historical events were the results of class struggles with an international character and span. Landmark dates such as the Union of 1859 no longer provide the titles of individual chapters as traditionally done in order to underline the importance of the event to the life of the country. They are usually inserted in wider chapters, artificially divided according to the standard periodization above-mentioned. In agreement with the new communist logic, the milestones of Romanian history are deprived of their national character and support. The Union of 1859 is represented as the pursuit of the ruling classes against the lower ones: "The ruling classes managed to ensure that the Union be made from the top by means of the agreement between the bourgeoisie and the boyars; it benefited the bourgeois elements and the commercial boyars, and not the large popular masses."⁷ The union was the result of "a class political act, not a national action"⁸, as Boia summarizes the new historiography.

The purpose of the deletion of such landmark events from chapter titles was twofold: the falsification of history as well as mental chaos. For a primary school student, it must have been confusing to learn about the Great Union of 1918 without the possibility of identifying leading personalities directly involved in the events, such as the sovereign of the country at the time, King Ferdinand I.

⁵ Romulus Rusan, coord., *Sfârșiți odată cu trecutul negru. Sistemul represiv comunist din România* (București: Editura Fundației Academia Civică, 2010), 122. See also Vlad Georgescu, *Istoria românilor de la origini până în zilele noastre* (Los Angeles: A.R.A. (Academia Româno-Americană de Științe și Arte) Publications, 1989), 295 and Giurescu, 199.

⁶ Iain McLean, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 313.

⁷ Mihai Roller, ed., *Istoria R.P.R.* (București: Editura de Stat Didactică și Pedagogică, 1952), 373.

⁸ Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (București: Humanitas, 2005), 124.

An important dimension of the process of re-interpreting and re-writing history was the deletion of the image of the Romanian constitutional monarchs from the collective memory and of the merits of the monarchy in the modernization of the country by simply removing their names from history as if they never existed: "As far as the monarchy was concerned [...], the easiest method to use was omission, by simply extirpating the data regarding the dynasty and the Romanian kings in the history of Romanians."⁹ King Carol I's contribution to the country's independence in 1877 or to the birth of the Kingdom of Romania in 1881 is entirely deleted. King Ferdinand's merits in the making of the Great Union of 1918 are also omitted. King Carol II though is more often mentioned, mainly as an example of personal greed and unconstitutional conduct. Little do the course books say about the monarch's contribution, for instance, to the cultural development of the Romanian society. Like his predecessors, King Mihai is also seldom mentioned, usually in relation to his abdication. There is no mentioning of the king's personal contribution to the coup of 23 August 1944 or in relation to the Royal Strike.

One of Mihai Roller's political achievements of consequence for entire future generations of young Romanians studying their country's past was the publication of the only history course book, *Istoria României (The History of Romania)*. First issued in 1947, the new history handbook was "a complete revision of the country's past, of the national idea"¹⁰. The new textbook had several editions until 1958 when Roller passed away, and was used both for the secondary education¹¹ and the high school¹². Even after Roller's death, the Soviet ideology continued to manifest itself in a new series of history textbooks edited by a team of historians, most of them members of the Institute of Historical and Social-Political Studies of the Romanian Communist Party's Central Committee. Although the textbooks did experience some alterations along the years, they did not deviate from the official ideology and the royal past of the country continued to be, if not always omitted, largely marginalized.

Being generally regarded as the conventional means of educating the younger generations and an indispensable teaching support, the history course books turned into one of the most rapid and efficient forms of propaganda, and perhaps one of the most unopposed by those they were addressed to. Since the handbooks were designed for the three stages of the pre-university education, i.e. the primary, the secondary and the high-school educational systems, one may conclude that the indoctrination of the young generations was made at all levels, so that few could avoid it. It was very unlikely that six to eleven-year old pupils in the primary grades and eleven to fourteen-year-olds in the secondary grades owned the capacity to judge for themselves and discriminate between what was generally held as historical truth and what was forged in order to match the new ideology. By the time they reached high school or university, they may have already become brainwashed, unaware perhaps of the process they had been subjected to.

⁹ Livia Dandara, "Extirparea ideologică a memoriei naționale prin falsificarea masivă a trecutului istoric. Experimentul stalinist în varianta Roller: "Istoria R.P.R." în ediții succesive (septembrie 1947, iunie 1948, ș.a.)," in *Anul 1948: Instituționalizarea comunismului*, ed. Romulus Rusan (București: Fundația Academia Civică, 1998), 581.

¹⁰ Georgescu, 295.

¹¹ Mihai Roller, ed., *Istoria României-Manual unic pentru clasa a III-a și clasa a IV-a de gimnaziu* (București: Editura de Stat, 1947).

¹² Mihai Roller, *Istoria României-Manual unic pentru clasa a VIII-a secundară* (București: Editura de Stat, 1947).

What follows is a critical analysis of the manner in which King Mihai is represented in the communist history books with a particular focus on the ideological dimension manifested at the text level. Through ideological manipulation, the communist historiography constructed King Mihai as the “Other”. I will use the term “Other” according to Edward Said’s interpretation: both as a “contestant” (in this case of the communist system) and as the “contrasting image [...], experience”¹³ in relation to the Romanians living under the new regime. The relevance of the king’s German origins, for instance, was exacerbated in order to make him look as a true alien. At the same time, the monarchy was depicted as a form of State unfamiliar and harmful to the people, with no or little contribution to their wellbeing.

Norman Fairclough (1992), drawing on Althusser (1971)¹⁴, regards ideologies as

significations/constructions of reality (the physical world, social relations, social identities), which are built into various dimensions of the forms/meanings of discursive practices, and which contribute to the production, reproduction or transformation of relations of domination.¹⁵

In Fairclough’s view, ideologies become efficient when they are naturalized, i.e. they become accepted as “non-ideological "common sense"”¹⁶.

The naturalization of meaning can be achieved through various text features which can be ideologically invested such as presuppositions (assumptions) or metaphors. Fairclough views ideologies as “generally implicit assumptions”¹⁷. What makes assumptions or prepositions good vehicles of ideological meaning is the fact that they are not characteristic of a specific text: “It is a matter rather of a relationship between this text and what has been said or written or thought elsewhere, with the “elsewhere” left vague.”¹⁸

The metaphor is a figure of speech in which “one thing, idea or action is referred to by a word or expression normally denoting another thing, idea or action, so as to suggest some common quality shared by the two.”¹⁹ Though mainly a feature of poetry and of the literary language in general, the metaphor has colonized the every day language, as Lakoff and Johnson point out²⁰, by means of words and expressions that often “pass unnoticed as “dead metaphors””²¹. The fact that people use metaphors in order to signify the world around leads to Fairclough’s conclusion: “Metaphors structure the way we think and the way we act, and our systems of knowledge and belief, in a pervasive and fundamental way.”²² Coherence, as an attribute of texts, also

¹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books. A Division of Random House, 1994), 1-2.

