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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
Stalin's Romanian Disciples.	11
The Comintern and the RCP	16
Stalinism for All Seasons	34
The Anti-De-Stalinization Platform	39
The Road to Absolute Power	43
The Manipulated Manipulator	47
Assault on the Party Apparatus	52
Notes	57

The Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism

Vladimir Tismaneanu

Un monde sans tyrans serait aussi ennuyeux qu'un jardin zoologique sans hyenes.

E. M. Cioran, Histoire et utopie

Now, despite eternal cabals in the inner clique and unending shifts of personnel, with their tremendous accumulation of hatred, bitterness, and personal resentment, the Leader's position can remain secure against chaotic palace revolutions not because of his superior gifts, about which the men in his intimate surroundings frequently have no great illusions, but because of these men's sincere and sensible conviction that without him everything would be immediately lost.

Hannah Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism

Introduction

Stalinism is alive and well in Romania. At the time when Gorbachev's politics of glasnost threatens to contaminate and/or destabilize the long slumbering East European elites, the Ceausescu regime has strengthened its despotic features and is determined, it seems, to abide by a vision of communism that synthesizes an updated version of Stalinism and xenophobic populism. Increasingly exclusive and programmatically suspicious of domestic liberalization, Ceausescu's system has exhibited an unprecedented contempt for its own subjects. The system appears to be a sui generis form of Asiatic despotism where the political state, in the words of Marx, is truly "nothing but the personal caprice of a single individual."¹

There is today a growing temptation to dismiss the Romanian autocracy as an anomaly, irrelevant to understanding the general

development of Soviet-type regimes. To be sure, the tantrums and vagaries of Romania's president--his insatiable need for Neronian pageants, odes and panegyrics, and the enormous toll he has exacted on an impoverished and terrorized population--can hardly be considered in a dispassionate manner.² But after Ceausescu has been condemned, one must still address some disturbing questions about his successful utilization of a Lenino-Stalinist party structure to reach absolute control over the whole of Romanian society.

Not surprisingly, Ceausescu's rise to power occurred within a political formation imbued with an authoritarian ethos, where secrecy and intrigue were infinitely more valued than polemics and imagination. The tale of Romanian communism can be told as an endless succession of plots, vendettas, and assassinations, with one general secretary after another denouncing his predecessor as a villain or, sometimes, as a renegade, traitor, or agent provocateur. This has been a tragedy without any redeeming feature, whose most dismaying epilogue is the subjection of a whole nation to one man's delirious dreams of social engineering.³ In any other East-Central European communist party, this type of autocracy would not have developed without difficulty. Ceausescu's success within the Romanian communist political culture was foreshadowed and facilitated by its history of unmitigated commitment to the logic of Stalinism. Furthermore, the perplexing "tribalization" and personalization of Romanian communism should be considered as part of the psycho-ideological traditions of a communist party

beset by an overwhelming inferiority complex. Unlike the Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish and Yugoslav CPs, the underground Romanian Communist Party (RCP) was a peripheral movement (miscare) entirely dominated and frequently offended by the Comintern. It managed to achieve national prominence and establish its hegemony only under the umbrella of and with immediate support from the Soviet Army after 1944. Its claim to legitimacy therefore has always been a moot issue, even after Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej decided to simulate born-again Romanianism in 1963-64. Hence, both in theory and in practice, Ceausescuism appears as a desperate attempt by a beleaguered elite to gain domestic authority and international recognition through emphasizing the qualities it had most conspicuously lacked for most of its history: national prestige and influence. Within the framework of the Romanian communist tradition, Ceausescuism does not appear as an imposture (a violation of the natural course of things) but rather as the exacerbation of a pre-existent sectarian syndrome, characterized by voluntarism, fanaticism, and an uncompromising commitment to the Stalinist philosophy of "transformism."⁴

The chauvinistic outbursts of Ceausescu, his romanticization of the country's archaic past, his passionate identification with mythological Thracian-Dacian chieftains and powerthirsty feudal princes, his fascination with "organic corporatism" and the rehabilitation of Blut und Boden symbols and rites, have deeper sources than Ceausescu's personal psychology. These manifestations originate in the RCP's problematic relationship with

Romanian cultural traditions and political patterns; they are the means by which Romanian communism tries to compensate for its failure to offer convincing responses to the challenges of political and social modernization.

Hegel once wrote that the problem of history is the history of the problem. This article's approach to the problem of Ceausescuism is no less historical than psycho-sociological. Despite the temptation to disregard the performance of the Ceausescu regime as an historical oddity, it is important that Romanian communism be granted the thorough and unbiased treatment it deserves, particularly if one is to explain the seemingly senseless contemporary developments in the country. The most daunting tasks are to seek the political and intellectual roots of Romanian communism, reveal the interplay of national and international variables, and disclose the invisible nexus which links the current regime to the never-abandoned Romanian Stalinist heritage. Despite several valuable endeavors, the political and social history of the Romanian Communist Party remains to be written. Drawing from my own research on this topic, this essay incorporates several guiding hypotheses and a set of preliminary conclusions I have reached at this level of my investigation.⁵

A true history of Romanian communism should weigh the role of successive elites whose values and interests have molded the political culture of the ruling formation in that country. But in a Stalinist party the leading groups are made up of partisans (allies, clients, proteges, etc.) of the general secretary, who

rules as an autocrat and enjoys unconditional support from the party apparatus.⁶ Inevitably, therefore, this paper will concentrate on the paramount role of such personalities as Ana Pauker, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceausescu.

What I designate as Romanian domesticism--the ambition of the RCP's hegemonic group to pursue a road distinct from the other Warsaw Pact countries--has not meant a divorce from traditional dogmas, but precisely the opposite: the compulsive wish to carry the Stalinist logic to an extreme by strengthening the party's grip on society, and preventing the coagulation of any autonomous centers of political, social and cultural initiative. In its initial stage, under Gheorghiu-Dej and during Ceausescu's first years in power, this politics earned the unmitigated support of the nomenklatura. Were it not for the erratic behavior of the conducator, the apparatchiks would not have found grounds for disaffection. What they bemoan is the erosion of power, not its hypertrophy. It is not because they wish to revive the civil society that bureaucrats have started to murmur against Ceausescu, but rather as a result of personal anguishes generated by increased personal and group insecurity. At a time when communist reformers in other East European countries acknowledge the legitimacy of a multi-party system, Romanian Stalinists dream of replacing Ceausescu's willful autocracy with a bureaucratically sane oligarchy. Exhausted, corrupt, ill-informed and disoriented, the Romanian political class seems too amorphous and insecure to withstand the calamitous course imposed by the conducator.

My purpose is to grasp both the unique and universal, national and international attributes of the Romanian communist pedagogy because unless one succumbs to hopeless relativism, it must be admitted that each communist formation contains more than its own irreducible biography. For instance, the discovery by the RCP of "underdog" nationalism as an instrument of political consolidation especially after 1958 inaugurated a political pattern which has since been tested by other communist regimes. Under certain political circumstances, communist regimes may embrace diverse forms of distorted, "pharisaic" nationalism.⁸ Because of their origins and nature, however, this cannot be a genuine nationalist creed but a syncretic concoction whose fundamental purpose is to compensate for the ideological vacuum generated by the decline of Marxism-Leninism as a dominant doctrine.⁹ Ceausescu's endeavor to merge communism and ethnocentrism seems to be a most glaring illustration of this thesis. In spite of its alleged pristine and patriotic credentials, the RCP has never relinquished its Stalinist structure, dogmas, and phobias. These have remained intact because its leaders, from Elek Köblös, Boris Stefanov, Stefan Foris and Ana Pauker to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceausescu, have all shared the same belief in the predestined role of a tiny, conspiratorial elite, and the same suspicious attitude toward any independent form of social activity. Stalinism as a totalitarian mentality, a methodology of acquiring and maintaining absolute personal power, and an undisguised disdain for individual freedoms as well as an

anti-intellectual obsession, has been safeguarded by Romanian communists for more than three decades after Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" at the 20th Congress of the CPSU (February 1956).¹⁰ The Romanian communist political culture has not exorcised its demons and is still possessed by a self-righteous identification with the "iron laws of historical necessity." This is still a pre-critical communist culture, enraptured with its own mythological projections and incapable of transcending its enduring inferiority complexes.

Ceausescu portrays RCP history as a continuous succession of glorious events. Though the rhetoric has changed from one communist generation to the other, the command-administrative methods employed by the party have not. Under Ceausescu, the cult of bureaucratic obedience, the ultra-centralized pattern of political leadership, the exaltation of grandiose--though more often than not worthless--economic projects, the harassment of critical or potentially critical minorities, and the hostility toward any source of dissent and opposition, have reached Gargantuan proportions.¹¹

Time and again, analysts of Romanian communism have raised the following question: Was the current debacle a fatality which could have been predicted in 1965, when Ceausescu succeeded Gheorghiu-Dej and vowed to restore socialist legality, or in 1968, when he rehabilitated Lucretiu Patrascanu, stigmatized the Stalinist show-trials, and earned broad mass support for his vitriolic condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia?

