

## THE POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL EDUCATION DURING CEAUȘESCU'S REGIME. STUDY CASE: THE ANCIENT HISTORY TEACHINGS FOR CHILDREN REFLECTED IN THE '80S COMICS

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*Abstract: Trying to cheer up its citizens affected by the austerity of the '80s and the desire to promote the national-communism ideology of the Romanian Communist Party, propaganda appealed to the victorious moments of the Romanians' history and iconic historical figures, highlighting their millennial desire of unity, independence, peace etc. Not infrequently, it is noted that propaganda put the communist leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, into the pantheon of great historical figures of the Romanian people, their features merging with his.*

*Given this, this article tries to analyze how the comics found in the children's magazines were subjected by the ideological requirements and how the ancient world teachings were transmitted to children, exploiting the very moment of national-communism, the "Dacian moment", "people's continuity and unity" theory since ancient times.*

*Keywords: comics, propaganda, Romanian communism, national-communism, Nicolae Ceaușescu, communist magazines for children.*

On the background of the continuously increase of nationalism and the overused of topics such as unity, independence and courage, Romanian education, already controlled by the propaganda, included and supported topics such as the above mentioned with the final aim of *guiding young people towards socialism*. The national-communism<sup>1</sup>, specific to Ceausescu's regime, has brought to attention the study of history, promoting historical figures as *heroes of the nation* with the inherent changes in real facts so that history would serve the communist ideology. Even more, the propagandists induced the idea that the history of the homeland bears witness of the oldness of the nation and the millenary continuity, pointing to the fact that "Romanian people have never bowed their head to any foreign master that looked for social and national exploitation. The very formation of the Romanian people is marked by fierce full fights of the Dacians [...] against the Roman Empire which threatened the existence".<sup>2</sup>

Communist propaganda put in a positive light, as a result of studying the past of the Romanian people, that the socialist era, Romanians, while continuing to fight against external exploitation guided by with their leader, are protected now, and the times they are living are the result of their successes so far, all thanks to Nicolae Ceausescu which is presented as a successor of the peaceful and profound social policies.

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<sup>1</sup> The transition from internationalism that we find in the Marxist-Leninist philosophy to the right-wing nationalism was materialized as the *national-communism*. More on this topic in A. James Gregor, "Fețele lui Ianus. Marxism și fascism în secolul XX", Univers, București, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> "Teme comune pentru toate cursurile învățământului politico-ideologic", published by the Department of Propaganda of the CC of PCR, 1981 p.173.

This article aims to show how the favorite themes of the Communist Party, those concerning education of children (the pioneers and the homeland's falcons<sup>3</sup>), are reflected in the comics found in the most famous magazines for children at that time ("Cutezătorii"<sup>4</sup>, "Șoimii Patriei"<sup>5</sup> and "Luminița"<sup>6</sup>) and inevitably, how it – the comics - was used by propaganda to undergo ideological imperatives.

For this study, we choose only the comics with ancient history theme that appeared during the years 1980-1989, in the magazines "Cutezătorii", "Șoimii Patriei" and "Luminița", noting that themes of the comics were not only historical; there were science fiction themes or topics of daily life, etc. Also we note that the most complex comics were in "Cutezătorii" because it was dedicated to older children in contrast to other magazines where comics are specific to young ages and, therefore, are fewer and less complex, especially regarding the texts attached to drawings, which focused mostly on topics such as games, poetry and others.

In terms of statistics, comics with historical themes<sup>7</sup>, during 1980-1989 in "Cutezătorii" were, on average, 35% - 40%<sup>8</sup> of all comics. In "Șoimii Patriei" the percentage is considerably lower due to the age for which they were designated, about 3-4 comics with historical themes, themes that were often presented in the form of short stories. In "Luminița", on the other hand, comics can be found in almost each issue and, even more, there can be seen a high preference for historical themed comics, historical legends or comics where the action is fictional but has some history event in the background.<sup>9</sup>

The Party involvement in education began with the communist takeover in România, they considered that it was necessary to create new generations of young people raised in the spirit of Marxist-Leninist theory who, eventually, will become the prototype of the "new man". The year 1971 was a "milestone" in terms of education, materialized by "The proposals to improve political and ideological activity, Marxist-Leninist education of the party members, all working people" also called "The July's theses", were those who set out measures to be taken to guide the working people towards socialist education, even if this education involves censorship or removal of inconvenient intellectuals and their work, for the regime's sake.