¹⁴ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, ed. Louis Althusser (London: New Left Books, 1971).

¹⁵ Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (London: Polity Press, 1992), 87.

¹⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language* (London: Longman, 1995), 27.

¹⁷ Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis*, 5.

¹⁸ Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London: Routledge, 2003), 40.

¹⁹ Chris Baldick, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 134.

²⁰ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

²¹ Baldick, 134.

²² Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 194.

“may rest upon assumptions of an ideological sort”²³, which could make people establish connections and draw inferences which seem logical. Therefore, ideology invests language at various textual levels and it is often undetected by the inexperienced reader.

Let us analyze how King Mihai is positioned in the communist discourse in the history course books. Within the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the working classes, King Mihai is depicted as the representative and the defender of the former: “At the head of the fight of the enemies of the working people was the king. He was the inside ally of the bourgeois and the land owners and the outside ally of the American and English capitalists.”²⁴ Through possible connections linking King Mihai to his Hohenzollern forerunners, depicted in previous course book chapters as Prussian aristocrats who, as Romanian sovereigns had accumulated wealth (palaces, land estates, stocks), the reader could have inferred as logical the representation of the king as the head of those opposing the working classes, hence not one of them, but the “Other”. The coherence of the fragment, which may have helped students understand it in communist terms, is provided by the metaphor “the head of the fight” as if the king was the one leading his troops in the battle against the masses. The linguistic vehicle which links the king to foreigners is the noun “ally”, which also carries a metaphorical meaning in the sense that “ally” is usually used in the context of a war. Therefore, the profile of Mihai I is that of a king at war with his own people.

23 August 1944 was another landmark of the Romanian past manipulated by the communist regime. The personal and direct contribution of the king is entirely omitted: Roller’s 1953 edition of the history textbook for the fourth grade presents the coup as the successful mission of the communists: “The Communist Party established a patriotic fighting squad who broke in the royal palace and [...] arrested Antonescu and his entire government.”²⁵ The events are defined as the result of the contribution of the Communist Party. After Roller’s death, a new series of history textbooks, edited in approximately the same format for decades, labeled the events of 23 August 1944 as “the armed insurrection [...], organized and led by the Romanian Communist Party.”²⁶ The choice of the term “insurrection” may have represented an attempt to naturalize a new meaning for 23 August 1944: that of a popular movement supported by the army and headed by the Communist Party. In fact, the naturalization of meaning did take place, since for almost thirty years the noun “insurrection” was pervasively used to describe the above-mentioned events. In a shrewd twist of meaning, the Romanian army, which fulfilled a paramount role on 23 August 1944 and acted only on the direct order of their supreme commander, King Mihai I, was deprived of their contribution to the event while their part was distributed to the masses.

The abdication of King Mihai on 30 December 1947 is another example of the ideological falsification by the communist historiography. Through metaphor,

²³ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 84.

²⁴ Mihai Roller, ed., *Manual pentru clasa a IV-a elementară* (București: Editura de Stat Didactică și Pedagogică, 1953), 165.

²⁵ My translation (Partidul Comunist a alcătuit o grupare patriotică de luptă care a pătruns [...] în palatul regal unde a arestat pe Antonescu și întreg guvernul său), Mihai Roller, *Istoria R.P.R.-Manual pentru clasa a IV-a elementară*, 1953, p. 156.

²⁶ My translation (insurecția armată de la 23 august 1944, organizată și condusă de PCR), Dumitru Almaș and Gheorghe Georgescu-Buzău, *Istoria Patriei-Proiect de Manual pentru clasa a IV-a* (București: Editura de Stat Didactică și Pedagogică, 1959), 278.

presupposition and coherence, King Mihai's abdication is manipulatively depicted as the natural outcome of history:

By removing the monarchy, one of the most powerful reactionary citadels in our country was demolished. The removal of a form of state inherited from the dark times of the Middle Ages, hated by the people, was necessary, a form of state which represented a big obstacle to the revolutionary development of Romania.²⁷

Notice first the use of the metaphor "citadel" to describe the monarchy, a noun which is synonym with "bastion, fort, fortification, fortress"²⁸. The adjective "reactionary" used perhaps with the ideological meaning of "hostile to progress"²⁹ (as illustrated by the Romanian dictionary of the Popular Academy, the one established by the communist power) gives a new twist to the original purpose of such a construction, i.e. to defend a settlement or an area against attacks from outside. Hence, the monarchy is depicted as a construction not only unable to defend the country, but as the enemy from inside and an obstruction to progress. The meaning relations set among various elements of the fragment make it coherent. Defining the monarchy as the product of the dark medieval times represents the coherent link with the necessity to overthrow it. Almost at the half of the twentieth century, it was necessary that society moved on. It was perhaps impossible for the general reader to decipher that the overthrow of the monarchy was not necessarily a prerequisite of the post-war era.

Another method of signifying King Mihai as the "Other" was by continuously invoking his German origins. In many texts, the monarch is referred to as Mihai of Hohenzollern. The aim was perhaps to highlight his "otherness" by pointing to his foreign origins. The Romanian history books omitted to explain that in 1916, when King Ferdinand I joined the Entente against the German Empire, his family erased him from the Hohenzollern family tree, considering him a traitor. As a result, the king decided that the royal family would take the name "of Romania". In addition, starting with Ferdinand's children, the dynasty was naturalized entirely. Carol II and Mihai I were born in Romania, in the Orthodox faith, according to the Constitution of 1866. By representing the king as member of a foreign dynasty, his Romanian name, Mihai, apparently lost its symbolism. A primary school student may have missed the connection between the monarch's name and the name of one of the most beloved and revered Romanian ruling princes, Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave), which symbolized the links with the past and the identification of the young monarch with his country. Little did Romanian school pupils know that other members of the royal family were held dear by the population. Princess Ileana, for instance, King Mihai's aunt (daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Maria) was often called "Domnița Ileana". Ileana is the Romanian form of Helen and it is also the name of one of the most beloved characters in Romanian fairy tales, Ileana Cosânzeana, consort of Prince Charming. The noun "Domnița" is a diminutive of "Doamna" ("Lady"), an archaic form for princess, always part of the names of the wives of Romanian voivodes from the Middle Ages until

²⁷ Mihai Roller, *Istoria R.P.R. – Manual pentru învățământul mediu* (București: Editura de Stat Didactică și Pedagogică, 1956), 760.

²⁸ Alan Spooner, *The Oxford Minireference Thesaurus. A Dictionary of Synonyms* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 83.

²⁹ Dimitrie Macrea, ed., *Dicționarul limbii române moderne* (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Populare Române, 1958), 699.

the reign of Prince Cuza. As a diminutive, “Domnița” was possibly used as a word of endearment, signifying the people’s attachment to Princess Ileana.

