

## POLITICAL INTERFERENCES IN THE SCIENTIFIC WORK OF ION CONEA

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**Abstract.** Ion Conea was among those Romanian intellectuals who endured the political oppressions during the Communist period because of their beliefs. Repeated abusive dismissals, prohibition to teach, censorship of a series of his works etc. resulted in the creation of a state of repugnance against the installed regime, as well as of a state of fear, even dread. However, there is a discrepancy between what Conea believed about the regime and what he was writing about it. The insertion in his work of ideologizing messages and political clichés can be noted in the period comprised between 1950 and 1963. This ambivalent nature raises many questions with regard to the political interferences that exist in Conea's work. Analyzing all the biographical and bibliographical data, an overall image was created on the nature of the compromise made by Ion Conea. Therefore, it seems that we are not dealing with a total moral resignation, but it is rather a tacitly acquiescing compromise.

**Keywords:** *history of geography, geopolitics, historical geography, communism, socialism*

### 1. Introduction

The change in the political regime after 1947 led to a major change also in the intellectual life from Romania. During the period comprised between 1950 and 1960, we deal with a cultural environment found under the overwhelming pressure exerted by repression, recruitment and ideological surveillance.

The new cultural system installed during the Gheorghiu-Dej regime was rather a bureaucratic and ideological thicket, composed of a series of commissions, committees, councils, directorates and services. All this heavy structure complied with the lines traced by the communist party and decided all the aspects of the cultural, scientific and artistic life. These commissions, committees, services, etc. exerted control over the editions, repertoires, school figures, rewards, fees, documentation trips, penalties, ideological processing, promotions, censorship *et alia*.

Taking the new situation into account, most Romanian personalities riposted, adjusted to or adopted the new conditions. For this reason, after 1950, the entire Romanian specialized literature comprised realistic and socialist topics such as: class struggle, unmasking saboteurs, agricultural collectivization, forced industrialization, socialist competitions, Stahanovism.

For a stronger impact, after 1948, a mass purification was made amongst university teaching staff, suspected to be regime opposers, "reactionary elements and enemies to the

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construction of socialism”<sup>2</sup>. The people fired in 1950 also included Ion Conea, who was teaching at that time the lectures Toponymy and Historical Geography on second and third year of study at the University of Bucharest. Ion Conea was not the only person to be fired during the “clean-up reform”, as Lucian Badea suggestively named it. In that year and in the following years, Vintilă Mihăilescu, Nicolae Al. Rădulescu, A. Bârsan, I. Vintilescu, Ana Conea, Mircea Peahă, Alexandra Bunescu were in their turn removed one by one, being considered inapt for the new line.<sup>3</sup>

It is surprising that, in the same year, Ion Conea published in *Lucrările Institutului de Cercetări Geografice al R.P.R.* an article: *Principii călăuzătoare în studiul raporturilor dintre societățile omenești și mediul geografic*, in which he quoted Stalin and Marx.<sup>4</sup>

This approach is surprising, because Conea was no fan of a certain political doctrine, and he did not include any ideological messages in his works until that time.

In order to have a better understanding of the extent to which the political influence exerted on Conea’s work, the critical opinions privately stated by Conea with respect to the political regime from the period 1945 – 1974 and his opinions expressed in writing in the specialty magazines or works from that time.

### **Methods of Analysis**

The first method of analysis was that analyzing the contents of the scientific discourse, which implied the making of an inventory of all the reference works published by Ion Conea between 1950 and 1974. The automatic analysis software, Tropes, was used to analyze the documents; this technique implied the previous scanning of the documents and their subsequent conversion into Word. The use of the TROPES software allowed: a semantic classification; a quantitative analysis; the extraction of key words; the construction of ontologies, as well as the processing of a large number of documents.<sup>5</sup>

Because the analysis pursued the identification of ideological implications from the documents, the main ideological key words frequently used in that time were established after floated reading. In this way, the individualization of the following elements was pursued: rhetorical mechanisms (metaphors and analogies), words masking reality and use of stereotypes. Subsequently, further to the automatic analysis, these elements were cut out from the content and their frequency and presence were enumerated. Individualizing the context in which such elements were used was performed as well. Most identified terms are frequently based upon abstract symbols such as popular democracy, people’s men, bourgeois-landlord system, and they do not make any particular reference to a certain object, being rather a series of labels.