The answer to this question is far from simple. One must admit from the very outset that there was a potential base for a semi-Titoist development in Romania, particularly after 1963-64. The alliance between the RCP and the national intelligentsia ensured political stability, and could have allowed the power elite to refurbish its ideological tenets in opposition to the "Moscow centre."¹²

Nicolae Ceausescu inherited from Gheorghiu-Dej a semi-autonomous country which was not wholly subservient to the Soviet Union, despite its membership in the Warsaw Pact and CMEA. To be sure, no genuine de-Stalinization had taken place under Dej, but in this respect Romania was similar to Yugoslavia in the first years after the Cominform 1948 and 1949 Resolutions. The open break with Moscow in April 1964 was an opportunity to blame the Soviets for the regrettable past and enable domestic leaders to resurrect a sense of patriotism in the Declaration of the Romanian Workers' Party. This Declaration in fact opened the door for a new approach to both foreign and domestic policy.¹³

Since the Romanian leadership was deeply worried about Khrushchev's intention to force de-Stalinization, the conflict with the Soviet Union and the search for national legitimacy were more than a game of mirrors.¹⁴ What escaped many observers was the nature of the Romanian-Soviet tension: it did originate in the center-periphery conflict, but also included an incompatibility of political philosophies and approaches to the Stalinist legacy.¹⁵ For the RCP leaders, Khrushchevism represented a major

deviation from the orthodox Leninist line, a hazardous undertaking bound to undermine the foundations of the communist bloc.¹⁶

Instead of obeying Khrushchev's urge to engage in de-Stalinization, the RCP elite astutely exploited the international conjuncture (the Sino-Soviet rift, and Khrushchev's defeat during the missile crisis) and embarked on an alternative platform of desatellization. It is no exaggeration to say that the ambivalent Romanian domesticism could have eventually resulted in a new version of Titoism, and might have permitted increased political cooperation between Romania and Yugoslavia.¹⁷ But for this to occur, the RCP had to reconsider its own past, do away with the logic of Stalinism, and gradually evolve toward oligarchic authoritarianism instead of protecting obsolete totalitarian structures.

Ceausescuism is less exotic than sometimes pictured. Both the man and the ideology--what official propaganda eulogizes as the "Ceausescu Thought"¹⁸--belong to the mainstream of Romanian communist political culture in a most intimate way. Romanian communism's stubborn rejection of any attempt at democratization is the consequence of an enduring Weltanschauung inherently suspicious of diversity. Romanian communists have never given much credence to critical Marxism, heterodoxy, and the values of dialogue and tolerance. The often noted debility of intra-party opposition and the absence of effective anti-Stalinism were certainly linked to the precariousness of the Marxist tradition in Romania. Michael Shafir has observed that "...even assuming that

a revisionist faction had come into existence ex nihilo within the national leadership, its prospects of success would probably have equalled those of an officers' corps without an army."¹⁹ This bleak generalization about the intellectual profile of the successive Romanian communist elites can be somewhat corrected if we think of such diverse and controversial personalities as Alexandru Barladeanu, Geo Bogza, Tudor Bugnariu, Barbu Campina, Csehi Gyula, Miron Constantinescu, Paul Cornea, Radu Cosasu, Ov. S. Crohmalniceanu, S. Damian, Petru Dumitriu, Gaal Gabor, Gall Erno, Paul Georgescu, Gheorghe Haupt, Ion Ianosi, Silvian Iosifescu, George Ivascu, Eugen Jebeleanu, Athanasie Joja, George Macovescu, Eduard Mezincescu, Costin Murgescu, Miron Radu Paraschivescu, Grigore Preoteasa, Mihail Ralea, Lucian Raicu, Valter Roman, N. Tertulian, Ileana Vrancea, Henri Wald, et al., who, in a more permissive political climate, could have offered revisionist alternatives to the hegemonic Stalinist line. Using Leonte Rautu's manipulative skills, Gheorghiu-Dej prevented this possibility by dividing, coopting and/or purging the party intelligentsia. A history of the anti-intellectual and anti-revisionist campaigns in Romania between 1956 and 1958 remains to be written. The weakness of revisionism was as much the consequence of the anti- or non-Marxist traditions of the national intellectual class, as of the ability displayed by the RCP to hinder the rise of an anti-Stalinist wing within the disenchanting party intelligentsia--a political group similar in its propensities and affinities to Polish and Hungarian neo-Marxist "heretics."²⁰

Hence, the advent of Ceausescuism has been the outcome of an excruciating identity crisis of a party lacking any substantial popular and intellectual support.

Stalin's Romanian Disciples

Ironically, the same party which is now proclaiming its impeccable patriotic credentials was one of the most strictly Bolshevized detachments of the Comintern. Under the watchful eyes of the Soviet-appointed instructors, the underground RCP behaved like a sect of zealots prone to mystical identification with the Soviet Union and its leader. More than any other communist movement in East-Central Europe, the RCP owed its creation to immediate Soviet pressure and influence. For Lenin and his comrades, Romania was an imperialist, multi-national state belonging to the anti-Soviet cordons sanitaires. The Bolshevik leaders considered Great Romania an artificial construct and wanted their followers in that country to denounce the ruling classes for having incorporated Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. Most of the Romanian socialists rejected this claim and refused to bow to Soviet dictates. As Social-Democrats they were eager to maintain a legal political structure and defend genuine working class interests until the forced merger with the Communists in February 1948. Others, initially called the "maximalists," embraced the Soviet view and paved the way for the fateful division of the Romanian socialist movement.

Founded in May 1921 as a splinter group within the Romanian Socialist Party, the RCP was deeply attached to the basic tenets of the Third International.²¹ The founding fathers of Romanian communism abhorred the reformist legacy of social-democracy and endorsed, with fervor, the cataclysmic revolutionary scenarios of the Comintern. In their view, conditions in Romania were ripe for a convulsion that would bring about a Soviet-style "dictatorship of the workers and peasants." Among those who galvanized the Romanian Leninist "vanguard" was the Bulgarian-born Christian Rakovsky, a prominent Comintern figure and once a leading Socialist activist in Romania.²² With the notable exception of Gheorghe Cristescu, the RCP's first general secretary, there were few signs, if any, of willingness for self-assertion, let alone independence, on the part of the various elites appointed by the Comintern to guide and control Romanian communism. The profound national roots of this political group, now strongly emphasized by Ceausescu's propaganda, were in fact absent during the clandestine years of 1924-44.²³

All the historical leaders of the Communist Party of Romania, including those exterminated in the USSR during the Great Purge (1936-39), were proud to proclaim their unwavering commitment to defending the "Motherland of the Proletariat." They experienced no pangs of conscience in underwriting the Soviet claims to the Romanian historical territories of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina and willingly endorsed the Comintern's disastrous "class against class" strategy. They were indifferent to their country's

political traditions, contemptuous of patriotic sentiments and aspirations, and embraced "internationalism" as a mystical camouflage for their unfailing subservience to the USSR. The RCP remained, until the occupation of Romania by the Red Army in 1944, a marginal and unappealing formation, whose membership at the moment of its emergence from clandestineness was approximately 1,000, including those exiled to the Soviet Union or fighting with the French maquis.²⁴ They were a minority within a minority, since the Left, as such, was far from being a significant social or intellectual force in a traditionalist political culture dominated by the National-Peasant and the National-Liberal parties. Unlike in other East-Central European countries, in Romania the shock of modernization did not lead to the successful development of mass working class parties, but rather to anti-capitalist resentments and rural nostalgias manipulated by the extreme Right. It is not surprising that the advance of the Iron Guard--the Romanian Fascist movement--coincided with the Great Depression and the slow but irresistible collapse of the parliamentary system."²⁵

Had it not been for its obsequious relationship with Moscow, which automatically bestowed on it the image of an alien entity, the RCP might have broadened into a national formation. The decay of the old order seemed to offer the RCP favorable ground in which to grow, and a possible constituency existed in Romanian youth who were yearning for new, uncorrupt, cathartic experiences, and existential guidelines. Authors like Andre Malraux, Romain

Rolland, Andre Gide, Nikolai Berdiaev and Leon Shestov were as influential in Bucharest in the 1930s as they were in Paris. Inspired by Bucharest University metaphysics professor Nae Ionescu--a strange combination of intellectual guru and political adventurer--young philosophers like Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica and Mircea Vulcanescu founded a proto-existentialist philosophy (trairism) which celebrated sacrifice, martyrdom, and the "tragic sentiment of being" and despaired over the mercantile logic of mass democracy.²⁶ Furthermore, there was an immense amount of poverty, despondency, and hopelessness in the country that created a potential audience for exalting, radical ideologies and actions. But instead of searching for the genuine origins of social malaise, and perhaps capitalizing on widespread frustration, the RCP was slavishly implementing the tactics devised and imposed by the Comintern. On June 1, 1928, for example, the Executive Committee of the Comintern (EKKI) addressed an Open Letter to the RCP urging it to act resolutely "against the social-democrats, who have entirely identified themselves with the bourgeoisie and pursue its interest to the detriment of the working class."²⁷ The Communists indulged in diatribes against the Social Democratic Party (describing it as the "Trojan horse" of the bourgeoisie within the working class), and in doing so estranged themselves further from the only political formation which might have considered cooperating with the RCP. Before the overhaul of the Comintern line at the Seventh Comintern Congress (1935), no imaginative policy of alliances was proposed by the RCP

leadership. The strategy of the Popular Front was thus an imported rather than a home-grown product.

To understand the mentality of the interwar Romanian communists, one must consider the political makeup and the moral values of the first Stalinist elites within the RCP. Activists like Imre Aladar, Ecaterina Arbore, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, Elek Kőblös, David Fabian, Elena Filipovici, Stefan Foris, Vasile Luca, Gelber Moscovici, Vanda Nikolski, Lucretiu Patrascanu, Ana and Marcel Pauker, Eugen Rozvany, Boris Stefanov, Timotei Marin, and others belonging to the same spiritual family, behaved like political sleepwalkers, possessed by the quasi-religious belief that the Soviet Union personified their most sacred dreams of social justice and human freedom. They worshipped Stalin, identified their destinies with the fate of the Russian Revolution, and were ready for the highest sacrifice to serve their ideal. The experience of belonging to the Party, fulfilling the tasks assigned by the Comintern, and sharing in the sentiment of universal fraternity, both absorbed and exhilarated the party elite. There was, as well, unremitting domination exerted by Moscow on the Romanian clandestine apparatchiks and on such Comintern leaders as Dmitri Manuilsky, Bohumil Smeral, and Bela Kun, whose main preoccupation was safeguarding the monolithic unity of Romanian communism and defending those dogmas which had led to the fracture of the left in 1921.