The same mystification of the historical past was disseminated not only by means of school course books but also by other works with historical subjects aimed at re-educating the large masses. Such a book is *Hohenzollernii în România*³⁰ (The Hohenzollerns in Romania). The front cover of the book may be read as an ideological interpretation of the Romanian royal past. Against a black background, the institution of the monarchy is depicted as a purple octopus spreading its arms with its head covered by a crown. The color of the octopus, the royal purple, may lead to the interpretation of the octopus as the Romanian monarchy. Figuratively speaking, the octopus is “a significant representation of monsters which usually symbolize the infernal spirits, even the inferno”³¹. As an invertebrate, the octopus can be metaphorically associated with a corrupt political system, the head of which was the king (symbolized by the crown) while its tentacles symbolize the plurality of dangers and problems.

Using the same animal symbol, the communist dogma re-constructed the monarchy as an alien form of State, which the general masses, the people, had never been acquainted with. In fact, the Romanian popular fairytales are full of legendary animals, both with positive and negative features. The authors could have used as book cover another negative Romanian mythological animal, such as *zmeul* (the flying dragon) or *balaurul cu șapte capete* (the dragon with seven heads). It may be believed that the octopus was chosen on purpose since the octopus is not a typical Romanian mythological creature, but a foreign one “to be found in the ornamentation of Northern Europe, the Celtic world and Greece”³².

Hence, the association of the Romanian Crown with an alien animal allies it with the “Other”. At the same time, in the Romanian language, the noun “caracatiță” (“octopus”) also has a figurative meaning, that of “avid, greedy, grabbing person”³³, a meaning preserved in dictionaries published before and during the communist regime. This points to the fact that at the time of the publication of the book, the general public may already have been familiarized with the figurative meaning of “octopus” and they could easily make the assumption that the graphic features of the cover of the book depicted the Romanian dynasty as greedy. Here the ideological coherence of the picture seems to work on connotation. The octopus as a tentacular and voracious animal could easily be deciphered as a metaphor for a wealth-driven foreign dynasty.

King Mihai and the New Political Regime in the Post-Communist Romanian Society

In 2006, the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Regime in Romania judged Roller’s handbook of history as “a document full of falsification and deeply unpatriotic”³⁴. However, years of indoctrination have left their mark, which may explain the virulent position of the post-revolutionary regime towards King Mihai.

³⁰ Gheorghe Țuțui and Mircea Popa, *Hohenzollernii în România* (București: Editura Politică, 1962).

³¹ Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, *Dicționar de simboluri, vol. I* (București: Artemis, 1993), 252.

³² Chevalier and Gheerbrant, 252.

³³ Macrea, 115.

³⁴ Vladimir Tismăneanu, coord., *Raport Final al Comisiei Prezidențiale pentru Analiza Dictaturii Comuniste din România* (București: Humanitas, 2007), 661.

The ideological attitude of the new power in Bucharest towards the king is clearly reflected in the way in which the National Salvation Front, the provisional body which had seized power after the communist collapse in 1989, refused to abolish decision no. 797 taken by the Council of Ministers³⁵ (the former name of the communist government) in 1948, by means of which King Mihai's Romanian citizenship was withdrawn. It seems that the decision came as a retaliatory measure against King Mihai's first official statement after the abdication, made in London on 4 March 1948, when the king publicly revealed that his abdication was imposed on him through threats and blackmail and that the new political regime in Romania was Soviet-oriented.

In a press article published in December 1991³⁶, law specialist Eleodor Focșeneanu, author of *Istoria Constituțională a României (The Constitutional History of Romania)*, demonstrates how the communist authorities, while unable to find a solid legal justification for their measure, tried to cover it up by invoking two former Romanian laws. On the one hand, they made use of Law no. 33 of 1939³⁷ regarding the conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality. According to article 45, paragraph 5, the individuals living abroad, guilty of harming Romanian interests or contributing to anti-Romanian propaganda, could be deprived of citizenship. However, since it was difficult to prove that the former sovereign was guilty of such deeds, the communist authorities invoked the decree-law no. 9 of December 1940³⁸ regarding the withdrawal of citizenship from those who, while abroad, displayed a disrespectful attitude to the country. It appears that, because the monarch criticized the new regime in Bucharest as Soviet-oriented, the authorities considered the royal statement a disloyal act towards the country.

Interestingly, Focșeneanu points to the fact that decree-law no. 9 was issued when Romania was a national legionary State (14 September 1940-14 February 1941) and was aimed at those disapproving of the Legionary Movement. From the CDA perspective, the representation of King Mihai as a traitor was made through recontextualization, which implies "the appropriation of elements of one social practice within another, placing the former within the context of the latter, and transforming it in particular ways in the process"³⁹. By using two measures of their political enemies in order to justify an act against the king, the communists took them out of their original context and forced them into a new political context, with a clear manipulative intent. Their aim was to denigrate the king's image in people's eyes. In the communist logic, it seemed there was no contradiction between their ideology (opposing the extreme Right) and their acts based on legionary legislation. The same technique of recontextualization will be used in the Romanian press in the early 1990s in order to blacken the reputation of King Mihai, which I will analyze later.

What follows is a demonstration of the manner in which the new, self-proclaimed democratic regime in Bucharest struggled for hegemonic power. One of the dimensions

³⁵ Decision of the Council of Ministers, no. 797, May 22, 1948, in *Monitorul Oficial* (Partea 1 B) [Official Monitory (Section 1 B)], no. 122, May 28, 1948.

³⁶ Eleodor Focșeneanu, "Cetățenia Regelui Mihai," *România Liberă, Anul XLIX, nr. 14592, serie nouă*, December 31, 1991.

³⁷ Law no. 33, January 33, 1939, regarding the conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality, in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitory], no. 16, January 19, 1939.

³⁸ Law no. 9, December 9, 1940, regarding the withdrawal of citizenship from those who, while abroad, displayed a disrespectful attitude to the country, in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitory], no. 290, December 9, 1940.

³⁹ Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 31.

of this struggle was the constant prevention of King Mihai from returning home. In so doing, the new regime forged the monarch's public image on two coordinates: on one hand, he was the representative of an outdated form of State, constitutional monarchy. On the other hand, King Mihai was depicted as the "Other" by considering him a contestant of the new political order. My analysis will focus on three decrees which the new regime led by Ion Iliescu used in their fight for hegemony: the decree-law no. 2 of 27 December 1989 (which gave birth to Consiliul Frontului Salvării Naționale (the Council of the National Salvation Front), in short C.F.S.N., as the supreme political body, the decree-law no. 10 of 8 January 1990 for the new regime of passports and the decree no. 92 of 14 March 1990 for a new electoral law.

The C.D.A. instruments are Fairclough's concept of *discourse* as "ways of representing the world", in an attempt to circumscribe the attitude of the new political power towards King Mihai, and the concept of *hegemony*⁴⁰ as a form of power through which domination can be achieved. My claim is that Iliescu used the laws above to maintain his political domination and set the country on the political course he wanted, by-passing the consultation of the masses.

