

Indian-Romanian Solidarities during the Cold War: Indira Gandhi and Nicolae Ceaușescu

Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru*

Abstract: In the years following the fall of state socialism in the Eastern bloc, there have been numerous theoretical attempts at forging a critical discourse about communism by drawing inspiration from other cognate theoretical spheres, most notably the postcolonial one. Studies by theorists such as Bogdan Ștefănescu (2012) and by Cristina Șandru (2012) are examples of this effort of theoretical repositioning. This article proposes a comparison between the Romanian communist periodical *Scînteia* and the post-independence, internationally attuned Indian periodical *The Times of India*, with a view to examining some of the ways in which the political friendship between Romanian communist president Nicolae Ceaușescu and Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi illustrates a possible theoretical dialogue between postcolonialism and postcommunism. Whilst this alleged political friendship was also fuelled by the motivation behind two very ambitious personal trajectories, the details of the accounts of political encounters between the two leaders, as discussed in the two periodicals, reveal important similarities, but also call for caution with respect to the many faceted historical roles played by Marxist ideologies.

Keywords: Cold War, postcolonialism, postcommunism, state socialism, totalitarianism

Introduction: Postcolonialism-Postcommunism Connections

Much has been written in recent decades about the possible dialogues between (post)communist and (post)colonial theories and cultural and political practices. Comparisons between the two discourses particularly flourished in East/Central European academia after 2000, aiming to identify a valid theoretical approach to the experience of postcommunism. There had been little in the form of a viable discourse fit to theorise the realities in postcommunist Europe before the turn of

* Maria-Sabina Draga Alexandru (✉)

Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bucharest, Romania
e-mail: sabina.draga.alexandru@lils.unibuc.ro

the millennium, and the postcolonial inspiration came as a necessary revitalization to what so far has been locked in the dead-end of transitology or other discourses of modernisation. For instance, in his 2012 book *Postcommunism/Postcolonialism: Siblings of Subalternity*, Bogdan Ștefănescu relies on postcolonial critics such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak to encourage such a comparison, starting from a theoretical explanation of coloniality that focuses on the discourse of cultural trauma. He places discourse at the center of colonial identity formation (Ștefănescu 2012, 83-85) and argues against West-centric accounts which make Western modern (usually capitalist) powers the only instances of colonialism, by also establishing the Soviet as a valid type of colonialism in the modern age, and linking them through similar historical circumstances. Such circumstances include the fading of colonial powers from domination to a more subtle predominance, the emancipation of marginalized groups, the relaxation of the repressive state apparatus and the adoption of the poststructuralist critical paradigms:

Postcommunism and postcolonialism are not rigorously coeval. Because historically unsynchronized, postcommunism and postcolonialism have often been declared unrelated phenomena. However, if we shift our focus from chronology and the valorization of historical dates to kairology as the assessment of successive stages in a process (...), then postcommunism and postcolonialism are consistent with each other in terms of the structure of their transformation. (Ștefănescu 2012, 128-151)

A similar view is maintained by Cristina Șandru, who, in her book *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of post-1945 East-Central European Culture*, points out the different directions taken by the different, even though equally committed, applications of Marxism-Leninism in postcolonial and communist countries after 1945. This happened to the point where the very understanding of the term “liberation” was different, with a post-imperial, “capitalist globalising flavour” in Third World countries and “applied Marxism-Leninism” in Eastern Europe (Șandru 2012, 7).

The dialogue between postcolonial and communist views of progress between India and Romania in the sixties and seventies is worth examining, more than it is in the case of other postcolonial and East European countries, where the left developed forms of resistance to totalitarianism. To a certain extent, the two countries shared a socialist political orientation, with similar aspirations of freedom, self-

determination and an independent, industry-based economy. But they also created similar conditions for totalitarian practices.