One of the 17 proposals was aimed directly towards young people proposing to intensify the political education in schools and colleges and in the Union of Young Communist in order "to combat manifestations of cosmopolitanism various artistic designs borrowed from the capitalist

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<sup>3</sup> "Homeland's Falcons" was a communist youth organization comprising children ages 4 to 7 years old, "Pioneers" includes children between 8 and 14 years old, then after 14 years old, young people were included in the organization called "Communist Youth Union". All organizations aimed, among others, indoctrination from an early age, the acquiring of the socialist ideology and the control over the activity of the future "new people".

<sup>4</sup> The Magazine "Cutezătorii" appeared in September 28th 1967 as a successor of the magazines "Red tie" and "The pioneer's spark". In English "Cutezătorii" could be translated such as "The Dares" or "The Bold", but in this article I am going to use the Romanian title.

<sup>5</sup> The "Șoimii Patriei" magazine replaced from the 1977 the magazine "Arici Pogonici". "Șoimii Patriei" could be translated such as the "The Homeland's Falcons", in this article I will use the original title.

<sup>6</sup> The magazine called "Luminița" appeared between 1953 -1989 and could be translated like "The Little light" or "The Glim", but I will use the original name in this article.

<sup>7</sup> This includes topics from different historical eras and comics inspired by World War II which appear mainly in August, marking the events of August 23, 1944. Please note also that some comics stories are part of a fictional universe, the events were placed on the background of historical events. However, not all numbers included comics, while other numbers contained two "serials" in the same time.

<sup>8</sup> In some years the percentage of ancient history themed comics exceeded 50%, for example in 1980, 1982, 1984 and others.

<sup>9</sup> More about Romanian comics history in Niță Dodo, Alexandru Ciubotariu, "Istoria benzilor desenate românești: 1891-2010", Vellant, București, 2010.

world."<sup>10</sup> At the same time, they proposed atheism and promoted the idea that mysticism should be eliminated, being replaced with the philosophy of dialectical materialism.

The "Theses of July" allowed the proliferation of nationalism at odds even higher and therefore national-communist historiography tried to highlight, through all possible means, the glory of the nation, materialized in the so-called "Dacian obsession" (which opposed in some way to the '50s Slavism), and "a large part of public opinion has fallen into this trap, seduced by the laudatory speech on the immortal glory of the Romanian people."<sup>11</sup>

In the report of the Secretariat of the Central Committee (CC) of the PCR, in 18 October 1977, was discussed some pressing issues for preschool, school and pioneers, Nicolae Ceaușescu stating that: "This is the answer to the principles established by the XI<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Party, the Congress of Political Education and of socialist culture, the acquisition and preparation for work and life, the formation of socialist consciousness, learning and putting into practice the principles and norms of socialist ethics and equity, development of young generation of love and devotion to country, party and people?"<sup>12</sup> Following this meeting, not just the magazines designated to children changed by introducing more political and ideological material, but comics focused on glorifying the past, the heroes of the Romanian culture, personalities who did esteem Romanians abroad and themes based on the thesis *education through work, education for work*.

According to Ion Manolescu, the Romanian education's aim, in the communist regime, was to discipline through control and fear, to equalize and was based on political-ideological reasons. At the same time, various myths are included in the educational process, including the *juvenile patriot, the hero, the peace fighter* etc.<sup>13</sup>

One of the favorite themes of propaganda regarding history was, therefore, the ancient history of the Romanian people, considering that there is where you should start researching when it comes to the fight against the exploiters, the fight for unity and continuity. These themes were also part of the Romanian protochronism theory, where experts were trying to find socialist ideas (Marxist-Leninist) in the national heroes' plans, long before Marx and Lenin, like Burebista or Mihai Viteazul. "The historical truth" was sought, however, not disinterested; it was needed to serve the nationalist policies, a desire to put Nicolae Ceaușescu in the pantheon of great leaders of the Romanian people, supporting at the same time, the cult of personality on the perspective of the *unity guarantee*<sup>14</sup> and the return to the positive moments of the Romanian history.