Fairclough sees hegemony as "a focus of constant struggle around points of greatest instability between classes or blocs, to construct or sustain or fracture alliances and relations of domination/ subordination, which takes economic, political and ideological forms"⁴¹. Through this struggle both leadership and domination could be achieved.

In eliminating Ceaușescu and, as claimed at the time, sparing the country the potential retaliation of the dictator's *Securitate* forces, Iliescu not only strengthened his political position, but also emerged as a leader in control of a difficult situation, able to bring the much needed stability. The next step was the consolidation of his political hegemony.

Since Frontul Salvării Naționale (the National Salvation Front), in short F.S.N., was one of the results of the anti-communists demonstrations in December 1989, or of what Focșeneanu calls "the popular insurrection [...] in itself a legitimate right of the people as it expresses the popular will in the most direct way"⁴², the other two political bodies which claimed their allegiance to F.S.N., i.e. the C.F.S.N. (established in December 1989) and Consiliul Provizoriu de Uniune Națională (the Provisional Council of National Union), in short C.P.U.N. (established in February 1990) appeared legitimized by the insurrection. Additionally, most of their members were former members of the communist party apparatus, thus ideologically unopposed to Iliescu. This allowed Iliescu to consolidate his domination by consent, one of the avenues through which hegemony can be achieved⁴³.

In December 1989, F.S.N., the provisional political body which had seized power after the communist collapse, in establishing the C.F.S.N., decreed that all power

⁴⁰ The concept of hegemony is often used in post-colonial studies to highlight how the worldview of the dominant has been absorbed by the dominated. In the present paper, the concept is used with a similar meaning: how the communist viewpoint on Romania's royal past became the dominant view until 1989 and was re-appropriated by the new revolutionary power in Bucharest (made by numerous former members of the Communist Party) in order to maintain their political domination. However, it should be acknowledged that the Romanian communists did not see themselves as colonized by the Soviets, although the Red Army occupied the Romanian territory until 1958.

⁴¹ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 92.

⁴² Eleodor Focșeneanu, *Istoria Constituțională a României* (București: Humanitas, 1998), 138.

⁴³ Fairclough, *Analyzing Discourse*, 218.

structures of the former dictatorial regime were and remained dissolved (Decree-law no. 2 of 27 December 1989)⁴⁴. The decision having a retrospective character, its exact application should have led to the abrogation of the three communist constitutions in this order: the Constitution of 1965, the Constitution of 1950 and the Constitution of 1948 as well as the decree no. 797 of 22 May 1948 (mentioned above), regarding the withdrawal of citizenship to the Royal Family.

A look at the constituting paragraphs of article 1 of decree no. 2 may reveal a manipulative intent on the part of the legislator. Paragraph 1 stipulates that the country's name is Romania. According to paragraph 2, the republic remains the form of government while paragraph 3 detailed the new Romanian colors. Focșeneanu claims that in intercalating the decision regarding the republic between the other two paragraphs, the new regime may have intended to make the preservation of a form of government dissolved by article 10 of the same decree, i.e. the republic, pass unnoticed⁴⁵. It was also an abusive decision since the law regarded the establishment, organization and functioning of the C.F.S.N. and the territorial branches of F.S.N. Since these aspects had an organizational character, the decree could not decide on constitutional matters.

The new regime used a similarly arbitrary interpretation of the law when working on the electoral system. The position King Mihai adopted in this matter made the regime in Bucharest consider him a contestant of the new political order, another dimension of the concept of the "Other".

The allegations were based on a letter⁴⁶ which the monarch had previously sent to the Consiliul Provizoriu de Uniune Națională (the Provisional Council of National Union), in short C.P.U.N., a provisional body which was running the country at the time, regarding the adoption of a new electoral law. The monarch drew attention to the fact that C.P.U.N., a transient body, non-mandated⁴⁷ by the vote of the electorate, could not decide upon constitutional matters, which the electoral law prepared by C.P.U.N. was also addressing. For instance, articles 79 and 80 stipulated that the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies together form the Constituent Assembly charged with the adoption of a new Constitution⁴⁸. King Mihai voiced up his disquiet about the electoral project, which could potentially harm democracy in Romania and give the political regime established after the general election of 20 May only a thin legitimacy:

It seems to me dangerous for the national unity, for the very stability of Romania that such matters be discussed upon and even decided by an assembly that, irrespective of the good will and patriotism of its members, has not received any constituent mandate from the people, in accordance with the normal procedures of a pluralist democracy.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Decree-Law, no .2, December 27, 1989, regarding the formation, organisation and functioning of the National Salvation Front Council and of the regional councils of the National Salvation Front, in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitor], no. 4, December 27, 1989.

⁴⁵ Eleodor Focșeneanu, 140.

⁴⁶ "Mesaj adresat membrilor Consiliului Provizoriu de Uniune Națională (C.P.U.N.) de către Regele Mihai la 23 februarie 1990" [Message of King Mihai I to the Members of the Provisional Council of National Union on February 23, 1990], in Liviu Vălenaș, *Regele Mihai printre noi (1989-1999)* (Iași: Ars Longa, 1999), 272-274.

⁴⁷ CPUN was established by the Decree-Law no. 81, February 9, 1990, in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitor] no. 27, February 10, 1990.

⁴⁸ Decree-Law no. 92, of 14 March 1990 for the election of the Parliament and the President of Romania, in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitor], no. 35, March 18, 1990.

⁴⁹ Vălenaș, 272.

Eleodor Focșeneanu supports the royal point of view underlining that a decree-law is the equivalent of ordinary laws (i.e. laws which do not have the power to determine constitutional matters, such as the separation of powers in the State or the form of government). Moreover, given the provisional character of the political power, it could only establish “current legal norms of strict necessity, entirely indispensable to a period of transition”⁵⁰.

Fairclough also claims that the consent upon which hegemony rests may also be induced ideologically. Iliescu did enjoy the consent of his political colleagues in C.F.S.N. and C.P.U.N. due to their shared political background. As far as the masses were concerned, he tried to get their approval through the same ideological manipulation conducted by the communist regime. Although Iliescu attacked the institution of the monarchy considering it old-fashioned, it was easier and more efficient to attack the person representing the institution, i.e. King Mihai. Decades of falsification of history and brainwashing turned Mihai into a young and inexperienced king, unable to lead the country during the dark hours of the Second World War. His direct contribution to the coup of 23 August 1944 was entirely erased and he was considered guilty for the death of Marshal Antonescu, as I will later indicate. Hence, the image of King Mihai as a very controversial figure coming from history soon turned into common sense, often understood as “a depository of the diverse effects of past ideological struggles”⁵¹. This induced common sense may reflect that “the dominated people are not fully aware of their status or have been convinced that it is the natural state of affairs, or they accept their position because they receive some form of benefit from it”⁵². As indicated by many newspapers issued after 1990, many Romanians were unaware that during the communist regime they were so indoctrinated that they have come “to see the world from the point of view of the dominant”⁵³, i.e. the communist State and its ideology. Hence, regarding the king as a controversial, if not negative character, people may have concluded that the monarchy is a corroded form of government, unfit for the newly liberated country. In addition, a need for a fresh start was felt among the masses, which made many ignore the fact that the past could have provided them with sources of inspiration.