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<sup>2</sup> Interview, Șerban Dragomirescu, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> In 1948, the geography department was united with the history department. Then, in 1950, a new reform takes place, which implied the separation of the geography section from the history section, and its association with Geology. This change led to the establishment of the Faculty of Geology and Geography within the Bucharest University. Consequently, new subject matters appeared, and others such as Toponymy and Historical Geography will be taken out from the curriculum.

<sup>4</sup> There is a possibility that the article was written before the dismissal time, because the articles were usually sent one year before their publication.

<sup>5</sup> Dan Caragea, 2010, Modulul 5. Analiza automată a discursului științific.-Teorie, programe, aplicații -, prezentare PDF în cadrul A XII-a sesiuni de training în autorat științific, [www.ecs-univ.ro](http://www.ecs-univ.ro).

A conventionalization of the strategic behaviour can be thus noted at the communication level, as well as a description of the communication strategies based on ambiguity, tuning and adapting of significances according to the receiver and used channel.<sup>6</sup>

The second method used relied upon a series of unstructured interviews with people who were close to Ion Conea and in whose presence Conea freely expressed his ideas and beliefs.

### **Conea's Personal Perception on the Political Regime.**

Ion Conea's life was going to change drastically after 1950, once he is forcefully removed from his position. His removal was based on "a series of serious accusations"<sup>7</sup> such as the fact that he was the professor of King Mihai, he was an attaché during the war in Berlin and he was also a founder and permanent collaborator of magazine *Geopolitica și Geoistoria*.<sup>8</sup> The most serious accusations brought to him was that he has drawn a "theory justifying the expansion and aggression policy" of the Nazi Germany, "a reactionary science and a weapon of aggressive imperialism"<sup>9</sup>. We have to consider that in that period of time geopolitics had become a science blamed, abolished and implicitly forbidden, being considered a "non-scientific, retrograde doctrine". Probably for this reason, the fact that Ion Conea promoted a defensive and non-aggressive geopolitics attacking the German geopolitics was not even taken into account.

The following books: *Cum învață a-și cunoaște țara Măria Sa Mihai*, 1936, *Din Norvegia – cunoștințe folositoare*, *Geografie și istorie românească* 1944, *L'unità geopolica dello stato romeno*, 1940, *Omul și natura*, 1937, were also rejected undoubtedly for the same reasons, as well as the magazine: *Geopolitica și Geoistoria. Revista română pentru sud-estul european*.

For the same reasons, Ion Conea was on the verge of going to prison on political grounds<sup>10</sup>, but – because he had sound origins - "he had no fortune at all, no home, no land" and he was a scientific personality, not a political personality, they considered that his arresting was not necessary. In fact, he did have an estate at Snagov, "a piece of land where he wanted to build a house"; he gave up this estate and "did not declare it, because he was afraid"<sup>11</sup>. His wife, Ana Conea, to whom he got married in 1949, was also subject to an investigation and accused to have had connections with the legionnaires. Based on these charges, she has been fired from her position with the University.

The pressures exerted, as well as the arresting of a series of acquaintances and colleagues, led to the generation of excessive anxiety and fear, for which reason Conea flees from Bucharest into the mountains and then he withdraws at Coteana, where he stayed hidden for a period of time. The stress caused by the fear of being arrested was very well described by his nephew: "he would teach me all day long, and whenever he saw an airplane, he would run and hide in the garden, in the corn field". For the very same reason, Conea would burn all

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<sup>6</sup> lecture: Silvia Săvulescu, 2004, curs : *Analiza discursului public*, p. 160, Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/47360212/Savulescu-S-Analiza-discursului-public>.

<sup>7</sup> Interview, Lucian Badea, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> The people who collaborated with the magazine included: Gheorghe I. Brătianu, Ion Rusu, H.H.Stahl, G. Giulea, Sextil Pușcariu, Anton Golopenița, T.A. Stoianovici, Sever Popp, C. Racoviță, M. Popa Vereș, Sabin Manuilă, Mircea Tomescu. From them Gheorghe I. Brătianu and Anton Golopenița served years in prison for political reasons.

<sup>9</sup> Interview Șerban Dragomirescu, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Interview Paul Iosifescu, 20 august 2011: "then, these guys took him, it was at that time when they wanted to throw him into jail".

<sup>11</sup> Interview Paul Iosifescu, 20 august 2011.

the documents related to the royal house and he would ask his family to destroy all the things which belonged to him: books, notes, letters, “so that the communists would not read them”. It seems that the burnt documents included also a notebook of essays that had belonged to King Mihai, and that had been preserved by Conea.<sup>12</sup>

Overcoming his initial fear, Conea returned to Bucharest and tries to re-enter into the education system, resorting to the assistance of the people he knew. Instead, he would be surprised to see a part of these people avoiding him for quite a long period of time.