The return to the glorious moments of history, the desire to show the oldness of a nation is not a singular case: Mussolini remembered the greatness of the Roman Empire; he wanted to revive the Roman Empire in Italy of the '30s or the French who were teaching in schools about "our ancestors, the Gauls" although among students were also non-Europeans.

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<sup>10</sup> "Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor munci", July 6, 1971, Political Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Andreea Lupșor "Istoriografia comunistă: de la glorificarea slavilor la dacomanie" in "Historia", October 16, 2011, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/istoriografia-comunista-de-la-glorificarea-slavilor-la-dacomanie>, accessed April 14, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> The full text of the Report can be found online on the website: "22" PLUS - YEAR XVI, no. 268 (III) - Archives of communism - Press for children, <http://revista22online.ro/5551/>, "22" PLUS - YEAR XVI, no. 268 (III) - Archives of communism - Press for children, accessed April 15, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Ion Manolescu, "Abecedarele – o paraliiteratură politică", in Paul Cernat (and others), "Explorări în comunismul românesc", vol. 1, Polirom, Iași, 2004, pp. 215-225.

<sup>14</sup> This issue is discussed by Manuela Marin, "Originea și evoluția cultului personalității lui Nicolae Ceaușescu 1965-1989", Altip, Alba Iulia, 2008, p. 535.

As for the case of the Romanians, definitely, Dacia and the Dacian leaders (there can be seen a preference for the Dacian king, Burebista) were taken from antiquity overlapping the socialist society led by Nicolae Ceaușescu. These parallels were serving, unfortunately, more the leader and the Party than the people, reason for which "this version, the formation of the Romanian people exactly on the territory where he lives today without the slightest fluctuation of the border was imposed in the years '70s and '80s, both in official discourse regarding national history as in the contributions more or less conformist of many specialists."<sup>15</sup>

Obviously, the subjects chosen for comics reflected contemporary issues, topics debated in society, politics, mass media etc. An example of this are the American comic strips, *Marvel or DC Comics*, appreciated by both children and adults, reflecting Cold War moments, some of which are known of being governmental productions (CIA) to raise public awareness, regardless of age, about some issues.<sup>16</sup> We must not overlook the fact that propaganda, even if not totalitarian, used this media to present the events in favor of the State and against the "enemies" (denigration of the enemy, army enrollment campaigns, keeping a permanent state of imminent danger from the behalf of the communists etc.). The Vietnam War, the struggle against the "red enemies," the depictions of the American hero (the superhero, like *Superman* as the savior of the free world), the anti-communist campaign, the patriot warrior dressed in a suit in the colors of the flag, could be seen in the American comics and not only.

#### *Romanian people - between Burebista and Ceausescu*

Thus, ancient history, the struggle between the ancestors of the Romanians and imperialist-exploiters (the Romans in this case), "the class struggle" or the desire for unity of Burebista, was satisfying the issue of nationalism, overrated, especially in the last years of communism in Romania. Ancient history was the subject of some historical films like "Dacia", "Columna" or "Burebista" which, obviously, along with a few elements of history, includes elements of historical fiction, some promoted as truths but finally, they had the same purpose: to instill the idea that Romanians were in those territories from the beginning, the exacerbation of nationalist sentiment, patriotism and if some were looking for a proof, ancient history proves it: "movies are packed with an amount of constants having the same desire to identify the audience with the Dacian patriot prototype, a feature that "inherited" Romanians, too."<sup>17</sup> Katherine Verdery<sup>18</sup> noted, as well, that *dacianism* was used to support the *national essence* in the historical field and political too, and in the end, it helped with the construction of the national identity.

With this in mind, one of the most enduring comics in "Cutezătorii" is called "Burebista"<sup>19</sup> and appeared in the context of the celebration of "2050 years from the establishment of the first centralized and independent Dacian state". As a result, comics marched

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<sup>15</sup> Lucian Boia, "Mit și istorie în conștiința românească", Humanitas, București, 2011, p. 203.