The attacks on King Mihai continued with the decision of the National Salvation Front to maintain valid the decree-law no. 797 (issued by the communist authorities on 22 May 1948), which allowed President Iliescu to refuse King Mihai entry visa. According to decree-law no. 10 regarding the regime of passports, “stateless people with their residence abroad are assimilated with foreign citizens.”⁵⁴ Since King Mihai was residing in Switzerland at the time, he was regarded as a foreign citizen by the Romanian law. Hence King Mihai could either request visa via the official institutions of the State or simply request one on arrival at the Romanian border checking points. However, article 27 paragraph 1 of the decree stipulates that “Passports and other foreign traveling documents, legally released, allow the crossing of the Romanian

⁵⁰ Focșeneanu, 141.

⁵¹ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, p. 92.

⁵² Paul Baker and Sibonile Ellece, *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis* (London, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 55.

⁵³ Baker and Ellece, 55.

⁵⁴ Decree-law no. 10, January 8, 1990, regarding the regime of passports, in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitory], no. 6, January 10, 1990.

frontier if recognized (validated) or accepted by the Romanian State”⁵⁵, a paragraph of the law which would be arbitrarily applied.

Since King Mihai has never recognized the act of abdication, considering it the invalid measure of an illegal power, he could not recognize the decree whereby his citizenship was withdrawn. Therefore, the king’s discourse ran parallel to the discourse of the post-1989 Romanian authorities. This explains why King Mihai has never applied for an entry visa through the Romanian official channels. This allowed the Romanian officials to legally declare that the king never had the correct traveling documents hence he could not be allowed access into the country (see article 27 paragraph 1 of the decree-law no. 10 of 8 January 1990).

This argument was also invoked by the Romanian authorities on the occasion of the king’s second attempt to visit the country in December 1990. On Christmas day, King Mihai and his suite landed in Bucharest for a twenty-four hour visit to Curtea de Argeș, the royal necropolis, where the king wanted to recollect his thoughts by the tombs of his ancestors. Soon the visas were granted and the royal suite was ready to embark for Curtea de Argeș when, on their way out of the airport compounds, a clerk from the frontier police asked that the passports be handed back because someone had apparently forgotten to register them in the official records of the airport⁵⁶. Meanwhile, Colonel Torontal, chief of the border checkpoint, was informing the press that the documents were in order and that the king and his suite were all welcome⁵⁷. As the procedure seemed to move on slowly and it was getting darker, the royal party decided to leave for Curtea de Argeș while the king’s representatives remained in the airport in order to collect the passports when ready. Sooner than expected it proved to be an abrupt decision, although taken in good faith.

According to the king, not far from Curtea de Argeș, the royal convoy was stopped and surrounded by Romanian police troops, some armed with automatic guns⁵⁸. King Mihai was approached by a police officer who informed the monarch and his party that they forced the Romanian frontiers and entered the country fraudulently. Consequently they were forced back to Bucharest under heavy police escort and expelled from the country in a Romanian military aircraft. Because of the Christmas holiday, newspapers were not published for three days (from Thursday, 25 December until Friday, 28 December). Therefore, the population could only have access to the news bulletins broadcast by the State-controlled Romanian television and radio⁵⁹, which dominated the mass media at the time, facing very little competition. According to news reports, the king had illegally crossed the frontier, breaching the Romanian law. Hence, the decision to expel the monarch was legitimate.

If applying Fairclough’s view on discourse as ways of representing to the measures taken by the political regime in Bucharest in order to deter the king, then these drastic measures may be interpreted as representing the position of the Romanian authorities towards the king: the king is represented as a lawbreaker. Drawing from Michel Foucault, Fairclough also points to the fact that discourse is socially

⁵⁵ Decree-law no. 10, January 8, 1990

⁵⁶ *România Liberă*, “Comunicat al Biroului de presă al M.S. Regelui Mihai,” sec. 8, December 28, 1990.

⁵⁷ Emil Hurezeanu, *Cutia Neagră. Istoria prezentă a României în 1001 de minute la microfonul Europei Libere* (București: Albatros, 1997), 35. See also Mihai I al României and Philippe Viguié Desplaces, *O domnie întreruptă: Conversații cu Philippe Viguié Desplaces* (București: Libra, 1995), 183.

⁵⁸ Emil Hurezeanu, 38.

⁵⁹ Peter Gross, “Media in the First Post-Communist Decade,” in *Romania since 1989: Politics, Economics and Society*, ed. Henry F. Carey (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 195.

constitutive, i.e. discourse is “shaped and constrained by social structure in the widest sense and at all levels: by class [...], by the relations specific to particular institutions such as law or education [...]”⁶⁰. As a result, one may conclude that the characterization of the former monarch as a law offender by the new political power was not the consequence of a whimsical attitude, but the logical outcome of the infringement of the law. However, the initial granting of visas (proven by the communiqué of the King’s Press Office in Versoix which made public the registration numbers of the visas on the royal documents) and the subsequent passport retention without a solid justification indicate that the decree-law number 10 of 8 January 1990 regarding the passport regime was arbitrarily applied. When Princess Sofia, the king’s third daughter, made her first visits to Romania in January and February 1990, she did receive an entry visa on a passport similar to that of her father, i.e. a Danish diplomatic passport⁶¹. This detail could be considered another indication of the fact that Article 27, paragraph 1 of the above-mentioned decree-law, invoking the right of the Romanian State to recognize or accept traveling documents (and providing a legal basis, in fact, for the king’s expulsion) was once again arbitrarily applied, though in reverse manner in the case of the princess. For three days, the regime also disseminated false information about the king’s traveling documents, in order perhaps to create confusion and place mistrust in the king’s acts.