Those who later were anathematized as "deviationists" were simply the victims of the various twists and turns of the Comin-

tern strategy. Fascinated by Stalin's presumed omniscience, they failed to perceive the opportunist orientation of Soviet domestic and foreign policy. The good faith of the Bolshevik leadership was taken for granted and no tribute was too high to express the fidelity to the Soviet Union and its vozhd. Unlike the Hungarian Communist Party, where Georg Lukacs and his friends from the Jenö Landler faction articulated an original, albeit still sectarian revolutionary platform (the "Blum Theses") which implicitly questioned the Comintern's doctrinaire infallibility, Romanian communists were among the most disciplined and loyal to the official Moscow line.²⁸ But like all other Bolshevized parties the RCP was plagued with factionalism, suspiciousness, and power struggles, encouraged by the Comintern.

The Comintern and the RCP

The Fourth RCP Congress (Harkov, 1928) sanctioned the total triumph of the Stalinist hard-core within the RCP. The meeting had been prepared by a Comintern commission headed by Ukrainian activists Vitali Holostenko and Iosif Suslik (Badeev) without any consultation with either the exiled RCP Politburo (in Berlin) or the operative home Central Committee Secretariat.²⁹ The Comintern's delegate, Czechoslovak Communist leader Bohumil Smeral, led the proceedings. Symptomatic of the anti-democratic atmosphere of this gathering, Elek Köblös, the RCP general secretary, and Solomon Schein, a Central Committee (CC) secretary charged with operative work within Romania, were deprived of the right to

deliberative vote. The final resolution on the nationalities issues reflected the extreme sectarianism of the RCP elite. It maintained that the historical territories of Transylvania, Bessarabia, Bukovina and Banat, united with Romania as a result of the Trianon, Versailles, and Neuilly Treaties, were predominantly inhabited by non-Romanians. Echoing the Great Russian chauvinist theories, the resolution claimed that the Bessarabian Romanians--referred to as Moldavians--constituted a national minority:

The working class from Bessarabia joined the Russian proletariat in making the Great October Socialist Revolution.... Though as a result of the October Revolution Bessarabia achieved national liberation, ten years ago this region was enslaved again by the Romanian landlords and capitalists.... In order to justify the predatory annexation of Bessarabia, the Romanian bourgeoisie seeks to prove that the Moldavians who make up the relative majority of the population are Romanians, whereas the Moldavian population considers itself, and is in fact, a different nation, with its own culture, who fights together with the other nationalities of Bessarabia against their national and class oppressor, the Romanian bourgeoisie.

In accordance with this national nihilism, the participants defined Romania as "a faithful gendarme of the imperialist powers (England and France) against the first proletarian state, the USSR and the future revolution in the Balkans."³⁰

In order to carry out the increasingly militant line vis-a-vis the Romanian state, the Comintern delegates reshuffled the RCP elite. The Congress eliminated from the Central Committee the representatives of the RCP "Leninist Guard" (Eugen Rozvany, Elek Köblös, David Fabian) and catapulted to the highest party position as general secretary a non-Romanian Comintern activist, the

Ukrainian CP member Vitali Holostenko (Barbu).³¹ Two Politburos were elected: one within the country (Vasile Luca, Dori Goldstein, Al. Nikolski) and another one abroad (Vitali Holostenko, Ion Heigel, and a representative of the Ukrainian CP). For many activists the resolutions of the Fourth Congress appeared as a striking proof of shortsightedness and isolation of the exiled leaders from the real situation in Romania. Speaking in May 1967, on the occasion of the 45th anniversary of the creation of the RCP, Nicolae Ceausescu deplored the Comintern practice of appointing members of other Communist Parties as RCP general secretaries.³² The problem, however, was more complex: the party's isolation was the consequence of an overall failure to achieve contact with the Romanian working class, to recognize and express its grievances and needs, and formulate a strategy for social and economic recovery. The dead hand of Stalinist sectarianism prevented the Romanian Communist Party from escaping from its political ghetto and becoming a major actor on the country's political scene.

In all fairness, it must be said that not all the RCP militants were convinced of the sagacity of the Comintern's Romanian strategy. For example, a Plenum of the CC of the RCP expelled Dr. Eugen (Jeno) Rozvany from the party in February 1929 on charges of "right-wing opportunism." The truth was that as a member of the Central Committee of the front-organization called the "Workers' and Peasants' Bloc," he had opposed the argument that several historical territories, including Bessarabia,

Northern Bukovina, and Transylvania had a right to self-determination and secession from the Romanian state.³³

In the late 1920s, two factions were vying to take over power within the tiny RCP. One was headed by the Moscow-appointed general secretary Vitali Holostenko (Barbu); the other one supported Marcel Pauker (Luximin), an ambitious leftist intellectual who enjoyed the support of the Communist Youth Union (UTC) and the Bucharest Party Committee. Each faction vilified the other for capitulation to and "rotten" compromises with the "class enemy"; each made vitriolic accusations of felony and betrayal. But despite the ferocity of the dispute, it does not appear that there was any principled difference between the rival groups. On the contrary, the conflict was basically over which group would be preeminent in carrying out the Kremlin's orders, with the main actors using their Moscow contacts to besmirch and eventually ruin each other.³⁴ What the Comintern labeled "the unprincipled factional struggle" still remains one of the most obscure episodes in the history of Romanian communism, all the more so because most of the protagonists perished during the Great Purge.³⁵ The competition between the two rival centers, aggravated by the emergence of a "third platform" embodied by a group within the exiled Politburo, led to disarray and could have resulted in the dissolution of the RCP. But it was precisely this fragmentation of the RCP leadership which suited the Comintern's designs and permitted the abysmal moral and political subjugation of the Romanian revolutionary elite by Moscow. "Tricentrism" was indeed

a basic pattern for the functioning of the RCP during its entire underground history. With two leading factions competing within the internal party, it was the privilege of the foreign center to play the umpire and maintain the myth of monolithic unity. Far from trying to alleviate the frictions between home and exiled communists, the Comintern exacerbated them. It encouraged the further split within the "party of the interior" between the operational underground Central Committee and the "center of the prisons," and only when this competition threatened to break up the party did the Kremlin intervene and endorse a certain faction. The Resolution of the Executive Committee of the Comintern adopted in August 1930 condemned the calamitous convulsions within the RCP, discharged Holostenko's team and appointed a provisional leadership headed by members of the Prague-based Politburo in exile (Eugen Iacobovici, Vanda Nikolski, and Elena Filipovici). Marcel Pauker and his supporters (Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Vasile Luca, among others) as well as Elek Kőblös, the former RCP general secretary, were also purged. In short, the "unity" of the RCP was only a facade behind which eternal cabals were permanently fomented and internecine struggles waged.

Alienated from the proletarian base whose interests they claimed to represent, and without an understanding of the country's complex social and economic dilemmas, Romanian communists were convinced that rapid Sovietization (imitation of the Soviet model) would be the only answer to the socio-economic turmoil of the late 1920s and 1930s. Echoing the "class against class"

Comintern strategy of the "third period," the Second RCP Conference in 1929 carried this logic of exclusion to an extreme. Its resolutions described Romania as an "imperialist country," an "outpost for the fascist aggression against the USSR" governed by a "criminal annexationist bourgeoisie." In shocking contrast to the political realities of the epoch, the Conference slogans characterized Romania as a full-fledged fascist dictatorship. Consumed by internal strife and unable to function as a homogeneous movement, the RCP agonized until the Comintern decided to put an end to the suicidal factious struggles.

For a long time, especially under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej,³⁶ the official 'hagiography' described the Fifth Congress (Moscow, December 3-24, 1931) as a watershed in the party's history. It was argued that the Congress abandoned the most counter-productive theses and offered a realistic strategy for the forthcoming revolutionary confrontations. However, the Fifth Congress continued to pay tribute to the old fictions about the artificial character of the Romanian state and did not renounce the slanderous description of Social Democracy as a corruptive force within the working class and an "objective" ally of the bourgeoisie. The Congress brought together 38 delegates from Romania as well as representatives of communist parties from the USSR, the Ukraine, Germany, Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, and elsewhere. The major reports to the Congress were delivered by the Hungarian Communist leader Bela Kun ("The International Situation and the Danger of an Anti-Soviet

War"), Elena Filipovici ("Romania's Political and Economic Situation and the Tasks of the RCP"), Imre Aladar ("The Economic Struggles and the Tasks of the Party in the Union Movement") and Eugen Iacobovici ("The Organizational Tasks and the Cadres Policy of the Party"). The final resolution announced that Romania was ripe for a bourgeois-democratic revolution to be carried out not by the national bourgeoisie, but by the proletariat in alliance with the peasantry.³⁷ In accordance with this view, Romania had no reason to fear its eastern neighbor. Moreover, it was argued that only in alliance with the USSR could the country solve its problems and become a modern, industrial nation. In her concluding remarks, Elena Filipovici summarized the main tenets of the Congress:

The Fifth Congress offers the correct political line and five fundamental slogans... [the RCP stands] against fascist dictatorship; for the 8-hour work day; for land to the peasants; for self-determination up to separation; and for the defense of the USSR. These slogans must be our beacon in the effort to transform the everyday struggle into a superior one, aimed at seizing the power and fulfilling the bourgeois-democratic revolution.³⁸

Following Bela Kun's instructions (Kun was one of the Comintern's most authoritative voices, and was instrumental in engineering elite shake-ups in all East-Central European parties), the Congress elected Alexander Danieliuk-Stefanski (Gorn), a member of the Polish Communist Party, as RCP general secretary. The protagonists of the factious struggles, most of whom had been among the founders of the RCP, were dropped from the supreme hierarchy. With their heretical propensities, they represented a

critical potential, intolerable at the moment the party had to operate as a military unit.³⁹ The Fifth Congress ensured the triumph of a new political generation, less linked to the Leninist origins of Romanian communism, and more conditioned by the ideology of unreserved solidarity with the Stalinist leadership. Hence, through the elimination of the "romantic revolutionaries" and the election of totally reliable Comintern activists, the Fifth Congress perfected the Stalinization of the RCP. The new Central Committee included such activists as Bela Brainer, Elena Filipovici, Nicolae Goldberger,⁴⁰ Emil Halitski, Eugen Iacobovici, Vanda Nikolski, Lucretiu Patrascanu, and others, who considered Stefanski's appointment an improvement in the quality of the party leadership.⁴¹ Lucretiu Patrascanu's presence was probably linked to his growing prestige among left-wing Romanian intellectuals. Even more important, in the summer of 1931, Patrascanu had been elected a member of the Parliament on the list presented by the front organization called the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc.