<sup>16</sup> More about this theme in Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith, "The power of comics. History, Form, and Culture", The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, New York, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Ciprian Plăiașu, "Mitul strămoșilor în „epopeea națională”: Dacii, Columna și Burebista”, in "Historia", December 20, 2011, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/mitul-stramosilor-in-epopeea-nationala-dacii-columna-si-burebista#>, accessed in April 14, 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Verdery Katherine, *National ideology under Socialism. Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceausescu's Romania*, University of California Press, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> The series "Burebista" has 21 episodes, each episode corresponding generally to an issue. Scenario: Vlaicu Bârna, drawings: Valentin Tanase.

upon the subject of independence and unity by drawing a fine parallel line between Romania's international independence, economic independence, independence from Moscow, themes that are found in official speeches of Nicolae Ceausescu, after 1968, with a higher frequency in the '80s.

In the comic strip "Burebista", various features of the leader are highlighted as well as the people united under the same name, the Dacias, so hereupon, one of the common features being *the great dream of the union*: "the army of Burebista was far superior and better equipped, meantime, thinking that it will be needed to achieve the great dream of the union"<sup>20</sup>. There are also mentioned different skills of the leader like the internationalist thinking of Burebist that can predict the external threat and, accordingly, he is preparing, by joining Dacian tribes and raising their awareness about the dangers: "[...] speaking to them with great enthusiasm about the danger of the Roman invasion, managed to win them [...]"<sup>21</sup>. Features like these are attributed to Nicolae Ceausescu who can anticipate the external and internal danger, raise awareness not only to Romanian, but to all people in the world, the fight for peace becoming, therefore, universal and the roots of his thoughts coming from the ancestors of the Romanian people.

The story continues stressing that tribes have begun to recognize Burebista as a great leader, who wanted nothing more than "understanding and cooperation" or "brotherly understanding" between tribes and, of course, the well-being for all. However, we find that after the tribes were united, the great dream of the new sovereign was to oppose foreign domination and exploitation: "Burebista talks about the need to organize the new state. [...] our dream, he said, is to preserve the freedom and to reject anyone who tramples our land ... [...]"<sup>22</sup>. The Dacian are peaceful people, it appears, therefore, people who have never had the desire to invade other people, so this subject of the people's pacifism, but constantly attacked by mean forces, was often found in the official discourse of propaganda: "Having never ambitions of conquest or warrior ambitions [ ...] ".<sup>23</sup>

Readers are further informed that Burebista's sovereign establishes the formation of a new society; about a "new society" was talking the communist propaganda too; and that all the inhabitants were satisfied by the leader initiatives who showed particularly concerned about the welfare of the people giving orders to burn vineyards for its people not to have the "wine weakness"<sup>24</sup>. Concerns regarding the welfare of the people are found at Nicolae Ceaușescu too, and they had manifested through various policies such as the scientific nutrition program<sup>25</sup> or the demographic (pro-birth) policies<sup>26</sup>. As expected, some people (the Dacians) were against the laws given by their leader, and so they are punished, one of drawings depicting what appeared to be a peasant flanked by the representatives of the new authorities and forced to destroy vineyards

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<sup>20</sup> „Cutezătorii”, nr. 2, January 20, 1980, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> „Cutezătorii”, nr. 1, January 03, 1980, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> „Cutezătorii”, nr. 6, February 03, 1980, p. 12.

<sup>23</sup> „Activitate vastă, neobosită pentru apărarea bunului suprem al omenirii: Pacea”, in „Scînteia”, August 14, 1985, p. 6.

<sup>24</sup> „Cutezătorii”, nr. 9, February 28, 1980, p. 9.

<sup>25</sup> The scientific nutrition program, adopted in 1982, reduced the daily calories intake through food rationing, based on studies that showed that Romanians eat too much and, as such, the state's role was to take care of the health of the citizens. In reality, the program hid the shortages of common foods, culminating with the impossibility to obtain products such as oil, meat, eggs, etc. in the late '80s.