The image of the king was also subjected to a massive campaign of denigration mainly from those newspapers supporting the Iliescu regime, such as the central dailies *Adevărul* and *Azi* (the political press organ of F.S.N.)⁶², the honorary president of which was Alexandru Bîrlădeanu, “a former apparatchik”⁶³. The daily *Adevărul*, an anti-opposition newspaper contributed to the denigration of the king by publishing an article which drew from various rumors, such as the king’s intention to recuperate his lost properties nationalized by the communist State⁶⁴. Such a rumor is confirmed by Mihai Anghel, the owner of a vineyard estate, Domeniul Coroanei Segarcea (the Royal Estate Segarcea) who revealed, on the occasion of the launch of a new type of wine, that around year 2000, friends warned him that the king was going to take his lands away. The king never did that, in the first place, but the Royal Estate Segarcea is now a royal supplier⁶⁵. The rumor was believable because it drew from the logical assumption that the king, as a former landowner and capitalist (according to the communist ideology), could return in order to claim his estates back. Though it is impossible to identify the exact source of such rumors, it may not be far-fetched to consider that one of the possible suppliers was the former *Securitate*, revamped after 1990 into *SRI* (*Romanian Intelligence Service*).

In *Moștenitorii Securității* (*The Heirs of the Securitate*), historian Marius Oprea, specialized in the history of the *Securitate*, points to the fact that the flow of information in the communist State was tightly controlled as well as manipulated through various departments such as Department “D” (for Disinformation). Through its network of informers, the department aimed at intoxicating public opinion with false information

⁶⁰ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 64.

⁶¹ Nicoleta Franck, “Vizita Regelui Mihai sau cum au jucat autoritățile o ridicolă parodie,” *Tinerama*, January 4-11, 1991.

⁶² Stan Stoica, *Dicționarul partidelor politice din România* (București: Meronia, 2004), 29.

⁶³ Ruxandra Cesereanu, *Imaginarul violent al românilor* (București: Humanitas, 2003), 91.

⁶⁴ Argentina Popoiu, “Maioneză contra coroană sub semnul neutralității,” *Adevărul*, December 28, (1990): 5.

⁶⁵ Revista Tango, November 2011.

and “perpetuating the atmosphere of fear and suspicion, fuelling nationalist, xenophobic attitudes”⁶⁶. Before 1989, the “D” Department played a key-role in launching false information regarding the extent of the repression against the workers’ uprising in Braşov in November 1987 so that any other attempt of revolt against the oppressive communist system be annihilated.

Though the institution of the *Securitate* was renamed *S.R.I.* after 1990, most of its structures remained unaltered, the changes affecting only some top commanders, mostly for cosmetic reasons⁶⁷. The “D” Department survived this process and proved loyal to the Iliescu regime during his electoral campaigns of 1990 and 1992. Through launching political slogans like “You have not eaten soy salami”⁶⁸, the SRI personnel managed to depict the members of the political opposition, many of whom lived abroad during the communist regime and returned after 1990, as quite different from the rest of the country. Since they had lived abroad, they did not suffer the persecutions and hard life of the common Romanian behind the Iron Curtain. Hence, the newcomers (the king included) apparently did not have the moral legitimacy to return home and teach the people what a free society really meant. If the “D” Department played an important role in backing President Iliescu against the political opposition, it may be presumed that the department could have used its know-how in defaming potential opponents of the president-to-be, King Mihai included, since the monarch was considered a leading anti-communist figure.

In its edition of 11 December 1990, the daily *Azi* continued manipulating the king’s image. With the title *Un admirator al lui Stalin: REGELE MIHAI! (An Admirer of Stalin: KING MIHAI!)*, the newspaper article is in fact a re-print of King Mihai’s official speech on the occasion of the twenty-ninth anniversary of the communist revolution of October 1917, celebrated at the Soviet Embassy in Bucharest in 1946. The text itself resembles the customary and often predictable type of message in such formal circumstances. In fact, on that occasion, the king was performing one of his ceremonial functions of representation. As head of the State and representative of the Romanian people, King Mihai raised his glass and toasted General Stalin and the friendship between the Romanians and the Soviet peoples. It was almost as standard a routine then as it may be now. Judging from the official speeches of Queen Elizabeth II during State banquets, such toast is a convention⁶⁹. A similar toast to President Ceauşescu and to the people of the Socialist Republic of Romania may have been made by Queen Elizabeth II in 1978 when she received the communist leader at Buckingham Palace. Such a potential toast does not necessarily equate the queen with a supporter of Ceauşescu. At the same time, one needs to take into consideration the peculiar position of King Mihai, the constitutional monarch of a country occupied by the Soviet Army, called “the liberating army” only by the official propaganda. The last barrier against the

⁶⁶ Marius Oprea, *Moştenitorii Securităţii* (Bucureşti: Humanitas, 2004), 79.

⁶⁷ Dennis Deletant, “The Securitate Services since 1989: Turning over a New Leaf” in Henry F. Carey, 503-521.

⁶⁸ Oprea, *Moştenitorii Securităţii*, 80.

⁶⁹ The Official Website of the British Monarchy, “State Banquet, President of the People's Republic of China, 8 November 2005”, accessed February 14, 2012, <http://www.royal.gov.uk/LatestNewsandDiary/Speechesandarticles/2005/SpeechbyTheQueenatthebanquetgivenforthePresidentof.aspx>. On this occasion, Elizabeth II, the head of democratic State toasted President Hu Jintao, the head of a communist State. The Queen’s toast was part of the official protocol and was not interpreted as a sign of admiration for the political system of a country considered still undemocratic in Western terms.

Sovietization of his country, the monarch had to slalom cautiously among pro-Soviet politicians, trying to buy more time and hoping that the Americans would eventually arrive. In such awkward circumstances, with little room for manoeuvre, the king could only try and maintain an already precarious equilibrium and avoid clashes at least at the level of public statements. In representing King Mihai as Stalin's admirer, the daily *Azi* attempted to re-contextualize a past event with a possible manipulative intent, through "de-contextualization (taking meanings out of their contexts) and re-contextualizing (putting meaning in new contexts)"⁷⁰. Fairclough also points to the fact that meanings can be ideologically invested, highlighting that ideology "is, first, a relationship between meaning (and therefore texts) and social relations of power and domination."⁷¹ In the early 1990s, when political partisanship was at its most intense and often violent, ideology was one of the means of holding power and maintaining domination by the National Salvation Front over the opposition parties, apart from using physical force (which was also used, unfortunately, during the miners' violent demonstrations in Bucharest in 1990). King Mihai soon came to be regarded as a strong anti-communist symbol and the Romanian opposition parties often invoked his name in their fight against the new political power made almost entirely of members of the second and third echelons of the former regime. Hence, it was not surprising that the National Salvation Front tried to denigrate the king by various means.

First, the editors from *Azi* simply adapted the traditional Marxist discourse established by Mihai Roller in the late 1940s and early 1950s. According to Roller's discourse of the historical royal past, the Romanian kings were representatives of the imperialist and capitalist circles, hence Moscow's enemies. The transformation of this standard meaning may appear illogical. However, there may be a new meaning hidden behind this new interpretation of King Mihai as Stalin's admirer. By interpreting King Mihai's presence at the Russian embassy not as a strictly ceremonial function which the king had to perform (as indicated above) but as an example of the king's admiration for the Soviet dictator, the editors de-contextualized the original meaning of the event, leaving room for ideological manipulation.