In spite of the Comintern's attempt to limit the damage of factionalism, the tension between domestic and foreign leaderships did not lessen. The RCP was now directed by the Berlin-based Politburo headed by Alexander Danieliuk Stefanski and an internal Secretariat consisting of Beta Brainer, Gheorghe Stoica (Moscu Cohn), and Dora Rotman, who were later replaced by Alexandru Sencovici, Lucretiu Patrascanu, Vanda Nikolski and Nicolae Goldberger.⁴² After the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (Moscow, July 25-August 20, 1935), the RCP embarked on the new

strategy of creating anti-Fascist Popular Fronts. The Romanian delegation to this Congress was headed by Boris Stefanov, who was soon thereafter appointed general secretary.⁴³ A founding member of the RCP, Stefanov was elected a deputy on the list of the "Socialist-Communist" party in 1922. He was a Bulgarian born in Romania, fluent in Romanian and less alien to the country's culture than his foreign predecessors, and his rise to the top of the hierarchy was welcomed by many underground militants as a restoration of the party's national dignity.⁴⁴ But they were profoundly wrong. Stefanov was in fact a rigid ideologue, whose unique concern was to carry out the Comintern's schemes.⁴⁵ His role in the party leadership was to supervise the new front organizations, to keep the cadres under strict control, and to maintain an unyielding sense of discipline. Stefanov epitomized a political generation immune to self-questioning and moral dilemmas. Its members shared the vision of Stalin's party as the avant-garde of the world proletariat and were not tormented by doubts about the suffocation of open discussion within the CPSU(b) and the Comintern. Significantly, between Gheorghe Cristescu's ouster in 1924 and Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's appointment in 1944, all RCP general secretaries were non-ethnic Romanians.⁴⁶ Some of them, like Elek Kőblös and Stefan Foris⁴⁷ were Hungarians, others were Jews, Bulgarians, Poles, and Ukrainians.

If any doubts were held by party elite about the totalitarian logic of Stalinism and RCP subservience to Moscow, these were forgotten with Hitler's rise to power in January 1933. For

Romanians in the 1930s, as well as for Polish, Hungarian, or German communists, the only choice appeared to be between Stalin's socialism and Hitler's Nazism. Many among them eventually realized the scope of Stalin's ruthless purges, but they could not voice their doubts lest this help their mortal enemy. I speak here, of course, about the generation of so-called idealistic communists, and not about the time-servers who were prepared to make any compromise in order to climb to a higher rung on the ladder of the Stalinist hierarchy. Fanatic and gullible as they were, these militants remained dedicated communists even when confronted with the atrocious reality of the Soviet concentrationary system, the frozen night of the Gulag.⁴⁸ The moral chemistry of Romanian communism was thus the product of a generation that had totally internalized Stalin's definition of proletarian solidarity:

An internationalist is one who is ready to defend the USSR without reservation, without wavering, unconditionally; for the USSR is the base of the world revolutionary movement, and this revolutionary movement cannot be defended and promoted unless the USSR is defended. For whoever thinks of defending the world revolutionary movement apart from, or against, the USSR, goes against the revolution and must inevitably slide into the camp of the enemies of the revolution.⁴⁹

Most of the members of the original Romanian Stalinist elite were executed or disappeared in Soviet camps, joining their former idol and protector, Christian Rakovsky. Among those who perished during the Great Terror were RCP luminaries like Imre Aladar, Ecaterina Arbore,⁵⁰ Ion Dic-Dicescu, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-

Gherea,⁵¹ David Fabian, Elena Filipovici, Dumitru Grofu, Elek Kőblős,⁵² Alexandru Nicolau, Marcel Pauker, Eugen (Jeno) Rozvany, Marin Timotei, and many others. They were outlived by the myth they had managed to impress on the minds of younger militants of the Soviet Union as a proletarian Mecca. Even in the writings of Lucretiu Patrascanu, one of the very few prominent intellectuals to hold an important position within the RCP, one finds attempts to justify the theses of the Comintern rather than to offer critical or dissenting ideas. Certainly more sophisticated than his peers, Patrascanu was nevertheless a disciplined "soldier of the party," ready to follow, without question, Soviet instructions. After the war, faced with infinitely more complex issues and increasingly aware of the cynicism of the Soviet attitude toward Romania, Patrascanu tried to articulate a more balanced view of the country's social history, though it was still imbued with Leninist-Stalinist cliches.

The intellectual debility of interwar Romanian communism, determined by the party's elitism as well as by its aversion toward any stance seeming nationalistic, explains the limited appeal this formation had among the intelligentsia. The only theoretical heritage Romanian communists could have relied upon--Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea's theory of the "new serfdom" (neoiobăgie)--was denounced as a camouflaged version of Menshevism with baleful consequences for the development of the Romanian revolutionary working class movement.⁵⁴ To be sure, some younger communists tried to pierce the dogma and embark on a more sophis-

ticated approach to Marxism. Lucien (Gica) Goldmann, the future French neo-Marxist thinker, started his dialectical investigations in Bucharest, but his unorthodox views aroused suspicions among fellow communists and led to his break with the RCP after 1934.⁵⁵ Even Lucretiu Patrascanu's original historical research did not generate any profound discussions within the Romanian radical left.⁵⁶

The party-controlled, cultural-political magazines--Cuvintul Liber, Reporter, Era Noua--professed a Manichean worldview based on unqualified support for the USSR and visceral hostility toward Romania's parliamentary system. Indeed, the only intellectual pursuit encouraged by the Stalinist watchdogs was the perpetual rumination of Stalin's booklets and Comintern directives. No daring political solutions were advanced from within the RCP's ranks--no Georg Lukacs, Bertolt Brecht, Antonio Gramsci or even Georges Politzer could emerge as intellectual spokesman for Romanian communism. Romanian communists were always waiting for Moscow's suggestions and signals, and with the exception of Patrascanu, the RCP did not beget any noteworthy theorist.

After 1933, the intensification of international anti-fascist campaigns helped the RCP to build bridges with left-wing Romanian intellectuals. The National Anti-Fascist Committee, founded in 1933, managed to attract the support of important cultural figures.⁵⁷ Like in other European countries, the fascist threat radicalized the left-oriented intelligentsia. Some joined the party, like the endocrinologist C.I. Parhon, the philosopher

Tudor Bugnariu, the historian Scarlat Callimachi, and the lawyer Ion Gheorghe Maurer. Others, like the psychologist and literary critic Mihai Ralea or the politician Petru Groza engaged in dialogue with RCP representatives and sponsored several anti-fascist actions. The main organizer of these propaganda operations was Ana Pauker, who had returned from Paris in 1934. Arrested in 1935, she was convicted and sentenced to a ten-year prison term during a much-publicized trial in Craiova in June 1936. Thanks to the Comintern's propaganda machine, Ana Pauker's name became an international symbol of opposition to fascism. At the same time, the Craiova trial was the beginning of an increasing cult of Ana Pauker's personality among Romanian communists at home and abroad.⁵⁸ Among the most active in the Agitprop cadres were Stefan Foris, Iosif Chisinevski, Leonte Rautu, Tatiana Bulan, Mihail Roller, Lazar Grunberg, Sorin Toma, Ana Toma, Grigore Preoteasa, Miron Constantinescu, Alexandru Buican, Mircea Balanescu, Stefan Voicu, Petre Navodaru, and Constanta Craciun. Despite its increasingly patriotic rhetoric, the RCP could not implant itself in the Romanian working class and continued to recruit primarily among ethnic minorities. Even legal organizations like the MOPR (the Romanian branch of a Moscow-sponsored international organization to support political prisoners) and the Student Democratic Front remained isolated and never attracted a mass following.⁵⁹

Both in the operative ("technical") and propaganda sectors, the party apparatus was overwhelmingly dominated by non-Romanian

Transylvanians and Bessarabians, mostly of Jewish extraction. The significant Jewish presence in East-Central European radical left groups was linked to the illusion entertained by many Jews of the Soviet Union as the embodiment of Marxist humanism. Dissatisfied with the status quo, disgusted with bourgeois values, victimized by discriminatory measures and appalled by the rise of Nazism, they indulged in fantasies about a world-wide communist revolution that would create a climate conducive to what Marx had called the "realization of human essence," and thus excise the cancer of anti-Semitism at its social roots. Their dream was to overcome their Jewishness, to become part of a universal movement whose aspirations and promises transcended national and racial limitations. Their romantic image of the Soviet Union functioned as compensation for their frustrations and humiliations. Like their Polish and Hungarian comrades, most Romanian Jewish communists abjured their background and proudly severed all links with their ancestors' traditions. They were, to use Isaac Deutscher's term, "self-hating Jews," yearning for a new identity that would enable them to act as citizens of a universal homeland. Hence they refused to grasp the chasm between their hopes and the barbarous reality of Stalinism. Matyas Rakosi and Jozsef Revai, Jakub Berman and Roman Zambrowski, Ana Pauker and Leonte Rautu were all united in denial of their Jewishness and a frantic desire to replace it through a different, larger sense of belonging.⁶⁰

Rooted in alienation and malaise, the belief in internationalism prevented most East European communist parties from

becoming mass movements in countries where independence was the most cherished national value. The Romanian situation was strikingly similar to the Polish one as diagnosed by Czeslaw Milosz:

The truth is that in prewar Poland the leftists were mainly Jews. There is no racial mystery in that. They simply had an international outlook, whereas since the nineteenth century the Poles had a very strong tradition of fighting for independence. The Poland that had reappeared on the map of Europe seemed so precious to them that the very idea of any end to the unique arrangement that allowed Poland to exist was unthinkable. A whole series of imponderables prohibited any sympathy for the Communist Party.⁶¹

Identifying themselves with the "foreign enemy," East European communists appeared to their fellow countrymen as agents of national dissolution.