In this paper I will compare two totalitarian figures coming from the postcolonial and the communist spaces and their episodic collaboration: Indira Gandhi and Nicolae Ceaușescu. Even though praised by many as a symbol of India and a revolutionary figure, Gandhi was a controversial personality, who did make herself guilty of power abuse, especially during the dark Emergency period (1975-1977). I will analyse political media rhetorics in the Romanian press of the time on the basis of a close reading of some issues of *Scînteia*, the official periodical of the Romanian Communist Party, approached in conjunction with the English-language Indian periodical *The Times of India*, which, though privately owned and republishing many articles from Western press, dates back to 1838 and is considered one of the most active press tribunes of India after independence. *The Times of India* is also an interesting case because, while drawing on the international popularity that comes from the similarity in name with other famous English-language periodicals such as *The Times* or *The New York Times*, *The Times of India*¹ is owned by India's Times Group. Since 1947, it has also served the interests of the Indian English-reading middle class, on whose support Indira Gandhi counted, the more so as the newspaper was faithful to the official government line, as *Scînteia* was in Romania.

Despite alleged objectivity, neither can be deemed to be entirely unbiased, since one was the political voice of Romania's unique ruling party and the other started as a colonial newspaper and became the official mouthpiece of progressive India after 1947². The reason I have chosen to rely on information from *TOI* as a reliable source for Indian political views to posit against the communist newspaper *Scînteia*, despite the existence of a vast plethora of English-language Indian newspapers after 1947, is that this is one of the most prestigious post-

¹ From now on abbreviated as *TOI*.

² On the website of its own media studies school, the Times Group describes itself in the following terms: "Tracing its roots to 1838, the Times Group is India's largest media house with a dominant presence across all media platforms and a footprint spanning the whole of Indian sub-continent. The flagship daily of the group – *The Times of India* – is today the largest English newspaper in the world with its sister publication – *The Economic Times* – being world's second-largest English business daily." 2011. <http://www.timesmediastudies.com/aboutus.html> [accessed: 01.09.2017].

independence Indian publications, but also one that struggles to maintain a constant synchronicity with the western press and a certain claim to balanced, objective news, despite the big business drive characterising Indian press as a whole. Despite its claim to independent journalism, however, *TOI*'s constant practice of reprinting articles from Western periodicals makes it susceptible to some neocolonial tones. But, on the other hand, as Deeptanil Ray shows in an article dedicated to the changes in Indian press during and after the collapse of the British Raj, these changes are not so much about "the missionary zeal of a unitary pan-Indian 'nationalism'", but rather about "the Indian big bourgeoisie and other newspaper proprietors speculating on a 'national presence' for their newspapers, and their desire to secure prestige and profit under a sympathetic post-colonial state and its new leaders" (Ray 2013-2014, 1). Thus, with few exceptions (such as Samar Sen's leftist journal *Frontier*, 1968-1975), whether a newspaper was Indian-owned or still preserved economic ties with its British owner was not relevant to its political allegiances, nor did it guarantee a faithful rendering of political realities from a "genuine" Indian perspective. Apart from this commercial bias, the English-language Indian press of the time tended to praise Indira Gandhi's politics as progressive and to celebrate her international relations (as suggested for instance by quotes from Indian periodicals such as the *National Herald*, the *Indian Express* and the *Hindustan Times* in *Scînteia* with reference to Ceaușescu's visit to India in 1969). The only Indian English-language newspapers that were hostile to Indira Gandhi were the *Indian Express* and the *Statesman*, whose views inclined away from her mostly left-wing politics.³ Despite its broad international outlook, *TOI* maintained a consistently pro-government attitude, going as far as to celebrate the various stages of Indira Gandhi's Emergency (1975-1977), including the controversial sterilisation campaign run by her son Sanjay Gandhi. Therefore, in a different way from *Scînteia* (the straightforward mouthpiece of a unique party in power), *TOI* performed a similar political function of supporting a dictatorial regime, but it did so in a way that maintained connection with the

³ Many thanks to Deeptanil Ray for offering me an insight into the Indian press around and immediately after 1947 and to Anupama Mohan for putting me in touch with him. Also, thanks to Dorota Kołodziejczyk and Siegfried Huigen for some very useful comments on this issue.

international media scene and mimicked a commitment to accuracy that *Scînteia*, with its more politically committed orientation, lacked.