Let us have a look at the text. The speech is written in the first person singular, therefore what the reader sees are the king's own words. It is easily intelligible that once one reads someone's own words, one may have access to that person's thoughts and ideas. In Fairclough's view, "Implicitness is a property of texts, and a property of considerable social importance"⁷². It is unlikely that the average reader, let us call him the non-professional reader, was aware of the fact that the newspapers editors recontextualized a past event with a manipulative intent. In reading that the king used the occasion "to raise My glass to the health [...] of the brave Generalissimus Stalin, who leads the peoples of the Soviet Union with so much competence"⁷³, the non-professional reader may, after years of manipulation through indoctrination and omission, ignore both the historical circumstances and the diplomatic conventions. It is this ignorance of formality and State protocol which may leave room for ideological assumptions that positions the king as Stalin's admirer.

⁷⁰ Norman Fairclough, "Semiosis, Ideology and Mediation: A Dialectical View," in *Mediating Ideology in Text and Image: Ten Critical Studies*, ed. Inger Lassen, Jeanne Strunck and Torben Vestergaard (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006), 26.

⁷¹ Norman Fairclough, "Semiosis, Ideology and Mediation", 29.

⁷² Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 55.

⁷³ *Azi*, December 11, 1990.

It may not be far-fetched to believe that the hidden intent behind this parallelism between the Romanian monarch and the Soviet leader was to place King Mihai in opposition to one of Stalin's victims, Marshal Ion Antonescu. As the party in power trying to project a democratic creed, F.S.N. may have realized that using the Leninist discourse to manipulate King Mihai's image could be less fruitful than the nationalist discourse, already used by the communist regime due to its propagandistic potential.

After Ceaușescu started the cultural revolution in 1971, the liberalization which had begun in the 1960s was abruptly stopped. But this did not lead to a rapprochement between Bucharest and Moscow. On the contrary, the distancing from Moscow continued. This period was characterized by the rise of communist nationalism, which became "the political instrument for legitimization and domination"⁷⁴. Unable to convince the people of the rightfulness of their regime, the communists turned to the past, aiming to construct themselves as the legitimate heirs of other Romanian great statesmen.

Antonescu's rehabilitation started in the late 1970s and reached a momentum in the 1980s. The internal political context marked by a distancing from Moscow allowed a re-interpretation of Antonescu in accordance with the communist interests. He was no longer a fascist and a war criminal. According to Adrian Cioroianu, he was rehabilitated "as a symbol of authoritarianism of national essence and of anti-Sovietism"⁷⁵. Lucian Boia nuances the process, pointing out that Antonescu was subjected to a prudent rehabilitation, "sufficiently modest [...] so that the Ruler's uniqueness was not questioned"⁷⁶. The 1980s witnessed a series of books which revamped the marshal's image, a trend initiated by the State "due to the strange mixture of communism, nationalism and undisguised authoritarianism"⁷⁷ which characterized the regime. One of the contributors to the new approach to historiography was President Ceaușescu's brother, Lieutenant General Ilie Ceaușescu, who edited many history books which were written in accordance with the new political creed⁷⁸.

Another was Iosif Constantin Drăgan, a controversial Romanian émigré. Apparently a supporter of the Iron Guard in his youth, Drăgan later became associated with the national movement in Romanian historiography that was promoted by the communist leadership⁷⁹. In one of the books, dedicated to Marshal Antonescu, Drăgan criticized King Mihai's coup of 23 August 1944 concluding that it was an act of treason⁸⁰.

During the intense political debates which opposed the Romanian historical parties (the main core of the opposition) and the party in power, the National Salvation Front, led by Ion Iliescu, the image of Marshal Antonescu was used as the spearhead of

⁷⁴ Boia, 132.

⁷⁵ Adrian Cioroianu, *Focul ascuns în piatră. Despre istorie, memorie și alte vanități contemporane* (Iași: Polirom, 2002), 217.

⁷⁶ Boia, 362.

⁷⁷ Cioroianu, 217.

⁷⁸ See Ilie Ceaușescu, coord., *România în anii celui de-al doilea război mondial: Vol. 1: Statul național unitar roman în perioada 1919-1939. Impactul declanșării celui de-al doilea război mondial asupra României. Lupta poporului roman pentru cucerirea independenței și suveranității naționale* (București: Editura Militară, 1989).

⁷⁹ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

⁸⁰ Iosif Constantin Drăgan, "Trădarea regelui Mihai și decorarea lui de către Stalin," in *Antonescu. Mareșalul României și războaiele de întregire (4 volume)*, ed. Iosif Constantin Drăgan (Venice: Nagard, 1986-1990).

the anti-monarchic campaign. By attacking the king, the National Salvation Front was also attacking the opposition. Drawing on the same logical assumptions which Fairclough identifies as the means whereby the ideological manipulation of meaning takes place, King Mihai, being responsible for Antonescu's arrest, was also guilty of the marshal's death. In the collective memory, these facts could have easily been put together by a sort of ideological selection which, after years of indoctrination, had become inodorous. Corroborated with the king's own words in the embassy speech, they could easily lead to the logical implication that King Mihai was under Stalin's spell and inclined towards acts of treason.

It may seem surprising, but such meanings originally forged by the communist nationalists to legitimize their political leadership are still manifesting today. President Bănescu's public condemnation of King Mihai as a traitor may be considered a case in point. On 22 June 2011, during a televised talk-show, the Romanian head of State called the king "a servant of the Russians"⁸¹ and the monarch's abdication "an act of treason of Romania's national interest"⁸². The TV program was broadcast exactly seventy years after Marshal Antonescu ordered the Romanian Army to cross the river Prut in order to liberate two Romanian provinces, Bassarabia and Northern Bukovina, lost as a result of Molotov-Ribbentrop Diktat in August 1940. In an exuberant fashion typical for a player-president, as the president publicly admitted to see himself, he managed to overlap Antonescu's command to the Romanian troops to attack the Soviet Army in order to regain a Romanian territory with King Mihai's coup of 23 August 1944 which, apparently, allowed the Soviets an easy access into Romania. The head of state then added that he would have given the same order had he been in Antonescu's shoes.

President Bănescu's public statement is surprising since in 2006 the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania concluded that "The destruction of the constitutional continuity of the Romanian State through the forced abdication of King Mihai in December 1947 remains one of the greatest abuses of communism in Romania."⁸³

It may not be easy to pinpoint the president's real motives for attacking the king. One plausible explanation is the king's growing popularity, enhanced perhaps by numerous public appearances made by the monarch on the occasion of the Jubilee Year when he celebrated his ninetieth birthday. In launching such a serious accusation, the president may have intended to curb King Mihai's public renown at a very difficult time for the party in power, the president's party, which was experiencing a significant decline while a new electoral year was rapidly approaching. If the accusation represents just the personal opinion of the president, then it should not have been made public.