A peripheral formation, to be sure, the RCP was nevertheless highly efficient in manipulating anti-fascist symbols. After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, it succeeded in recruiting an impressive number of Romanian volunteers for the International Brigades. According to the RCP historiography, more than 500 volunteers fought in the International Brigades on the Republican side.⁶² My own research suggests the figure of three hundred volunteers as closer to reality (some of whom were my parents, other relatives, and close family friends).

As a new world war was becoming increasingly more likely, the Comintern leaders were satisfied with the "inflexible discipline" governing the RCP. True, the party lacked a broad mass base, but this deficit was compensated by its loyalty to the Soviet Union

and to Stalin himself. In 1986, Nicolae Ceausescu, who was in jail between 1936 and 1938, and was again arrested in 1940,⁶³ referred to the prison Doftana as a main "academy of revolutionary thought." The purpose of this statement was to suggest Ceausescu's pivotal role in the communist underground establishment and to maintain the image of the party as a tightly knit community of fighters dedicated to further the "most advanced ideals of mankind."⁶⁴ Ceausescu was right in emphasizing the cardinal role of the prison "collective" in shaping his revolutionary view. But when one considers the mentality characteristic of the RCP leadership, it is obvious that theoretical training in prisons amounted to mere parroting of the Short Course of History of the CPSU(b) and other Stalinist treatises. With mentors like Ana Pauker, Stefan Foris, Iosif Chisinevski, Lazar Grünberg, Leonte Rautu, Andrei Bernath, Ileana Raceanu, Zina Brancu (Haia Grinberg), Manole H. Manole, Ofelia Manole, Iosif Ranghet, and Bela Brainer, most of whom had graduated from the Leninist Comintern School in Moscow, it was logical to expect such indoctrination of the few men and women of genuine working class extraction imprisoned in such places as Doftana, Jilava, Aiud, Brasov, Mislea, and Dumbraveni. Gheorghiu-Dej, who by the end of the 1930s had become the undisputed leader of the Doftana RCP organization, had masterfully appropriated the "mysteries" of party propaganda and carefully supervised the doctrinary initiation of neophytes like Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceausescu, Alexandru Draghici, and Alexandru Moghioros.⁶⁵

During his prison term (1933-44), Dej realized the immense strategic value of propaganda. No wonder that after the war, with the decisive support of the Soviet "advisers," Iosif Chisinevschi and Leonte Rautu were appointed leaders of the Agitprop Department of the RCP.⁶⁶ Again, the presence of a tiny group of Bessarabian and/or Jewish declassé semi-intellectuals at the pinnacle of the RCP propaganda apparatus--Iosif Chisinevschi, Leonte Rautu, Mihail Roller, Sorin Toma, Stefan Voicu (Aurel Rotenberg), Ofelia Manole, Zina Brancu, Iosif Ardeleanu (Adler), Barbu Zaharescu (B. Zuckerman)--as well as the strikingly disproportionate presence of non-ethnic Romanian militants in all the Central Committees up to the 7th Congress (the 2nd Romanian Workers' Party Congress, 1955) is significant. It is tempting to assume that Moscow favored precisely those groups and personalities who were the least likely to turn the RCP into an influential, potentially autonomous party. The ethnic composition of the Romanian Stalinist elite could hardly have improved the party's influence and authority within the country, particularly in the 1930s and '40s, when both the USSR and Hungary were voicing loudly their discontent with the post-World War I, East-Central European frontiers. Needless to say, Romanian communists did nothing to mitigate their predicament. On the contrary, they yielded to the humiliating 1940 Comintern Directives describing Romania as a "multinational, imperialist country" and criticizing the RCP for having launched in the late 1930s a campaign for the defense of the country's borders.⁶⁷

In his illuminating essay on the experience of Polish communism, Isaac Deutscher showed how Stalinization resulted in the fatal manipulation of revolutionary enthusiasm by the practitioners and beneficiaries of bureaucratic uniformity.⁶⁸ The dissolution of that party on Stalin's order during the Great Terror, the later resurgence of Polish communism under Gomulka in occupied Poland, and the salient links between the recurrent anti-totalitarian Polish movements and the legacy of the anti-Stalinist left, cannot be comprehended without taking into account the survival of a pre-Leninist, intrinsically anti-authoritarian strain, rooted in the tradition of Rosa Luxemburg. In Deutscher's view, a "certain law of continuity" ensured this distinctive Polish feature:

...since nothing in nature is ever lost completely, the Luxemburgist tradition had not vanished completely either, in spite of the years which had been spent on uprooting it. The opposition's influence and the effect of that tradition was such that even the most orthodox Polish Communist left much to be desired from the Stalinist point of view.⁶⁹

A similar analysis would emphasize the tradition of rebellion in the commitment of the Hungarian left, with its incessant internal disputes and electrifying intellectual polemics. If these parties had been totally and irretrievably Bolshevized--turned into mere conveyor belts for Moscow's orders--it would be difficult to understand the rise of the revisionist generation after Stalin's death. A humanist approach to socialism could emerge in Poland and Hungary from within the communist intellec-

tual elite, whereas the party elite in Romania has preempted this possibility by stifling the very idea of dissent.⁷⁰

Stalinism for All Seasons

Ana Pauker was the leader whose biography most graphically reflected the tortuous course of Romanian Stalinism. After belonging to the first Central Committees of the RCP, she left Romania and joined the "exquisite detachment" of Comintern instructors, with special assignment in France.⁷¹ Returning to Bucharest, she was arrested, tried and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment. As noted previously, the international Stalinist left--the "Stalintern"--capitalized on her 1936 trial in Craiova in order to publicize Pauker as a symbol of antifascist militancy. In the summer of 1940, following an agreement between the Romanian and Soviet governments, she was allowed to go to the Soviet Union. In Moscow, as a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, Ana Pauker headed the External Bureau of the RCP and elaborated (together with Vasile Luca, Petre Borila, Valter Roman, Dumitru Petrescu, Gheorghe Stoica, and Leonte Rautu, to mention only some of her associates) the RCP strategy for the takeover of power. A prominent member of the Comintern aristocracy, she established close contacts with influential Soviet personalities, including Vyacheslav Molotov.

At the same time, with Moscow's blessing, a group of imprisoned communists led by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej fomented an internal coup against the Comintern-appointed general secretary

Stefan Foris (April 1944). The main accusation against Foris, formulated in the letters sent by the "center of the prisons" to Moscow during the war, was his "cowardice and capitulation," later to be described as Foris's betrayal of class principles.⁷² I mention these names and events in order to illustrate the ethical quandary of Romanian communism, the pervasive climate of intrigues, conspiracies, innuendo, obloquy, bloodthirsty revenge and ruthless settlements of accounts. Thus, the people who belonged to Dej's entourage at Doftana and Tirgu-Jiu--Gheorghe Apostol, Nicolae Ceausescu, Iosif Chisinevski, Miron Constantinescu, Alexandru Draghici, Teohari Georgescu, Alexandru Moghioros, Iosif Ranghet, et al.--became masters of Byzantine manipulation, learned the mysteries of Stalinist frame-ups, and started practicing the purge as a privileged means of domination and a well-tested instrument of communist pedagogy. They did not need Ana Pauker's or Vasile Luca's assistance to organize the conspiracy which led to Foris's tragic end. Later, however, the Moscow Center and Dej's group were to establish a temporary alliance and engineer Lucretiu Patrascanu's ouster in 1948.⁷³ Another historical note may be of interest here. Though Teohari Georgescu had been one of Dej's acolytes in the anti-Fori campaign during the war years, he was purged in 1952 as a member of Ana Pauker's "anti-party" faction. He had not been a member of the "emigre coalition," but Dej could not forget that in 1940 the Comintern had suggested Georgescu's name as a solution for the Romanianization of the RCP elite through his appointment as

general secretary.⁷⁴ Teohari Georgescu apparently refused this promotion, but it was not Dej's style to underestimate the risk of Moscow using the Georgescu card against him. This detail is all the more meaningful since there is a widespread tendency to attribute a predominantly political nature to the conflict between Dej and the Pauker-Luca-Georgescu faction. In other words, the "anti-party group" was rather an ex post facto construct, rather than an association of like-minded conspirators intent upon toppling Dej and pursuing an alternative, "rightist" political strategy. Furthermore, unlike Pauker and Luca, Teohari Georgescu--an ethnic Romanian worker--had not spent the war years in Soviet exile, which may also explain Nicolae Ceausescu's readiness to politically rehabilitate Georgescu and restore his Central Committee membership in 1972, while avoiding any re-assessment of the May-June 1952 Plenum which led to the elimination of the "right-wing deviators".⁷⁵