Nicolae Ceaușescu-Indira Gandhi exchanges in *Scînteia* and *The Times of India*

The cultural and diplomatic relations between India and Romania go back to the early decades of the twentieth century, based on a tradition of interest in each other's culture. As Cristina Păiușan (2011) shows, in November 1926 Rabindranath Tagore visited Romania and gave talks on Indian art, culture and philosophy. In 1931, three Romanian aviators (Valentin Bibescu, Traian Burduloiu and Radu Constantin Beller) tried to fly around the world and got to India, later on describing its beauty and their fascination with it. Constantin Brâncuși, Mircea Eliade and Mihai Ralea visited India, studied its traditions and drew a lot of inspiration from them. Romanian-Indian economic relations took off successfully at the beginning of the 1950s and in 1959 a Romanian-Indian Commercial Agreement was signed, stipulating that Romania exported to India mainly industrial machinery and imported goods such as tea, coffee, rice, textile, leather products etc.

According to historians such as Păiușan, the relations between Gandhi and Ceaușescu on behalf of their countries came in the wake of this solid cultural tradition based on pursued intellectual affinities, which were also highly praised at the time. On the other hand, however, this represents a relevant example of the relations between a communist country and a formerly colonial one, favoured by the circumstances in which their countries found themselves at the time. The shared Marxist foundation of their political lines created a common ground for dialogue, despite certain differences between the ways Marxism was being understood in each of their countries. There were several diplomatic visits between India and Romania, with an important one in 1967, when Indira Gandhi visited Romania and Nicolae Ceaușescu returned the visit in 1969. As India oriented itself politically more towards the Soviet Union and the satellite members and Gandhi's socialist politics became steadier in India, bilateral agreements increased, with several refineries built by Romanian teams being an important achievement. More economic agreements followed. Gandhi and Ceaușescu met at United Nations events in New York and projected an image as rather strong allies in the Non-Alignment Movement, relaxing the Soviet hold upon Eastern Europe and

influence on the postcolonial world. On May 30, 1978 Nicolae Ceaușescu returned to India between Indira Gandhi's terms, and saw the Indian prime minister Morarji Desai in Delhi. An important event was Indira Gandhi's visit to Bucharest in October 1981, which crowned the political friendship between the two leaders and was highly mediated. After her assassination in 1984, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu visited India once more, at the invitation of president Giani Zail Singh and of prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. On the occasion, a very important point was made of paying homage to Indira Gandhi's memory at her grave. Almost on every occasion, an Indo-Romanian economic agreement was signed or updated, but important talks on international political issues were also conducted.

There seems to have been a real affinity between the two originally charismatic political figures who turned into stern dictators at later stages in their careers and had similarly tragic ends in revenge for their power abuses that defied human rights. Indira Gandhi made her first visit to Romania between 16 and 19 October 1967. An Indo-Romanian treaty was signed, on the basis of already existing economic relations between the two countries. They were mainly based on Romania's intentions to extend the benefits of its industrial development to the third-world country freed from colonial rule, which, like Romania, aimed to acquire economic freedom by developing an independent industrial activity. *Scînteia*, which at the time had not yet forged its famous wooden language of the last socialist years, covered the visit thoroughly, as it tended to do on the occasion of the most official "high-level" visits. The issue features an editorial entitled "Crossing the Threshold of India" by Dumitru Tinu, who describes the country as a touching mixture of tradition and progressive aspirations, despite the difficulties which are, in pure Marxist spirit, blamed on the former colonial regime. India is pictured as a young democracy recently freed from the manacles of a capitalist system against which its communist commentator sets himself: "India aspires to progress. The effort towards renewal made by this talented people aims at overcoming the stubbornness of century-old traditions and the dark memory of the colonial rule" (*Scînteia* Oct. 16, 1967, 5). We recognize here the tone of Marxist-Leninist press, with clear intimations that communism is the one and only key to progress. In the next days' issues, Indira Gandhi's visit is documented in detail, including reports on the official meetings and cocktails with Ceaușescu himself, with Ion Gheorghe Maurer (Chairman of the Ministers' Council, as the prime minister

function was called in socialist Romania) and Chivu Stoica (Chairman of the State Council).