<sup>26</sup> The demographic policy or policy of population growth (also called anti-abortion policy or anti-abortion laws) was based on Decree no. 770/1966 which was supposed to boost population growth. It forbade abortions, except in the few rare cases and removed the contraceptive methods from the market. Abortions were illegal, and therefore it increases the number of women who died appealing to non-medical practices to interrupt a pregnancy. This policy was one of the most abusive of the regime leaving deep scars in the Romanian society. More on this topic in Doboș Corina, Luciana M. Jinga, Florin S. Soare, „Politică pronatalistă a regimului Ceaușescu”, Polirom, Iași, 2 volume, 2010-2011 or Kligman Gail, *Politica duplicității. „Controlul reproducerii în România lui Ceaușescu”*, Humanitas, București, 2000.

and wine, which can be placed into an analogy with the work undertaken by communist collectivization and the peasants which opposed or others policies that include the force during the communist regime, all for the general well-being.

Burebista's genius is revealed when he leads his armies to defeat the Celts who were seen as a threat to Dacia and of course, the Dacians are winners in the fighting against the Greek cities, too. The series "Burebista" ends with a speech of the leader showing that people will fight against anyone who dares to suppress the homeland<sup>27</sup>, speech similar to the official '80s speech, for example: [...] never wanting what did not belong to them and taking the gun in hand solely to defend their national identity, poverty, needs and nation [...].<sup>28</sup> The image of Burebista as a unifier and peacemaker can be found, also, in the "Luminița's" magazine comics, under the name "Burebista, the first and the greatest king of Dacia"<sup>29</sup> being highlighted, as expected, his desire to unite and fight against the exploiters.

Another series of comics, also included in the category of ancient history theme, is called "The Mighty of Petrodava"<sup>30</sup> and is a cautionary tale about trust and betrayal, deception, the humanity of the Dacian and the evilness of their enemies, about justice and righteousness. The story begins after the death of a Dacian chief of a city in the Eastern Carpathians, the chief who was among Burebista's entourage, with the desire that after his death, the followers will build a city called Petrodava. To raise the city, the Dacian made an agreement with the Greek workers who they will work with, the agreement stating that they will be paid at the end. Finally, however, they required a very large amount of money, and knowing that the Dacian cannot pay such an enormous amount, they took the sister of the new ruler as hostage and even more, during the excavations that have been made by the Greeks workers, they discovered a great treasure that was rightfully to the Dacian, but now they were longing for it.

The Dacians of Petrodava felt cheated and exploited by the workers whom they called enemies<sup>31</sup> and which are assigned with features that can be easily identified in official speeches of communist propaganda: the desire for enrichment, exploitation, betrayal, deception, lying, invasion or robbery.

The series ends with the recovery of the chief's sister, and with the pursuit of justice for the city, the message of the chief stating: "We, the mighty of Petrodava, will stand still against the storms. To remain free forever."<sup>32</sup> The message fits also in the fight for independence and for opposition to those who want to exploit the riches of the ancestors' earth, like the way how modern exploiters act, according to the propaganda: "In to this purpose, the imperialist circles use a wide processes of neocolonialist type of financial enslavement [...] that would make the developing countries to suffer because of the external debt burden, undermining their independence and freedom."<sup>33</sup>

Another series of comics brings into the reader's attention, one of the figures of ancient history, Decebal, in the series called "The Secret of the Parchment"<sup>34</sup> which supports the idea of Romanian ancestors' courage and outstanding capabilities of their leader. The events in the story,

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<sup>27</sup> "Cutezătorii", nr. 22, May 29, 1980, p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> "Activitate vastă, neobosită pentru apărarea bunului suprem al omenirii: Pacea", în "Știința", August 14, 1985, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup>In "Luminița", starting with nr.1 from 1981, 12 episodes, scenario: Radu D. Georgescu, drawings: Dorandu.

<sup>30</sup> The series "The mighty of Petrodava" starts from the number 38 of the magazine "Cutezătorii" and spans 10 episodes, each episode corresponding generally to an issue. Scenario: Petru Demetru Popescu, drawings: Sorin Anghel.

<sup>31</sup> "Cutezătorii", nr. 45, November 06, 1980, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> "Cutezătorii", nr. 47, November 20, 1980, p. 12.