With the benefit of hindsight, the May-June 1952 purge of the Pauker-Luca-Georgescu faction may appear as the first attempt of the national Stalinist elite to achieve cohesion by forcing out the Moscow-backed faction headed by Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca, but this was hardly the perception the RCP party apparatus had at the time about this event.⁷⁶ The Soviet advisors played a crucial role in the preparations for what eventually turned into an intra-party coup.⁷⁷ Furthermore, it can be intimated that even Dej and his accomplices--among whom was Iosif Roitman-Chisinevschi, Lavrenty Beria's homme de confiance in Romania, as

well as people with impeccable pro-Soviet credentials like Leonte Rautu (Lev Oigenstein), Petre Borila (Iordan Dragan Rusev), Miron Constantinescu--did not have any "autonomist" propensities, particularly at a historical juncture when "bourgeois nationalism" and "rootless cosmopolitanism" had become Stalin's pre-occupation.⁷⁸ After all, it had been none other than Gheorghiu-Dej who, at the 1949 Cominform meeting, had been selected by Stalin to deliver the notorious speech about "the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in the hands of murderers and spies."⁷⁹ Hence, the 1952 ouster of the Pauker-Luca faction was by no means the harbinger of a national communism in statu nascendi but rather a successful attempt by Dej and his faction to take advantage of Stalin's paranoid delusions in order to consolidate their hold on the RCP apparatus and put an end to the centrifugal trends of the "duality of power." Unthinkable as an "autonomist" orientation was in a satellite country under the circumstances of the Cold War, it would have been all the more extraordinary coming from one of the most regimented Stalinist elites in Eastern Europe. In other words, Ana Pauker's downfall was possible not only, and not even primarily, because of Dej's skillful maneuvering--as some recently published novels in Romania would have us believe--but first and foremost as a result of Stalin's decision to initiate a major political purge in Romania. To be sure, Pauker's designation as the victim of a show trial could not but be applauded by Dej and his underlings. Psychologically, they had long resented the arrogant behavior of the Muscovites and

gladly volunteered to participate in their annihilation. But if the national Stalinists were the prime beneficiaries of this move against the RCP "internationalist faction," they were neither its initiators, nor its architects.

Teresa Toranska's fascinating interviews with Edward Ochab, Roman Werfel, Stefan Staszewski and particularly Jakub Berman leave no doubt about the East European Stalinist elites' total subservience to the Kremlin.⁸⁰ No less caught in the same perverse mechanism of self-delusion and self-humiliation than their Polish and Hungarian colleagues, the Romanian Stalinists--Dej, Chisinevschi and Ceausescu as much as Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca--were willing perpetrators of Stalin's designs. They were allowed by the Soviet dictator to gain autonomy not from the center, but from another generation of the center's agents. Of course it was a moment of emancipation, but as those who were victims of the repressive campaign in 1952--military, students, intellectuals--still remember, this signified only that Moscow sanctioned the coming of age of a new Stalinist elite in Romania.

The history of the Stalinist ruling groups in various East-Central European countries is strikingly similar. There is the same sense of political predestination, the same lack of interest in national values, the same obsequiousness vis-a-vis the Kremlin. Furthermore, we notice similarities not only at the psychological level, but also at the biographical. After all, Ana Pauker, Rudolf Slansky, Bedrich Geminder, and to some extent, Laszlo Rajk and Wladyslaw Gomulka, had all complied with the

Comintern's conversion into an appendage of the Kremlin's foreign policy, had all been imbued with the myth of Stalin's genius and Soviet primacy within world communism.

A political history of Romanian Stalinism shows the same conspiratorial, hyper-centralized and authoritarian-militaristic structure which characterized the leading teams in other communist countries; the same appetite for acquiring the status of a little Stalin on the part of the general secretary (Gheorghiu-Dej) and chief-ideologue (Leonte Rautu), for utilizing the Russification of the national culture as a method to achieve total ideological regimentation, for utilizing Soviet agents (Iosif Chisinevski, Petre Borila) to supervise their colleagues and diligently report on their behavior to the Soviet "protectors"; the same implementation of a terrorist police state; the same mechanical mass mobilization based on superstitious veneration for the Soviet Union and Stalin.

The Anti-De-Stalinization Platform

Later, when the 20th Congress launched the de-Stalinization offensive, Romanian Stalinist leaders looked askance at Khrushchev's "hare-brained" attempts to introduce a less brutal version of socialism. They simulated adjustment to the new Soviet line while secretly sympathizing with Mao's unreconstructed Stalinism. Their commitment to autonomy was not inspired, as in Tito's case, by wounded national pride, but rather by a fear of being compelled by Khrushchev to embark on resolute de-Stalinization.

Gheorghiu-Dej's skeptical attitude toward the renewal in the USSR was similar to that expressed by Boleslaw Bierut in Poland, but there was no Jozef Swiatlo affair to shatter the Romanian pyramid of vested interests and to undermine the cohesion of Dej's ruling group.

Anticipating the threat of a Moscow-imposed liberalization, Dej organized Lucretiu Patrascanu's execution in April 1954. This was designed to prevent the Soviets from regenerating the compromised RCP hegemonic team by promoting a victim of the Stalinist terror to a high position, in the same way Imre Nagy became Prime Minister of Hungary in June 1953.⁸¹ After Ana Pauker's elimination, a functional consensus had been reached in the RCP Politburo, with Dej exerting undisputed control over the party's leading bodies. But in the conditions of Khrushchev's mounting anti-Stalin campaign, Patrascanu, with his aura of martyrdom, could have exploited the frustrations and aspirations of different social groups. With no vote against or abstention, the RCP Politburo ordered his execution more than one year after Stalin's death. Simultaneously, Dej decided to rejuvenate the party elite, which automatically led to the marginalization of the Hungarian and Jewish "old-timers" and allowed younger Romanian upstarts, including Nicolae Ceausescu, to reach the highest bureaucratic echelons.⁸²

Nicolae Ceausescu's career was determined primarily by his association with Dej's group, by unswerving loyalty to the man who had guaranteed his election to the Central Committee at the

National Conference in 1945. Later, after his election as general secretary, Ceausescu would be at pains to recreate his own past, to invent a biography of a leader with a pristine background who was always adamantly committed to the "Leninist norms of party democracy." It was hard, however, to erase from the collective memory his involvement in the brutal collectivization campaigns of the early 1950s, his provisional alliance between 1956 and 1960 with the then Minister of Internal Affairs, Alexandru Draghici,⁸³ and his collaboration with Leonte Rautu in the annihilation of the Chisinevski-Constantinescu faction.⁸⁴

With regard to this still unclarified episode, mention should be made of Dej's anti-intellectual sentiments, which may explain the particular bitterness and violence of the purge which followed the internal party debates in 1956. No doubt, Miron Constantinescu had been a committed Stalinist, but he internalized the lessons of the 20th Congress, and thought that Dej could be replaced by a collective leadership that would engage in a "regeneration of the socialist system" in Romania. Dej used Constantinescu's uninspired alliance with Iosif Chisinevski--by far the most unpopular party leader--as an argument against this group. According to the official version of the events, it was the factionalists' intention to hamper the healthy course of events adopted by the party. Dej and his supporters demonstrated remarkable acumen in outsmarting Khrushchev and simulating a unique form of de-Stalinization. Indeed, what they wanted was to play for time, to appear unwavering supporters of the Soviet

leader's initiatives in order to fortify their own control over the party and the country.

A feverish campaign to woo the national intelligentsia was thus undertaken after 1960, with Leonte Rautu as its main artisan. At the same time, Ceausescu climbed higher and higher in the hierarchy. It is important to insist on his direct association with Dej between 1956 and 1965, since otherwise his triumph over such powerful adversaries as Gheorghe Apostol and Alexandru Draghici would be simply incomprehensible. For Gheorghiu-Dej, Nicolae Ceausescu was the perfect embodiment of the Stalinist apparatchik. He appeared to Dej as a modest, dedicated, self-effacing, hard-working and profoundly loyal lieutenant. Having successfully dealt with some of the most cumbersome issues that had worried Dej over the years--including the forced collectivization of agriculture, the continuous purges and the harassment of critical intellectuals--the youngest Politburo member maintained a deferential attitude toward the general secretary and other senior Politburo members (Emil Bodnaras and Ion Gheorghe Maurer). Certainly, Ceausescu had criticized Draghici for "indulgence in abuses" and "infringements on socialist legality," but that had occurred during the hectic months which followed the 20th Congress. Dissent, disobedience, and critical thought had never been a temptation for him. On the contrary, his indictment of Miron Constantinescu at the CC Plenum in December 1961 played upon the party's deeply entrenched anti-intellectual prejudices.⁸⁵ Together with the former Comintern

activist Dumitru Coliu (Dimitar Colev), the then Chairman of the Party Control Commission, Ceausescu carefully orchestrated the 1958-60 purge which resulted in the expulsion of thousands of important cadres from the party and had a particularly debilitating effect on the members of the RCP "Old Guard." Unlike Miron Constantinescu, who in private conversation used to deplore Dej's pivotal role in the "Byzantinization" of party life,⁸⁶ it seems that Ceausescu found special pleasure in complying with and cultivating the general secretary's passion for secrecy and intrigue.⁸⁷

The Road to Absolute Power

From his master, Ceausescu had learned the advantages of building up his own power base within the apparatus, a group of middle-rank activists whose careers depended on his personal protection. For years, and especially after 1960, in accordance with his principle of delegating power, Dej had entrusted Ceausescu with direct, daily contacts with and supervision of first secretaries of party regions and other key apparatchiks. Clientelism and patronage had thus functioned as the main means of political advancement at the moment Ceausescu won the succession struggle. It was from among these people that he chose the members of the supportive network which helped him rapidly ensure his supremacy within the power elite. Many among them had graduated from the Moscow High Party School in the mid-fifties (Ilie Verdet, Ion Stanescu, Cornel Onescu, Vasile Patilinet).