From a constitutional perspective, the president's charging the king with treason may be interpreted as a breach of the Constitution of 2003. A closer look at the fundamental law reveals that, according to Article 80, paragraph 2, the role of the president of Romania is to "guard the observance of the Constitution and the proper functioning of the public authorities. To this effect, he shall act as a mediator between

⁸¹ President Traian Bănescu in a televised talk-show broadcast on 22 June 2011, Youtube, "Traian Bănescu: Regele Mihai a fost slugă la ruși," accessed March 4, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWUqkbVLbkU>.

⁸² President Traian Bănescu in a televised talk-show broadcast on 22 June 2011, Youtube, "Traian Bănescu: Regele Mihai a fost slugă la ruși," accessed March 4, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SWUqkbVLbkU>.

⁸³ Tismăneanu, 17.

the Powers in the State, as well as between the State and society”⁸⁴. In depicting King Mihai as a traitor, the head of State compromised the principle of political neutrality required by the presidential status. In so doing, the president ceased being a mediator between the State and society. By placing King Mihai and Marshal Antonescu on antagonistic positions, President Bănescu may have resorted to the same rhetoric used by the communist nationalists, who, in Boia’s view, are the ideological “continuators of those who sent the Marshal in 1946 in front of the execution squad”⁸⁵.

The manipulation of King Mihai’s image in the years after 1990 is indicative of an anomaly of the post-communist Romanian society: the principle of legitimacy (one of the key concepts in the king’s speeches throughout his life) is opposed by the principle of democracy invoked by the new political power in Bucharest in order to justify their often arbitrary measures. The antithesis between legitimacy and democracy (realized, for instance, in the arbitrary decision of having constitutional matters settled by a provisory body, C.P.U.N.) may be circumscribed to the fight for hegemony. The points of instability around which hegemonic struggle takes place are represented by the fact that both the communist republic established in 1947 and the republic established in 1990 have never been legitimized by the popular vote in a referendum. The political power has always by-passed such a measure. Since hegemony is “never achieved more than partially and temporarily, as an ‘unstable equilibrium’”⁸⁶, one may assume that the republican hegemony established after 1990 is not complete because all the post-revolution republican constitutions, though validated by public votes, have never allowed the population have a say in the adoption of the form of government. On the country, the constitutions always stipulated that the form of government, which cannot be changed, is the republic. Hence, when the masses were asked to validate the new constitutional settlement, they could either vote it as a whole, thus having their hand forced or simply refrain from voting.

Making reference to the Decree-Law no. 2 of 27 December 1989 which dissolved all the communist power structures, King Mihai pointed to the fact that such a decision would have had the domino effect, leading to the abrogation of the three communist constitutions. If so then, the Constitution of 1923, the royal Constitution and the last democratic constitutional settlement of Romania would have taken effect. One may be tempted to accuse the king of being a constitutional purist. But the king has never assumed that such a course of action should have automatically led to a restoration of the Crown. In all his speeches, King Mihai has emphasized that public consultation must be a pre-requisite for new constitutional measures.

In contrast to the monarch’s “legitimate democracy”⁸⁷, the new political power came to embody a particular type of democracy, which may be dubbed “democracy in disguise”⁸⁸ in the sense that the simple ratification of a constitutional law by the masses

⁸⁴ “Constituția României” [Romanian Constitution] 2003, art. 80.2, in *Monitorul Oficial* [Official Monitory], no. 767, Octombrie 31, 2003.

⁸⁵ Boia, 368.

⁸⁶ Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 92.

⁸⁷ By “legitimate democracy” I mean democracy supported not only by public votes, but also supported by constitutional legitimacy and justice.

⁸⁸ By “democracy in disguise” I am referring to Ion Iliescu’s very personal interpretation of democracy (an original democracy, as he is known to have said), by means of which he tried to hide the return of Romania into the Soviet fold, as indicated by Iliescu’s plan to sign the country’s first treaty after the Revolution of December 1989 with the Soviet Union. Gorbachev’s removal from power in 1991 put a stop to Iliescu’s intention.

or by an ad-hoc body (with little regard to constitutional procedures and values) was enough to make the decision democratic, hence legitimate. In addition, the use of the communist rhetoric in order to prevent the king from returning home and the claim that the act of abdication was an act of treason positioned “the post-revolutionary republic in continuation of the communist republic [...]”⁸⁹. Although Iliescu and Băsescu are political adversaries and their ideologies are positioned at the opposite ends of the political spectrum, they seem to share a common ground in trying to diminish the importance of King Mihai’s presence in the public life of the country⁹⁰. This may be considered another facet of the struggle for political hegemony. As an embodiment of the principle of legitimacy, King Mihai has always highlighted the fact that the present form of government has never been subjected to a popular vote, a political measure which all the Romanian presidents after 1990, President Constantinescu included, have avoided.

King Mihai’s particular concern for measures which must be both democratic and legitimate contrasts with the political pragmatism developed by the republican authorities who, while looking for the democratic support needed in order to legitimize their actions, often succumb to arbitrary interpretation and application of the law in order perhaps to protect their immediate political interests.

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⁸⁹ Arthur Suci, “Prefaţă,” in *Republica Monarhică: Aportul Familiei Regale la integrarea euro-atlantică a României*, author Alexandru Muraru (Iaşi: Junimea, 2009), 9-12.

⁹⁰ In fact, all the Romanian presidents after 1990 (Iliescu, Constantinescu and Băsescu), though political adversaries, do have a communist vein and their leftist upbringing during the communist regime has had consequences, which are manifest in their position regarding the principle of legitimacy. Neither of these presidents had the political will or courage to allow the population to express their views on the form of State in a referendum, regardless of the outcome (possibly a republican outcome at the time and at present).

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Imaginea Regelui Mihai în societatea românească de după 1989: supraviețuirea ideologiei comuniste

După căderea regimului dictatorial în 1989, redescoperirea trecutului recent al țării (înțelegând prin acesta trecutul monarhic, în special) s-a făcut cu greutate. Acest fapt a fost cauzat în mare parte de sovietizarea suferită de societate în timpul comunismului. Supraviețuirea ideologiei comuniste în memoria colectivă a românilor poate fi demonstrată prin felul în care Regele Mihai a fost privit de către societatea românească la începutul anilor 1990. Până în 1997, când Regele Mihai s-a putut întoarce în țară nestânjenit, acesta a făcut mai multe încercări de revenire în România, dintre care numai una a avut succes, cea de Sărbătoarea Paștelui din 1992. Dacă între timp oamenii obișnuiți au început să îl redescopere pe Regele Mihai și să înțeleagă rolul acestuia în istoria recentă a țării, reprezentanți ai clasei politice, printre care și președintele țării, considerându-l pe rege un trădător, par a manifesta încă reminiscențe ale ideologiei comuniste.