In her toast speech, also published in the periodical, Indira Gandhi insists on the fact that the Indian-Romanian collaboration has already played a part in the building of oil refineries in India (*Scînteia* Oct. 17, 1967, 3). Following up on the interest expressed in Romania's industrial progress and the socialist spirit of “work visits”, the next day Indira Gandhi visited the Brazi oil refinery near Ploiești and finished the day with a ballet show at the Romanian National Opera House in Bucharest. We recognize here the shared postcolonial and communist interest in building a modern industry-based economy (as opposed to an agriculture-oriented one, marked by the sad tradition of colonial exploitation), as well as Romania's self-flattery with regard to the communist mission to help third world countries in need. In a recent history of post-1945 Romania, Florin Abraham points out that “Romania's foreign trade during the communist period was at first mainly oriented towards socialist countries”, but then, in the late 60s and especially in the 70s exports were oriented primarily towards developing countries in Africa, the Middle East, South East Asia and Latin America, where there was less competition than on Western or East European markets and where trade was “politically supported by Ceaușescu through several visits to those countries” (Abraham 2017, 101). India was among the first to benefit from this programme.

The same visit is documented a lot more frugally in *TOI*, arguably due to the periodical's worry regarding the difficulty to adopt the right position with respect to the international situation created around Vietnam. However, the Indian periodical does make it clear that the official Romanian and Indian positions are against the United States' intervention in Vietnam and insists on being against the proliferation of nuclear weapons (an official position that was going to be maintained steadily in the press of years to come, even though, as it became obvious after 1990, India was developing its own nuclear programme, with nuclear tests run since the mid-1970s). The visit to Romania is described within the context of Gandhi's wider East European tour (which also included Bulgaria and Poland and was part of a plan to connect India to several left-wing democracies and thus position it favourably with respect to the USSR and China). While the real possibilities of collaboration between India and these socialist countries are highlighted, the *TOI* report from Bucharest insists on the importance of the “Indo-Romanian accord on world issues” and

concludes by announcing Indira Gandhi's invitation that the visit should be returned.

It is on the second occasion that the views expressed by the two periodicals coincide most harmoniously. Ceaușescu did return Gandhi's visit by making an extensive tour visit into India with Romania's prime minister (or Chairman of the Council of Ministers), Ion Gheorghe Maurer, and their wives, between 13 and 18 October 1969. The visit was given a lot of importance in both countries and it seemed to confirm an already established, successful friendship. It included several cities of India and a number of official meetings, being an event widely documented in both the Indian and the Romanian press. *TOI* announces the Romanian high officials' visit in very celebratory terms: "We are honoured to welcome Madame & His Excellency Mr Nicolae Ceausescu, President of the State Council of the Socialist Republic of Romania and Madame & His Excellency Mr Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Chairman of Council of Ministers of the Socialist Republic of Romania" (*TOI* Oct 18, 1969, 4).

However, even though *Scînteia* and *TOI* mostly agree in describing Ceaușescu's visit to India as a highly successful and timely one, comments in the two periodicals differ with respect to the extent to which the official political views expressed were on the same wavelength. While *Scînteia*, by now well-launched on its way to becoming an instrument of communist demagoguery, is mostly celebratory, insisting on the warmth of the Indian people as they welcomed the Romanian guests and the similarity in the two countries' official political views, *TOI* sounds somewhat less enthusiastic as to the extent to which the two countries will manage to cooperate in the current political climate. An unsigned news report, significantly entitled "Purposeful", expresses worry with respect to what a wise foreign policy line would be and hope that the Romanian visit might help:

It is perhaps fortuitous that President Ceausescu's visit to this country has come at a time when there is a widespread demand for an agonising reappraisal of foreign policy here. This makes it all the more significant. India's foreign policy problems and requirements are vastly different from those of Rumania and it is no use pretending that the two governments share a common world view. In fact on the key issues of relations with the Soviet Union, China and West Asia they follow divergent paths. While Rumania still lives in fear of Soviet intervention in spite of all its membership of the Warsaw Pact and the Comecon, India depends on the latter for the supply of all its sophisticated military equipment to meet any possible threat from

China or Pakistan. Similarly, while Bucharest looks upon China almost as an ally in its continuing struggle against Russia, New Delhi has not fully got over the shock of the 1962 invasion and Peking's threats and ultimatums at the time of the brief war with Pakistan in 1965. (...) But it is precisely because the two governments have been following different policies that the present exchange between them at the highest level becomes meaningful. (*TOI* Oct. 16, 1969, 10)

This chunky quote gives a good view of the international political situation and of India's concerns, especially with respect to China, at the time of Ceaușescu's 1969 visit to India. It also voices some of the concerns India was then facing. The idea that strengthening ties with Romania might be ideal at this point works along the same lines as Romania's own ambitions to cast itself in the saviour role, as the progressive socialist country ready to support a Third World country still recently freed from the colonial rule. Ceaușescu was clearly interested in showing off his relations to India in order to prove to the world that Romania could be an important non-Soviet centre of communist alliances, whereas India's interest in political relations with Romania had a lot to do with its delicate positioning between China and the USSR on the international political stage. However, *Scînteia* often mentions the supportive role played by Romania in building a successful Indian economy and even quotes Indian newspapers such as the *National Herald* on the gratitude expressed by the Indian people with respect to the oil refineries built with Romanian support (*Scînteia* Oct. 13, 1969, 1).

The economic and political discrepancies between the two countries were not very accurately expressed publicly, since a lot of the truth about Romania's economic situation was being hidden by the steadily tightening communist demagoguery. Yet this is a point in the Indian-Romanian relations when the international interests of the two countries seem to converge, despite their coming from entirely different directions. In the current political climate, Ceaușescu appears as "one possible channel of communication" between Peking and New Delhi, since "no other Head of State with friendly relations with China is as well disposed towards China as President Ceaușescu". Ceaușescu's saviour role is one that *TOI* truly seems to believe in, not only as concerns India's petroleum industry (*TOI* Oct. 14, 1969, 1), but, more importantly, its position within the international political context: "All in all cooperation between India and Rumania can extend far beyond trade and aid. President Ceaușescu's current visit should be

seen in this context. He has not come all this distance and brought his Prime Minister with him merely to sign a couple of trade deals” (*TOI* Oct. 16, 1969, 10). The belief that “Indo-Rumanian friendship will benefit peace” (*TOI* Oct. 15, 1969, 1), stated on the periodical’s front page, casts a very positive light on the whole visit and on the encounter between the various parts involved.

India’s worries with respect to China are repeatedly stated: while insisting on the importance of the visit, in which Romania invested a 24-member delegation, *TOI* stresses (and even prints in bold letters) the fact that “The inclusion of the Prime Minister in the delegation is of particular interest because less than a month ago he had had high-level talks with the Chinese leaders in Peking” (*TOI* Oct. 14, 1969, 1). While the following *TOI* issues covering Ceaușescu’s 1969 visit to India follow up on the idea that one of India’s expectations was to be able to find together a way towards “Asian security” in the context of “China’s changing mood” (*Ibid.*), the message delivered by *Scînteia* is formulated very much around literally celebrating the 1969 encounter between Romania and India. “The Indian people await the Romanian leaders’ visit with feelings of respect and friendship” (*Scînteia* Oct. 13, 1969, 1). The contemporary reader, used to the many lies that dominated the Romanian public discourse in the last years of communism, is pleasantly surprised to notice that this rings true also in the Indian press and also that, in the late sixties, the president’s wife was not yet part of the official public discourse the way we find her to be in the eighties.