Others, like Virgil Trofin, Petre Lupu (Lupu Pressman), Ion Iliescu and Janos Fazekas had belonged to the UTC (Union of Communist Youth) leadership after the war, when Nicolae Ceausescu was responsible for that sector. Among those particularly close to the new general secretary was Petre Lupu, who had been the chief of the Central Committee's Organizational Department between 1955 and 1965. Petre Lupu's deputy, another close ally in Ceausescu's bid for absolute power, was Ilie Verdet. Later Verdet would become Prime Minister and exert a certain influence over the economic policy of the regime in the early 1980s, only to be demoted to less significant positions, and finally degraded to an unequivocally diminished status in 1986.⁸⁸

To sum up, the inner core of the general secretary's new team--what we refer to as the "party apparatus group"--included Maxim Berghianu, Ion Ionita, Petre Lupu, Manea Manescu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Vasile Patilinet, Cornel Onescu, Gheorghe Pana, Ion Stanescu, Virgil Trofin and Ilie Verdet, all party activists who had been in one way or another associated with Ceausescu when he was a secretary in charge of cadres under Gheorghiu-Dej (April 1954-March 1965). In addition to this co-optative method, the Stalinist divisive tactic was also employed. Ceausescu's rise to prominence and his victory over Dej's "barons" (Gheorghe Apostol, Emil Bodnaras, Petre Borila, Chivu Stoica, Alexandru Draghici) were facilitated by divisions within the Politburo and by Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer's conviction that the dynamic new general secretary would not try to interfere with the realm of

foreign policy, supposedly his domain.⁸⁹ As for the line of "national independence" that had been codified in the April 1964 Declaration, it was now attributed to Ceausescu's personal courage and alleged lifelong commitment to patriotic interests.⁹⁰ His nationalistic demagoguery was thus devised to improve the image of the RCP and prevent any attempts at social and economic reform.

From the very outset, Ceausescu made no secret of his hostility toward pluralism; his alleged Titoism consisted of theatrical performances to irritate the Soviet leadership headed by Leonid Brezhnev, but it had no tangible consequences for the Romanian people. Even his much-praised condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 lacked the necessary seriousness that would have enabled Romanian intellectuals to dig deeper into the foundations of the Stalinist system. The elimination of Alexandru Barladeanu, the only convinced and articulate proponent of economic reform within the RCP leadership (1969), resulted in the conservation of the obsolete system of command economy. Nicolae Ceausescu has spared no time in denouncing the advocates of market-oriented socialism, and has faithfully clung to hackneyed Stalinist planning principles. His political rhetoric is impregnated with references to the prevalent role of "objective economic laws," but practically speaking, he encourages the most distressing arbitrariness. Opposition to the Comecon integrationist plans, which under Gheorghiu-Dej was motivated by increasing reliance on economic

exchanges with the West, has been for Ceausescu another device calculated to cement his myth as a resolute partisan of total independence. Never mind that his experiment in autarky, inspired by the dogma that heavy industry plays the preeminent role in economic development, has caused a dramatic decline in Romanian living standards. Instead of following a neo-Titoist option, Ceausescu's obsession with self-reliance has compelled his country to embark on an economically counter-productive, socially disruptive, and culturally disastrous Albanization.

In 1968, with the help of his faithful followers from the "party apparatus group" Ceausescu unleashed a major myth-substitution operation. By exposing Dej's role in the Stalinist atrocities of the 1950s, he fostered his own image as the restorer of legality. Lucretiu Patrascanu was rehabilitated, Alexandru Draghici, the perpetrator, and Gheorghiu-Dej, his inspirer, were lambasted for the misdeeds of the Stalinist period, while Nicolae Ceausescu postured as the incarnation of innocence, whose involvement in the now recognized and deplored crimes was emphatically denied. Some prominent militants were rehabilitated, including Miron Constantinescu, Constantin Doncea, and Dumitru Petrescu, while some victims of the Stalinist terror were proclaimed martyrs of the communist cause (Lucretiu Patrascanu, Stefan Foris, the RCP leaders who perished in the USSR during the Great Purge). Still, the political system in Romania has remained totally unaffected by these measures. On the contrary, what followed has been a continual identification of

the struggle for justice with Ceausescu's presence at the helm of the party, and the emergence of an unprecedented cult of personality which was to reach surreal dimensions after the general secretary's visit to China in 1971. Increasingly convinced that Soviet leaders were plotting his elimination, Ceausescu found the Chinese card tremendously convenient in his razor's edge diplomacy between the two communist giants. Moreover, in Mao's apocalyptic Marxism as well as in the Chinese refusal to put up with Soviet hegemonic ambitions, he discovered affinities, further enhanced by his secret admiration for omnipotent, Pharaoh-like rulers.

Oriental despotism has always been closer to Ceausescu's heart than any form of "enlightened," "critical Marxism."⁹¹ His endorsement of the Prague Spring was motivated by considerations of opposition to the Soviet imperialist designs and nothing was more remote from his objectives than trying to emulate Dubcek's experiment in democratization. He cannot admit even the idea of opposition, and his outraged reaction against Solidarity as well as his cordial relationship with General Jaruzelski are telling in this respect.

The Manipulated Manipulator

The more powerful he has become, the more insecure Ceausescu feels. This explains his whimsical personnel policy. The victim of an insuperable complex of inferiority which governs his political behavior, he seems to relish the public humiliation of

his subordinates. Prime Minister Maurer was forced to resign in 1974 only because Ceausescu wanted to acquire total control over foreign policy. Chief ideologist Paul Niculescu-Mizil, one of Ceausescu's most ardent followers in the late sixties, was deprived not only of his status as a party doctrinaire, but was forced later to relinquish the last part of his family name, reportedly because of Ceausescu's allergy to "aristocratic symbols."⁹² Ludicrous as it may sound, this action indicates the General Secretary's concern with preventing anyone from overshadowing his imperial stature. The members of the Political Executive Committee must be mere executants of the "precious indications" (indicatii pretioase) uttered by the revolutionary oracle. The name of the "national hero" must be ritualistically invoked in all party and state documents. On the occasion of his 70th birthday on January 26, 1988, the party's propaganda machine eulogized the "saintly modesty" of the General Secretary and his "superhuman qualities." In response to Ceausescu's secret aspirations, court poets wish him "eternal life": "His immortality is our (ardent) wish,/And He will live as long as our Earth."⁹³ The mystical odes and panegyrics have become the main substance of the dominant Romanian ideology. Even under Stalin, one saw minicults form around the dictator's loyal lieutenants. In Ceausescu's dynastic experiment, the only beneficiaries of the cult are the conducator and his wife.

Ceausescu's personalist leadership has carried to an extreme the feudal-autocratic features of Stalinism: all power is now

concentrated in the hands of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu, who seem to have established absolute control over all the party and state agencies. Elena's lightning ascent was certainly a response to Ceausescu's increasing lack of confidence in the members of his coterie. Initially described as a mere shadow of her husband, the Romanian first lady now plays a significant role within the Romanian decision-making process. There are indications that Elena is intent upon exceeding the role ascribed to her when she was elected a member of the RCP areopagus under the pretext of enhancing the role of the women in the leadership apparatus.⁹⁴ Romanian media do not tire of glorifying her achievements in the field of science and technology, and together with her loyal supporter, Emil Bobu, she supervises the vital area of cadres appointments. More recently, Elena became the Chairwoman of the National Council for Science and Education, thus acquiring discretionary powers in the realm of culture. She has managed to build a parallel cult of personality to her husband's, and professional party minstrels compete to compose paeans to the "mother of the nation." With regard to her own revolutionary credentials, it is essential to note that Elena, unlike her husband, cannot invoke political trials or years of imprisonment during the underground periods of the RCP. She did not belong to the clandestine Central Committee of the UTC and her credentials are certainly overshadowed by those of most other women of the underground party. The one major event (piously evoked by party historians) that Elena can claim to her credit is

her participation, together with Nicolae, at the anti-war demonstration of May 1, 1939.