In 1952, he is re-employed as a researcher, thanks to the interventions made by Vintilă Mihăilescu, who had been fired, in his turn. We do not know exactly who else supported this initiative; however, it is certain that Vintilă Mihăilescu proposed to Maria Sârbu, the director of the Institute of Geographical Research<sup>13</sup>, to bring Ion Conea to the Institute. The argument on which this request was based was the need for trained and experienced staff. In this way, Conea would be re-employed with the Institute and, thanks to his qualification, he would be appointed as the coordinator of the Sector for Population Geography and Toponymy; he would maintain this position for five years.

Conea's return to the Institute meant an important step for his reintegration into the scientific system, although his new position did no longer allow him to have the scientific independence he had enjoyed until that time. He would be forced to work for the assignments contracted by the Institute, although the work performed by him could have been performed by less qualified staff<sup>14</sup>. Until 1954, he would no longer publish anything, because the sudden and repeated changes in the Institute's management led to the creation of an interior instability.<sup>15</sup> Certain sources spread the rumour that Ion Conea would have resorted to the assistance of some close friends to be able to publish, but it is unknown whether he succeeded or not.

After an absence of 4, even 10 years, if we do not take into account the articles *Principii călăuzătoare în studiul raporturilor dintre societățile omenești și mediul geografic* and *Platforma Luncanilor*, Conea published in *Probleme de geografie*, the article *Cu privire la toponimicul Vlășia*, resuming his publicist activity. He would also resume the series of field researches, both in private, at his own expense, and at the Institute's request.

In 1957, he was laid off again, due to the tightening communist oppression<sup>16</sup>; after one year, he would be re-hired as unattested scientific staff, the lowest research position. This demotion, which actually erased entire years of labour was perceived as a “huge humiliation”, exceeding “Conea's power of understanding”. Such situation would be rectified by the Institute's director at that time, acad. Virgil Ianovici, as he did not agree to the decision taken and he would take all the actions required to reinstate Conea to his rightful place.

Although he was being ostracized again<sup>17</sup>, this fact would not prevent Conea from publishing a series of articles and books, by himself or in collaboration: *Vechile târguri nedei*

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<sup>12</sup> Interview Paul Iosifescu, 20 august 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Maria Sârbu had taken over the director position from N. Rădulescu and she was considered to be a person who had a scarce training, but listened to good advice. (Lucian Badea - interview). Maria Sârbu was the sister of Elena Pavel, one of the remarkable characters of communist ideology.

<sup>14</sup> Interview Lucian Badea, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> In this period, the Institute had more than 4-5 directors, including Maria Sârbu, Herbst, Atena Rădoi e.t.c

<sup>16</sup> After the Hungarian revolution was defeated in 1956, Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej initiated a new wave of arrests and purification targeting the regime opponents

<sup>17</sup> Ion Conea is indirectly accused in the chapter of from that he was part of the generation of geographers from the bourgeois-landlord Romania, and –together with - he aided in the promotion of various pseudo-scientific theories advancing the territorial expansion of the bourgeois Romanian State. In the same in which he is denigrated, Conea is the author of the chapter of, entitled

*de pe culmile Carpaților, Scurtă prezentare a Republicii Populare Române, Concepția lui George Vâlsan în ceea ce privește raporturile dintre societate și mediul geografic, Contribution a l' etude de la toponymie petchenegue - comane dans la plaine roumaine du Bas - Danube, contributions onomastiques publiées a l'occasion* or to work at wide-scoped projects, outside the Institute, as in the case of *Monografia Mărginimii Sibiului*.

Due to the inequities caused, Conea's aversion to the political regime was increasing more and more, for which reason he would not hesitate, within a symposium held in the country, where Russian guests were invited, to speak pejoratively of the Russians and of the regime, relying on the fact that the Russians would not understand the Romanian language. Excepting his singular acts of discharge and contempt in relation to the system, usually expressed within his family, Conea still excessively feared the State authorities.

The contact with them caused anxiety to him, and such an event was described by Lucian Badea. According to his accounts, one evening, at the Institute, the professor was unexpectedly visited by a person who had "something of a military man about him", "was visibly a secret police agent". The unknown man did not introduce himself and started asking the professor about a relationship with a certain person, who subsequently turned out to be part of the resistance movement from the mountains. As the professor had no memory of the respective person, he vehemently denied having any relationship with that person. The visit, however, will cause him a state of profound restlessness and agitation. The following day, he would tell Badea that he looked on some old papers, and he found the name of that person, whom he had seen only once, during a field research in Hateg<sup>18</sup>. Eventually, because no connection between them was proven, the professor was no longer questioned about it.