As if to strengthen its credibility by quoting from Indian sources as well as reporting directly on the events, *Scînteia* cites coverages of the visit from the *National Herald*, the *Indian Express* and the *Hindustan Times* in sections entitled “Echoes from the Indian press” (such as *Scînteia* Oct. 14, 1969, 3) and states that “All the important periodicals in the capital of India are thoroughly informing their readers as to the schedule of the Romanian leaders’ visit, present the biographical data of comrades Nicolae Ceaușescu and Ion Gheorghe Maurer, dedicate special articles to the visit, pointing out its particular importance in the continuous development of relations between the two countries” (*Scînteia* Oct. 13, 1969, 7; translation mine). While we recognise in the newspaper’s language some of the clichés that were going to invade repetitively the Romanian press less than a decade later (of which one recalls “feelings of respect and friendship”, “continuous development of relations between the two countries”, “prolonged chants”,

“longstanding friendship between countries and nations”, “an atmosphere of warm friendship, respect and reciprocal understanding”, etc.), the official Romanian periodical reflects views similar to the Indian one’s and presents its readers with an objective, truthful account of the visit.

This was no longer the case in October 1981, when Indira Gandhi came back to Romania, soon after a period of being out of office (1977-1980) as a result of the decrease in her popularity caused by the Emergency. On the occasion, *TOI* provides merely an objective account of what, at this stage, are the advanced economic exchanges between the two countries and their position on the international stage. But in Romania the visit was highly mediatised and was considered one more step forward in the two countries’ cooperation, being considered as almost emblematic for the two countries’ relations and reflected on beyond the boundaries of news reports. It is significant that, at the time, Gandhi was returning to Romania – a country of old friends – in her second term, after her own political career had been in crisis and she had been betrayed by many other political friends, but not by Romania. This is in tune with the, by now, self-sufficient, repetitive, empty communist rhetoric that invades all periodicals in Romania, of which the international press is fully aware.

Around this time, *TOI* is significantly less enthusiastic about Romania, as it is beginning to reflect on what, about a year after Gandhi’s visit, comes to be reported, in an analytical article taken over from the *New York Times* news service and signed by Paul Lewis, as “Economic troubles in Eastern Europe”. These troubles are due to the efforts to maintain a centralised economic planning which leads to significant economic debt: “Many East European countries tried to maintain economic growth in the 1970s by importing Western technology paid for with money borrowed in the West”. But, in conditions of a world economic crisis, the strategy failed to the point where, *TOI* declares, “Poland and Romania are, for all practical purposes, bankrupt” (*TOI* Dec. 30, 1982, 8).

Scînteia, however, celebrates the visit by publishing a heroic front page portrait of Indira Gandhi, projected as a heroine of the Indian independence movement and a steady builder of progress in her country, and salutes her use of socialist economic strategies that Romania used as well, such as five-year plans (*Scînteia* Oct. 18, 1981, 1). At a time of economic difficulty and political isolation, the extreme result to which Ceaușescu’s maverick non-alignment policy led in the

long run, the friendship of a third-world country liberated from colonial rule, which Romania had helped make economic progress and be successful in its “offensive of industrialisation” (Neagu Udrioiu, *Scînteia* Oct. 18, 1981, 5), weighed significantly in Romania’s own view of its international relations. This self-flattering view also supported Romania’s systematic denial of the spectacular decay of Ceaușescu’s positive international image, as his abuses of power and personality cult became known abroad. In a country that was by now practically closed for the average citizen, which received accurate news from the West only through media such as Radio Free Europe and Voice of America, Indira Gandhi’s image and the history of economic cooperation between the two countries were being used as one foreign confirmation of Ceaușescu’s greatness, in which, in fact, nobody – and, least of all, the Romanian people – believed any longer.

Conclusion: Which Marxism?

The Gandhi-Ceaușescu dialogue represents an instance of manipulation of official discourse by the communist leader, to which the dialogue established with a postcolonial partner contributed by providing an alternative version of left-wing progressivism. In reality, the two leaders shared a much stronger interest in building leadership cults and personal dictatorships which, in both cases, ended in massive popular discontent and assassination. The positions represented by each of them betray a similar manipulation of left-wing rhetorical strategies, in support of two very similar versions of totalitarian control.