<sup>33</sup> "Împotriva acțiunilor de subminare a independenței și libertății popoarelor", în "Știința", November 20, 1989, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> The series "The secret of the parchment" stars from number 41 of "Cutezătorii" magazine in 1985 and has 17 episodes, of which the last five numbers appear in 1986. Drawings:Valentin Tănase and Radu Vintilescu, scenario: Tudor Popescu.

on the background of a conflict situation between the Dacian and the Romans, between Decebal and Traian, between the ancestors of the land and the invaders, shows the adventures of Dadas, nephew of Decebal, and his friend trying to lead weapons to other tribes in the idea that they will help the Dacians to fight against the Romans. The Trajan figure, although a leader of the Romans, is part of the homeland founding myth and therefore it turns out to be an important figure in the formation of the Romanian people.<sup>35</sup>

Of course, comics show age specific themes like friendship and helping those in distress, but there also appear lines, found in other contexts like the official propaganda, that of the leader who motivates his subjects to fight against the invaders, "Traian wants to subdue Dacia! He craves the treasures of our ancestors and our fields' fruits. He wants us to bow to his power"<sup>36</sup> or "For freedom of Dacia! We better stay next to Zamolxis than the yoke of Rome."<sup>37</sup> In the story the emphasis is less on the conflict between the Dacians and the Romans, but upon Dacian's bravery represented by the grandson of Decebal, and upon their greatest wish of not being enslaved by other people. Also we note that the comics appeared in 1985 and that the hero is leading weapons to tribes to fight against the mutual invaders, on the other hand 1985-1986 was a time in which weapons exports from Romania increased substantially. In fact, under Ceausescu dictatorship, despite the pacifist message, Romania exported weapons to Africa, Asia and Latin America countries, which were supposed to fight for the *revolutionary cause*.

In "Soimii Patriei" comics are reduced in terms of complexity, the historical comics are evoking legends or are being presented as short stories such as "The Flag with a Wolf's Head" showing how the Dacians had as symbol a wolf's head. The story recounts a time in Decebal's life being rescued by a tamed wolf when he was attacked by a pack of wolves. Following the confrontation, the tamed wolf dies saving his master's life and, therefore, Decebal decides to honor the tamed wolf by using it as the symbol of Dacia. The story ends with the words: "so this is the way it was made the banner of Dacian, who led the mighty Decebal to fight for freedom of the country and the people."<sup>38</sup> About the "wolf head" is spoken in a series of comics "Luminița" too, being shown that those who fight under this symbol showed a lot of courage, "Long was the Dacians fight for freedom. They defended at all costs each and every part of their land and under their flag - the wolf head – they not bowed in battle."<sup>39</sup> Also in the story there is shown a battle between the Romans and the Dacians, where we can note that the Dacian are gifted with a powerful patriotic sentiment being always ready to give their lives in the name of the flag.

The image of Decebal is also evoked in "Decebal, hero of the Dacians"<sup>40</sup> presenting a struggle between him and a Roman general, the first, being the winner of the confrontation, leaves the Roman general alive to tell his soldiers and to the Roman emperor to withdraw from Dacia. The story ends abruptly with "then the Romans withdrew from Dacia", the easiest conclusion being that the Romans withdrew from Dacia because of the bravery of Decebal, which makes him a true hero of the nation, opposing to all those who want to exploit others and he, also, sustains the idea of the "non-interference in internal affairs", supported by the communist propaganda theory in the '80s.

## *Conclusions*

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<sup>35</sup> Lucian Boia, *op.cit.*, p. 310.

<sup>36</sup> "Cutezătorii", nr. 46, November 14, 1985, p.12.

<sup>37</sup> "Cutezătorii", nr. 49, December 5, 1985, p.12.

<sup>38</sup> "Soimii Patriei", nr. 6, June, 1986, p.16. Scenario: Dumitru Almas, drawings: Valentin Tănase.

<sup>39</sup> "Luminița", nr.2, 1982, pp. 8-9. Scenario Petru Demetru Popescu, drawings: Sandu Florea.

<sup>40</sup> "Soimii Patriei", nr. 6, June, 1989, p.7 și p.16. Scenario: Dumitru Almas, drawings: Albin Stănescu.