Another fact to be considered is that the professor concealed his knowledge of the German language, although he was speaking this language fluently. Numerous quotations in German and references to various German authors can be noted in his works. He subsequently avoided speaking German. At the Institute, he implied that he has no knowledge or understanding whatsoever of this language, although certain sources reported that he spoke in German with his wife, at home, on occasions; such conduct or decision leaves us with a few question marks.

The '60s would open another stage, once the political regime became somewhat relaxed. The lecture on toponymy is re-introduced at the Faculty of Geology and Geography, and Conea would volunteer to lecture, with no financial claim. His requests to speak in front of the students would be systematically denied by the University authorities from that time. The hostile attitude would not prevent Conea from establishing in 1962 the Toponymy Circle within the Institute of Geography, where he started training new researchers.

In 1966, in the brochure dedicated to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Institute, Ion Conea is mentioned as the head of the sector of geography related to population and settlements toponymy and historical geography, managing 5 collaborators.<sup>19</sup>

Also in the '60s would be Conea's last encounter with the intransigence of certain people who "once they put on military boots" and "once they saw themselves with a gun in their hands and once they were cultivated with ideologically conceived slogans" started losing their humanity and became "two-legged stupefied and senseless" beings<sup>20</sup>. During that time, the professor would experience a "fantastic happening" during the field researches he made in

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<sup>18</sup> During his travels, Ion Conea used to leave his address with various people, especially with his hosts, so that such people could resort to him, if they came to Bucharest and wanted to pay him a visit.

<sup>19</sup> David Turnock, 1988, *Geographers Biobibliographical Studies*, Ion Conea

<sup>20</sup> Lucian Badea, 2011, *Drumeție și cercetare cu Profesorul Ion Conea*, p. 129

Danube's Plain for his work. During their researches, Conea and his colleague Cristache Stan, would be arrested, escorted with a gun against their backs, questioned for hours on end and treated as "a pair of dangerous criminals" for their "criminal entry" into the (Romanian) Danube's Plain, although they held valid travelling orders. Returning to the Institute, the professor would tell about the brutal interrogation techniques, which caused his companion to have a nervous breakdown, and about the humiliation that he experienced. At the same time, Conea would try to find a logical explanation for what had happened, as well as for the fact that an interdiction had been placed upon the entry into Valea Dunării. This incident was not singular; other similar incidents repeated also in other years, many of them defying the limits of the absurd.<sup>21</sup>

The series of political interferences would continue; in 1968, Conea's article which should have been included in his work entitled *Geografia Văii Dunării Românești* (Geography of the Romanian Danube's Plain) would be rejected by the communist censorship because "Conea had started the elaboration of his chapter with a quotation from a letter addressed by Ghica to Bălcescu, writing that, when he passed by Ruse in the stage-coach, he went to Balcani only through Romanian villages. Starting from this phrase, they considered that such a statement meant an immixture in the State's affairs"<sup>22</sup>.

In 1972, Conea would retire as a primary researcher, III<sup>rd</sup> degree, which is currently granted to those persons who acquire a doctoral degree. He was, however, appreciated and supported by his collaborators and colleagues, some of them sending him recommendations which he never used.<sup>23</sup>

His demotion and a relative exclusion from the scientific life brought him also a series of financial shortcomings, which he treated with optimism, being that sort of a person who "did not love the money, but needed it"<sup>24</sup>. His income was insured by his researcher's pay, as well as by an indemnity of 15% for his doctoral title, as his docent title was not acknowledged, although Conea could not be deprived of such title. Also, he received no compensation for being the head of his section, because his position was honorary and neither did he aspire to a higher position, because he knew that such positions could only be held if he was a member of the communist party and if the party approved.

The repercussions he suffered during the Communist time had a powerful impact on the professor; Lucian Badea considered that "Conea was the most forlorn geographer he had met", and his family<sup>25</sup> accused the regime that Conea had numerous nervous breakdowns and died, "it was because of these rascals that he died; if it hadn't been for them, he would still be alive!!!"<sup>26</sup>.