Two examples of the failure of socialism to maintain true democracy and its all too proven tendency to end in totalitarianism, Gandhi and Ceaușescu were nevertheless excellent actors of the Cold War era, managing to function within discursive systems whose rhetorical architecture – deeply flawed in content, yet structurally faultless – did not give in for years. And yet, the ways posterity remembers them are not at all similar: whereas Indira Gandhi’s legacy is fully acknowledged and her many biographies, even the more critical ones, agree in acknowledging, both during her lifetime and after her death, her undeniable “call to greatness” (Desai 1966), things are different in Ceaușescu’s case. His cult of personality, rampant during his life, led to endless lists of shamelessly praising biographies, autobiographies and a bulky so-called personal oeuvre (famously ghostwritten by other people, yet signed by Ceaușescu). Yet after his

death, his memory is relegated to that of the promoter of a “criminal regime” (Brucan 2002, quoted by Orescu 2006, 5) and he is most often described in terms like Șerban Orescu’s in his book dedicated to him and his political doctrine: “of peasant origin, arrogant, hyperactive, cynical and vulgar, Ceaușescu was a good illustration of the ‘new man’ of a society forcefully homogenised by the party” (Orescu 2006, 6; translation mine). An impostor who made it up the social hierarchy due to favourable historical circumstances and with his equally diabolical wife Elena’s complicity, Ceaușescu is reserved an exclusively villain part in the game of post-war Romanian and international history, despite his spectacularly promising beginnings.

Apart from an individual political destiny and dynamic of personal development that divides public figures into winners and losers, this may also be due to the fine line between various possible understandings of the progressive potential of left-wing ideologies. Marxism played an important part in the independence struggle of postcolonial nations, but it did not prove sustainable as a unique ideological line in either communism or postcolonialism. It did, however, create grounds for building totalitarian regimes in both spaces, and it led to similarly negative outcomes.

Acknowledgment: The researching and writing of this article benefited from support within the project *Aquatic Imaginaries: Re-charting Indoceanic and Atlantic Literary Productions*, PID2022-141118NB, principal investigator: Dr Esther Pujolràs-Noguer (University of Lleida), financed by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation.

References:

- Abraham, Florin. 2017. *Romania since the Second World War. A Political, Social and Economic History*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Aguiar, Benny. 2007. *Indira Gandhi: A Political Biography (1966-1984)*. New Delhi: Vitasta.
- Desai, Bhadra. 1966. *Indira Gandhi: Call to Greatness*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- Orescu, Șerban. 2006. *Ceaușismul: România între anii 1965 și 1989 / Ceausescuism: Romania between 1965 and 1989*. Bucharest: Albatros Publishing House.
- Păiușan, Cristina. 2011. Indira Gandhi – simbolul Indian / Indira Gandhi: the symbol of India. *Historia*. <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/portret/articol/indira-gandhi-simbolul-indian>. [accessed: 15.06.2017].
- Scînteia. Organ al Comitetului Central al Partidului Comunist Român*. October 1967, October 1969 and October 1981.

- Ray, Deeptanil. 2013-2014. Speculating 'National': Ownership and Transformation of the English-Language Press in India during the Collapse of the British Raj. *Media History Monographs*, 16:2. <http://facstaff.elon.edu/dcopeland/mhm/mhmjour16-2.pdf>.
- Şandru, Cristina. 2012. *Worlds Apart? A Postcolonial Reading of post-1945 East-Central European Culture*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Ştefănescu, Bogdan. 2012. *Postcommunism/Postcolonialism: Siblings of Subalternity*, Bucharest: University of Bucharest Press.
- The Times Group Homepage*. 2011. <http://www.timesmediastudies.com/aboutus.html> [accessed: 01.09.2017].
- The Times of India* (1861-current). ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Times of India. University of Chicago Library digital resources [accessed: 19.07.2017].