The central message, found in comics regardless of the historical period it refers to, is that always Romanians' lands gave brilliant and wise rulers like Burebista and Decebal, and more recently, under communism, Nicolae Ceaușescu. History was meant to demonstrate the "truths" and to sustain the Romanian protochronism theory used by the propaganda through various actions that finally shows an absurd desire to legitimate the regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Moreover, the Dacian leaders' image overlaps that of Nicolae Ceaușescu, merging their skills and those of leaders from other eras, resulting a perfect leader, in person of Ceaușescu. On this analogy, Zoe Petre said, "to the pleasing of the Leader, researchers from the Institute of History of PCR( the Romanian Communist Party) reinvented the biography of the Dacian king. Burebista was turned into a Nicolae Ceaușescu of antiquity. And Ceaușescu was turned into a Burebista from the end of the twentieth century."<sup>41</sup>

Propaganda speech, as we noted before, when it came to valiant leaders and their works, was completed by the idea of unity, continuity of Romanians and the peaceful image of these historical figures. In this way, Lucian Boia states: "The uninterrupted existence of the state from Burebista to Ceaușescu imposed as a dogma of the local national-communism, the Romanian state became one of the oldest in Europe"<sup>42</sup>, theory used by the Romanian protochronism promoters trying to demonstrate the Romanians' superiority in thought and not only, but legitimizing also the Romanian Communist Party actions. Analogies drawn between how Burebista refers to people's welfare, international life, the struggle for peace and how Nicolae Ceaușescu refers are more than obvious, somehow "Burebista offered Ceaușescu the supreme legitimacy, his state (Dacian State) foreshadowed in many ways Romania [...]."<sup>43</sup>

Studying ancient history themed comics shows us that children, even though some were pre-school children, haven't been omitted by the propaganda which used children's magazines or comics to transmit the national-communist ideology. Somewhat expected, young people, still at an early age, were supposed to know the history, the facts of the heroes, in this case the Dacians led by the braves Burebista and Decebal, even though the historical events were being selected to feed the nationalist sentiment, the fight for independence and peace and were avoided or reinterpreted the less favorable moments of history.

In some respects, the evocated historical characters, Burebista, Decebal or other leader, displayed a great deal of power over their own people as well as internationally.<sup>44</sup> The power of the leader is, of course, a subject exploited by propaganda, especially if we are talking about the propaganda of a totalitarian world, along with the theme of the national hero, where the totalitarian iron-led ruler is also the hero of the nation.

On the other hand, the image of Burebista, for example, is easy to associate with the image of Nicolae Ceaușescu; both opposed the invasion of foreign forces, both concerned about the welfare of the people, peacekeepers, diplomats, having good knowledge about the international relations etc. Comics, therefore exploited this issue, and on the other hand, comics were part of the "cultural revolution" started in the 70s.

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<sup>41</sup> Zoe Petre, "Cum au reinventat istoricii comuniști biografia lui Burebista" in "Historia", March 28, 2012, [http://archive.is/20140107081350/www.historia.ro/exclusiv\\_web/general/articol/cum-au-reinventat-istoricii-comunisti-biografia-lui-burebista#selection-507.0-507.257](http://archive.is/20140107081350/www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/cum-au-reinventat-istoricii-comunisti-biografia-lui-burebista#selection-507.0-507.257), accessed April 14, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Lucian Boia, *op.cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>43</sup> Lucian Boia, *op.cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>44</sup> About the relations between power and comics in Rikke Platz Cortsen, Erin La Cour and Anne Magnussen (editors), "Comics and Power: Representing and Questioning Culture, Subjects and Communities", Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015.

The theory called the "continuity of the Romanian people" on the lands that lives today not only legitimizing the actions of Nicolae Ceaușescu, but also legitimizes the fight for peace and the spirit of sacrifice that Romanians have had since ancient times. As a result of the exaltation of national pride of being a Romanian and glorifying the past, the communists were intended to draw attention to moments of great importance of the Romanian people, sometimes hyperbolizing some events in the context of the higher and higher social isolation and the poor living conditions in Romania of the '80s.

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