Regardless of the hardships and blows experienced by him, Conea "never complained, he was too proud to do so"<sup>27</sup>. He gradually withdrew and isolated himself, a sort of resignation that he could no longer change anything. Conea died in 1974 from sclerosis, and he was buried in the village where he had been born, Coteana.

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<sup>21</sup> Lucian Badea, 2011, *Drumeție și cercetare cu Profesorul Ion Conea*, p. 127 - 128

<sup>22</sup> Interview Lucian Badea, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> According to his nephew, Ion Conea had received a series of recommendations to receive the title of academician, but he declined such proposal. Instead, Lucian Badea and Șerban Dragomirescu invalidated this statement, saying that he had no knowledge of such an initiative, and that never during his lifetime did Conea receive such a proposal.

<sup>24</sup> Interview Lucian Badea, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> Ion Conea had no children of his own, but he was instead close to his sister's nephews.

<sup>26</sup> Highly unlikely, since 110 years lapsed from Ion Conea's birth.

<sup>27</sup> Interview, Paul Iosifescu, august 2011.

## Perception Reflected on the Political Regime

When we are dealing with this topic, we should stick to, know and try to understand the real facts. The opposition to communism brought together, at certain times, people who had otherwise very differing options, and also led to the creation of paradoxes, such as the current situation.

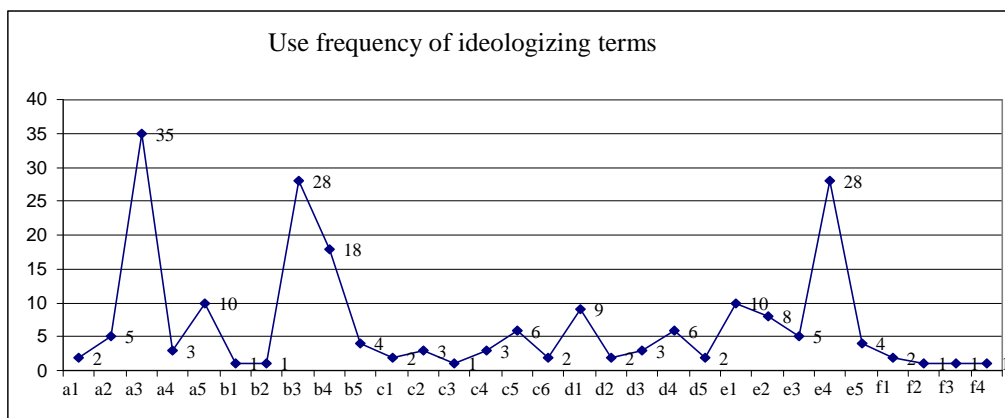
Described as a morally vertical person who firmly observed his principles, Ion Conea would not hesitate from inserting demagogical paragraphs in his works written in the period 1950–1963. Since 1963, political insertions ceased suddenly, probably thanks to the relaxation of the regime which followed after the demise of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej in 1965.

The reasons for this official conformance, although Conea personally hated the regime, may vary: his fear from the regime was so great that he wanted to leave an impression that he adjusted to the new trends; he was forced to seek a professional re-attestation and he reproduced them mimetically (it is most likely that his articles would not have been approved by censors if they did not contain any ideological messages); the ideological wordings were subsequently inserted, it was required that the works should contain any ideologizing messages, adhered to the new convictions.

By analysing the works from this period, a series of impersonal terms were individualized; these terms form part of the most frequently used political clichés from the respective period of time: *popular democracy, slave-owning production relationships, capitalist production relationships, slave-owning age, capitalist age, bourgeois-landlord regime, popular and democratic regime, years of the popular and democratic regime, years of the popular power, socialist, socialism, popular, communal, our homeland, working class, labour people, our socialist economy, socialist industrialization.*

Table 1: Matrix of the use frequency of ideologizing terms.

A r t	Terms referring to the regime					Terms referring to the period					Terms referring to economy						Terms designating a social category					Universal abstract terms					Space- related terms			
	a	a	a	a	a	b	b	b	b	b	c	c	c	c	c	c	d	d	d	d	d	e	e	e	e	e	f	f	f	f
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4
A																														
B																														
C																														
D											X						X				X		X	X	X					
E						X	X																							
F																	X						X	X						
G		X	X	X	X												X	X	X	X		X	X	X						
H																														
I	X																		X		X									
J																														
K																													X	
L																														
M																														
N				X																										X
O		X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	X			X				
P	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Q																														



Works: A - *Problema toponimiei Slavo-Române și a teminologiei geografice populare*; B - *Principii călăuzitoare în studiul raporturilor dintre societățile omenești și mediul geografic*; C - *Cu privire la toponimicul Vlăsia*; D - *Profile toponimice prin Carpații Merdionali*; E - *Din geografia istorică a bălților Ialomiței și Brăilei*; F - *Vechile târguri nedei de pe culmile Carpaților*; G - *Scurtă prezentare a Republicii Populare Române*; H - *Interpretări geografice în istoria poporului român. O problemă veche nerezolvată : originea numelui Oltenia*; I - *Toponimia - aspectele ei geografice, Monografia RPR*; J - *Cu privire la necesitatea unei revizuirii și sistematizării a terminologiei noastre geografice*; K - *Pentru o scriere justă a numelor geografice românești*; L - *Pentru o scriere justă a numelor noastre de așezări românești- discutii*; M - *Considerațiuni noi asupra toponimicului Vlăsia*; N - *În ce condiții a apărut și a însemnat la origine numele Țara Românească*; O - *Monografia geografică a regiunii Argeș*; P - *Monografia geografică a regiunii Oltenia*; Q - *Al 7 congres internațional de toponimie și onomastică*. Terms: a1 - popular democracy; a2 - popular and democratic State; a3 - popular and democratic regime; a4 - capitalist regime; a5 - bourgeois-landlord regime; b1 - slave-owning age; b2 - capitalist age; b3 - years of the popular power; b4 - years of the democratic regime; b5 - former regime; c1 - slave-owning production relationships; c2 - capitalist relationships; c3 - capitalist production relationships; c4 - our socialist economy; c5 - industrialization- socialist industry; c6 - socialist agriculture; d1 - capitalist(s); d2 - working class; d3 - labour people; d4 - landlords and kulaks; d5 - heroes of labour; e1 - socialist; e2 - socialism; e3 - capitalism; e4 - R.P.R.; e5 - republican; f1 - communal households; f2 - landlord households; f3 - people of the place; f4 - territory of our homeland.

Conea would also convert some of the favourite phrases, giving them a more socialist nuance: “the men of one place” becomes “the people of a place”; “the territory of our country” becomes “the territory of our homeland”; “rural household” becomes “communal household”. In some articles, the excessive use of R.P.R and of the pronoun “our” was individualized; the pronoun “our” was used to highlight the collective ownership, such as, for instance: *our homeland, our country, our economy, our agriculture*, etc.

These terms were grouped into six categories of terms: terms referring to the political regime, terms referring to the period/age, terms referring to economy, terms referring to the inhabited space, terms defining a social category, general abstract terms. The terms were graded from a to f, and the terms subordinated to them with numbers from 1 to 10, and the articles were graded from A to Q, according to the chronological sequence in which the articles were published.

The resulting matrix reveals a more frequent use of the terms designating a social category and of the abstract terms. Although they have a higher frequency of use, their weight within the text is quite low, of maximum 1 – 5 units. Much more intensely are used the terms *years of the social power, years of the popular and democratic regime*, popular and democratic regime. For instance, in *Monografia geografică a regiunii Oltenia*, 1963, the term



*years of the popular power* is repeated more than 20 times, same thing happens with the other two terms. These terms are placed in antithesis with the following terms: *capitalist regime*, *bourgeois-landlord regime*, *capitalist age* and *slave-owning age*, which have a negative connotation. It is, thus, emphasized that all the positive aspects of the economy and social development occur during “the age of the popular democracy” The other terms such as those related to the space record singular and extremely rare occurrences within the texts subject to analysis.

It is also noted that the following works: *Profile toponimice prin Carpații Meridionali*; *Scurtă prezentare a Republicii Populare Române*; *Monografia geografică a regiunii Argeș*; *Monografia geografică a regiunii Oltenia*, these clichés are quite frequent. In the works: *Din geografia istorică a bălților Ialomiței și Brăilei*; *Toponimia - aspectele ei geografice*, *Monografia RPR*; *În ce condiții a apărut și a însemnat la origine numele Țara Românească*; *Vechile târguri nedei de pe culmile Carpaților* these clichés have a frequency and a low share of their; and in the works: *Cu privire la toponimicul Vlășia*; *Interpretări geografice în istoria poporului român. O problemă veche nerezolvată: originea numelui Oltenia*; *Cu privire la necesitatea unei revizuirii și sistematizării a terminologiei noastre geografice*; *Pentru o scriere justă a numelor geografice românești*; *Pentru o scriere justă a numelor noastre de așezări românești - discuții*; *Considerațiuni noi asupra toponimicului Vlășia*; *În ce condiții a apărut și a însemnat la origine numele Țara Românească*; *Al 7 congres internațional de toponimie și onomastică* these clichés are almost entirely absent.

To better understand these political messages, the context in which they were used should also be analysed. For this reason, the following passages were extracted: with a tendentious, political-ideologizing nature, with antagonistic expressions between “communism” and “democracy”, as well as the fragments in which an excessive use was made of metaphors and comparisons leading to the “pompous” presentation of certain geographical realities. The quotations from Lenin and Marx and were added to the above.

Among them, a fragment from *Toponimia, aspectele ei geografice* draws a particular attention: “Finally, most of the major toponymic transformations which have taken place until this date in the course of history are those taking place nowadays, in USSR and in all the countries with popular democracy, the people of labour are expressing their gratitude and love for the personalities of the labour movement, for the best sons of the people, heroes of the working class, scientists, giving their names to mountains, populated centres etc., which previously had other names. In this way, Brașov is called the Stalin city ... in the same way in which the names of and many other names of heroes and fighters for the cause of the working class from our country are borne today by a great number of localities”.<sup>28</sup> As it can be noted, the text includes a series of clichés and stereotypical wordings propagandistic in nature. However, more important is the fact that reflected ideas contravene to the author’s conception, Conea breaking one of his basic principles, the principle related to the officials’ intervention in toponymy.<sup>29</sup> In this way, the information provided on the abusive changes made in the country’s toponymy are presented in a distorted manner, which in fact disguise and mask the real intentions of the party, making them seem to be “the will of the people” or of the “men of the place”.

Same thing happens in 1950, in *Principii călăuzitoare în studiul raporturilor dintre societățile omenești și mediul geografic* Conea made a small incursion into the future with

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<sup>28</sup> Conea I., 1960, *Toponimia – aspectele ei geografice – Monografia Geografică a R.P.R.*, p.70

<sup>29</sup> According to his conceptions “the true toponymy of a place is that given by the people living there”, and the authorities’ interference only leads to confusions most of the times.

respect to the way in which society was going to develop under the communist regime “Man’s fight with nature – to this does, in fact, the problem come down. And in the complete defeat of nature also resides the complete release of man. And this complete defeat and this complete release... will only become realities in the future’s society without classes.... – in U.S.S.R. – people organized themselves into a society without classes, a powerful society, surrounded by its nature” ... it is the *avant-garde* image of the entire world of tomorrow, in which people, released from the worries of wars, having at their disposal the more and more advanced science and technique, and released from lower forms of labour ... will be able to dedicate themselves only to the fulfilment of their higher, profound needs and satisfactions”<sup>30</sup>.

The message conveyed is clear and concise: under the socialist regime, society will thrive, and people will live without any worries; Conea described a rather utopian society, which did not correspond at all to the reality.

The same type of presentation is continued also in *Scurta Prezentare Geografică a Republicii Populare Române*, written in collaboration with Ion Velcea, where the first results of the new popular and democratic regime are described: “R.P.R.’s population is growing incessantly . . . This growth accentuated thanks to the enhancement of the living standard of the people of labour under the popular and democratic regime”, “the popular and democratic State firmly vanquished the national oppression regime applied to minorities under capitalism” etc. The work gradually became a sort of manifesto, a geographical presentation dressed in a propagandistic tin-foil, probably to avoid any reprimand from the publisher.<sup>31</sup>

In case of the two monographs of Oltenia and Argeş regions, we can observe the same thing, only this time particular results of the socialist economic progress were presented. The “wooden language”, atypical for Conea, the cascade of comparisons such as: “the historical province of Oltenia ... was named under the former regime the homeland of great landowners, and the city of Craiova, “their citadel of the throne”<sup>32</sup>, “the coming of socialism ... made some of these massifs escape the predatory exploitation of capitalists”<sup>33</sup>, “from modest rural settlements under the bourgeois-landlord regime, they became industrial centers, important in the years of the popular power”<sup>34</sup>, reveals as a first impression the fact that these two works were not written by the professor.

At the counter pole are his toponymy works, written in the same period, in which propagandistic messages are absent or present in a small extent, as a single phrase usually placed in their forewords. This opposition between avoiding the propagandistic “wooden language” and its use requires certain explanations, which can be found in the 6 previously formulated hypotheses.

The first hypothesis according to which *the ideological wordings were subsequently inserted* is false. Confidential sources revealed that the professor did not use to accept changes of his texts, and the editorial office secretary of that time saw to it that the text was accurately reproduced.

The second hypothesis according to which *he adhered to the new convictions* is similarly less likely. Although one-hour lectures of political education, which formed part of the working norm, were held at the Institute. Even if he had attended such lectures, it is hard to believe that a person older than 50 years could be politically re-educated. Furthermore,

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<sup>30</sup> Conea I., *Principii călăuzitoare în studiul raporturilor dintre societățile omenești și mediul geografic*, p.10 – 11.

<sup>31</sup> Confidential sources indicated that only the first part belonged to Conea. The respective fragments contain no ideological messages.

<sup>32</sup> *Monografia Geografică a R.P.R., Regiunea Oltenia*, p. 250

<sup>33</sup> *Monografia Geografică a R.P.R., Regiunea Oltenia*, p. 288

<sup>34</sup> *Monografia Geografică a R.P.R., Regiunea Oltenia*, p. 252

Conea – thanks to the assistance granted by his colleagues – could be exempted from such indoctrination lectures and, therefore, he did not attend them. Another argument is the fact that, in private, Conea hated the socialist regime, and the persecution he suffered had strengthened his anti-socialist convictions even more.

Nonetheless, his fear from regime was a lot greater and they relied on this fact. By instating terror, the regime counted on the writers' self-censorship and self-imposition to avoid sensitive issues. Conea probably gave in to the exerted pressure and he made a compromise by *inserting political clichés in order to leave an impression that he adjusted to the new trends*. Moreover, the quotations from the classics of propagandistic represented a sort of a guarantee, "the writers beginning with such a quotation were protected on the party line".<sup>35</sup> A conscious compromise was, thus, made in order to preserve the credibility of writing, and a wrapping was created for the ideas that an author wanted to express thereafter. This is the way in which the small ideological insertions from the beginning of certain articles (which vanish completely in their text can be justified. Another interesting aspect is that an ideological column had to exist in the beginning of each magazine; in this column, scientists had to record an ideologizing message; however, the existence of such insertions in subsequent articles was not required.<sup>36</sup> We cannot say the same thing about ordered works as is the case of *Monografia Geografică a R.P.R.*, in which a certain pattern had to be observed and for which there were precise indications. Probably, this is the justification for the structure of the two Monographs of Olteniei and Argeşului in which "R.P.R.'s great achievements" are highlighted and which are atypical for Ion Conea's manner of expression. Therefore, the hypothesis according to which *the articles were not approved by censorship unless they contained ideologizing messages* is false, but the hypothesis related to the fact that *it was imposed that the works should contain ideologizing messages* is partly plausible in the case of some of the works.

Another plausible hypothesis is that according to which *Conea was forced to acquire a professional re-attestation and mimetically reproduced various notions with an ideologizing nature*. Ideological sideslips correspond, in terms of timing, to the period when Conea is dismissed from, then re-admitted to the Institute. It is not excluded that such political and ideological concessions were made in order to prove that he was apt for the new direction and to be allowed to work again.

His various deviations did not affect the quality of the information provided by him, and his reorientation toward toponymy probably represented a manner in which he avoided such deviations, as it was quite difficult to insert political messages in this type of works. Gradually, observing his texts, Conea gave up the political clichés, made no further reference to the great achievements of R.P.R, subsequently R.S.R., and returns to his former style which had consecrated him. The professor would even have the courage to subtly introduce in some of his works certain geopolitical issues, which he presented as matters of historical geography, and reached a state of indifference to the directions indicated.

## Conclusions

No doubt during the communist regime people had to deal with an omnipresent terror and with a universe in which ideology had to be highlighted. If some people remained faithful to their democratic credo, and were insulted, smeared, denigrated, others adapted to the new

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<sup>35</sup> Interview, confidential, 2012

<sup>36</sup> Interview, confidential, 2012

regime. Conea was a part of neither category, but he placed himself in between such categories, and avoided becoming a politricks of the respective times. He inwardly defended his conceptions and convictions, and for the people who got to know him he “was an example of scientific thoroughness and consistency”<sup>37</sup>. He yielded, however, to the political pressures and he digressed from one of his most important conceptions, the immixture of politics into science.

By analysing all these aspects, perhaps we are not, eventually, dealing with a complete moral resignation, but we are rather dealing with a tacitly acquiescing compromise, in order to reach the objectives he proposed to himself, the possibility to research and publish.

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Invest in human resources!

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<sup>37</sup> Interview Șerban Dragomirescu, 2012