It would, perhaps, be far-fetched to assume that disharmony could arise within the presidential marriage, but the spectacular celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Brasov trial (end of May and beginning of June 1986) and Ceausescu's visit to Doftana (September 1986) suggest that the General Secretary feels a need to re-assert his authority and revolutionary legitimacy to any would-be rival, including his wife. To emphasize his pre-eminence in the speech at Doftana, Ceausescu avoided any reference to the real leaders of the party organization which were in the prison and indulged in his usual exercise in self-glorification. Doftana was once again presented as a symbol of the party's heroism and Ceausescu's incarceration there received extensive coverage in a media always ready to enhance the General Secretary's biography.⁹⁵

Under Gheorghiu-Dej and during the first years of Ceausescu's leadership, Elena wittingly kept a low profile. Director of the Institute for Chemical Research (ICECHIM) in Bucharest, she belonged only to local party organizations (the "16 Februarie" raion, and later, after 1965, to the Bucharest party committee). Her alleged scientific titles were granted under Dej by the Polytechnical Institute in Bucharest against the opposition of prominent Romanian chemists like Costin D. Nenitescu. Her relations with Gheorghiu-Dej's daughter, the once all-powerful Lica Gheorghiu-Radoi, were strained and Elena aimed to establish

close connections with wives (or ex-wives) of other members of Dej's Politburo: Stela Moghioros, Natalia Rautu, Ecaterina Micu-Chivu (Klein). Immediately after Ceausescu's coming to power, Elena insisted on granting privileges to some of her personal friends, women who had been active in the communist underground: Stela Moghioros, Ileana Raceanu, Ghizela Vass, Ecaterina Micu-Chivu, Sanda Ranghet, Ana Toma (who was married to Pintilie Bondarenko, the former chief of the political police under Dej), Eugenia Radaceanu (the widow of a leading Social-Democrat fellow traveler, Lothar Radaceanu), Tatiana Bulan (who had been married to Leonte Rautu and Stefan Foris, before her marriage to Iakov Bulan, a Soviet officer who became the rector of the Military Academy in Bucharest in the 1950s), Ofelia Manole, and many others. It was Elena Ceausescu's purpose to set up a constellation of relations to strengthen her authority within the party's "Old Guard." It seems clear now, twenty years later, that this was a well-designed scheme to build authority and power. Since personal elements play such an amazing role in the history of communist sects and regimes, it is perhaps worth noting that Elena deeply disliked Marta Draghici, Alexandru Draghici's wife, whose career in the illegal party was by far more impressive than Mrs. Ceausescu's questionable merits.⁹⁶

While trying to create political prestige, Elena Ceausescu received generous help from Mihail Florescu (Mihail Iacobi), then Minister of Chemical Industry and a former maquis fighter in the French Resistance (Southern zone), in getting a leading position

within Romanian chemical research. At the end of the sixties, all Romanian chemical research institutes were subordinated to Elena's own outfit and she became a member of the Ministry's College (the "collective" leading body). Alexandru Barladeanu's forced retirement to pension in 1969, and the appointment of colorless apparatchiks to supervise scientific and technological research in Romania further favored Elena's rise to the summit of political power. It is almost certain that one day in the future, after the end of the Ceausescu dynasty, party historians will be allowed (and even urged) to describe the conspiracy of the Ceausescu clan to monopolize power in Romania. Elena's takeover of the second-in-command position within the party cannot be dissociated from the politics of permanent aggression waged against the party apparatus by her husband. The more power she has managed to acquire, the more insatiable has been her taste for extravagant luxury, and her appetite for self-assertion and domination. According to reliable sources in Romania, there are people within the party apparatus who dare to mutter about Elena's evil influence on her husband. She is for all intents and purposes considered guilty of the current catastrophe of Romanian economic and social policy.

Assault on the Party Apparatus

Educated in the pure Stalinist tradition, Ceausescu is a hyper-suspicious individual who deeply believes in the magic of political rituals. His cult of personality is designed to make

any attempt to subvert his dictatorship into an "anti-national activity." Party propaganda characterizes Ceausescu as "the nation's shepherd" (in the words of former top ideologue, Dumitru Popescu). A kind of resentful tribalism, with jingoistic undertones, is the differentia specifica of the Romanian regime as compared to other Stalinist tyrannies. The party apparatus has remained the only cohesive social stratum that may oppose Ceausescu's plans to turn Romania into a Third World dictatorship. This is the main reason why the General Secretary has resorted to permanent rotations of cadres, to that perpetual game of musical chairs which makes everyone insecure and fearful. People who have reached a certain amount of popularity among the party rank-and-file (Virgil Trofin, Ilie Verdet, Ion Iliescu, Paul Niculescu-Mizil) have been incrementally marginalized and, when they dared to challenge the Supreme Leader, were severely reprimanded or, as in the case of Trofin, committed suicide. Even such an obedient servant of the dynasty as Cornel Burtica, the former secretary in charge of ideology and a deputy prime minister and by all accounts a pure creation of Ceausescu's, was eventually jettisoned from the Central Committee. The party apparatus in Romania is frightened by the ceaseless presidential showmanship; those who are perfectly aware of the boiling discontent among the masses and know that a new workers' uprising like the one in the Jiu Valley in 1977 or in Brasov in November 1987 can occur at any time, contemplate with anguish the General Secretary's gesticulations. The monumental projects which have

managed to ruin the Romanian economy have to be implemented by people who cannot ignore the possibility of an awakening of the silent majority. Romania is certainly experiencing a dramatic crisis and the party apparatus may want to dissociate itself from the ineptitude of the Ceausescu clan. Sooner or later, fear and exasperation could lead to the rise of a coalition against the ruling clan.

In the meantime Ceausescu, a fine observer of his subordinates' moods, increasingly relies on his wife's counsel and promotes the most servile people to underwrite the eccentric projects of "the most beloved son of the nation." What Seweryn Bialer has aptly called "the spiritual emptiness of the Romanian government" is primarily due to Ceausescu's control over party doctrine.⁹⁷ The totalitarian wedding of ideology and power reached a farcical climax in Ceausescu's enthronement as the honorary President of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, and identification as the most enlightened social thinker of our times.

In their struggle against the vestiges of the old party apparatus, Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu seem to be staking on the ascent to power of their offspring Nicu, a personage whose political beginnings were less than promising, but whose ambitions have been excited by the taste of power. Maybe without Nicolae's acquiescence--he does not think of himself as going downhill--Elena and Nicu are now prepared for a dynastic succession.⁹⁸ From their perspective such a development would be the

only alternative to the breakdown of the clan following the president's demise. At the same time, there are people within the highest echelons who certainly would oppose such a succession. These include the former Foreign Affairs Minister Stefan Andrei and his close ally Cornel Pacoste, now a deputy prime minister who, while First Secretary of the Timis Party Committee, strove to ingratiate himself with the intellectuals in Timisoara. Other possible candidates for the General Secretary's mantle, though with the handicap of poor health, could be General Ion Coman, now a secretary of the CC, who, like Nicolae Ceausescu himself graduated from the Frunze Academy in Moscow, or General Constantin Olteanu, the recently appointed CC secretary in charge of ideology.⁹⁹ Such a variant may fit the Soviet requirements for a drastic solution to Romanian troubles. It does seem clear that the party apparatus will not easily accept the Kronprinz's coming to power. Even people like Ion Traian Stefanescu, the former UTC First Secretary, or Pantelimon Gavanescu, Stefanescu's successor and Nicu's predecessor as head of the Communist Youth organization, both of them now CC members, will hasten to separate themselves from the Ceausescu clan. Gratitude is not de bon ton in Communist circles and these people have learned something from the fate of the "Gang of Four" in China.

The "Romanian ideology," or Ceausescuism, will not outlive its main driving force. Delusions of feudal splendor and the Byzantine cult of personality cannot be forever opposed to the challenges of modernization. Ceausescu's endeavor to eternalize

his glory through violent onslaughts on nature and society will certainly be remembered by future generations as one of the most bitter pages in Romanian history. He is not, however, solely responsible for the current tragedy: Thousands of Stalinist militants prepared his coming to power through their belief that a vanguard party should reshape the destiny of a country and nation. Years ago, probably unaware of the terrible truth he was uttering, Bellu Silber, one of Lucretiu Patrascanu's close friends and a defiant intellectual who was to pay for his candor and decency in Dej's jails, made a gloomy prediction: "Socialism in Romania will bear the seal of two combined geniuses: Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin and Ion Luca Caragiale." Caragiale, a famous Romanian playwright of the 19th century, was a main source of inspiration for Eugene Ionesco's absurdism. It took the pathology of Stalinism, the vaudeville of clientelism, nepotism and dynasticism, the cynical cronyism of the last twenty years, to turn this prediction into an unbearable national tragicomedy.

NOTES

1. See Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in Robert C. Tucker, The Marx-Engels Reader (New York and London: Norton, 1978), p. 23.
2. For an accurate description of the dismal situation in that country, see Daniel Chirot, "Romania: Ceausescu's Last Folly," Dissent (Summer, 1988), pp. 271-275.
3. Years ago, the novelist Alexandru Ivasiuc, who died during the earthquake in March 1977, gave a succinct and most disquieting description of the surreal relation between the conducator and Romanian society: "We are 22 million people who live in the imagination of a madman." With their unique sense of gallows humor, Romanians call the capital city of Bucharest, disfigured in accordance with the presidential architectural tastes, "Ceauschwitz," "Ceaushima," or "Paranopolis."
4. According to Robert C. Tucker, "transformism" was a prominent tendency of Soviet thought during the last years of Stalin's reign. It consisted of "the quest for formulas by which reality could be transformed and remolded to the dictates of the Soviet regime." See Robert C. Tucker, The Soviet Political Mind: Studies in Stalinism and Post-Stalin Change (New York; Praeger, 1963), p. 92.
5. Writing in 1968, the late Georges Haupt, an authority on the history of international socialism and one of the few party "revisionists" in Bucharest in 1956, sought a political history that would explain the nature and the dynamics of Romanian communism and would rely as much on open sources as on the immense volume of unpublished documents and personal information provided by some of the "actors" themselves. See Georges Haupt, "La genese du conflit sovieto-roumain," Revue Francaise de Science Politique 18:4 (August, 1968), p. 670. Since Haupt wrote this path-breaking study, several books on Romania have come out, but only a few focusing on communist history per se: Robert R. King, A History of the Romanian Communist Party (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980). Victor Frunza's Istoria Partidului Comunist Roman, Volume 1 (Arhus: Editura Nord, 1984) enriches our anecdotal knowledge about personalities and events, but fails to offer a comprehensive socio-political and intellectual framework to understand the tortuous course of RCP history. For the time being, therefore, Ghita Ionescu's Communism in Romania: 1944-1962 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) remains the unsurpassed analysis of the pre-Ceausescu RCP. For a recent study of Ceausescuism, see William E. Crowther, The Political Economy of Romanian Socialism (New York: Praeger, 1988).

6. See T. H. Rigby and Ferenc Feher, Political Legitimation in Communist States (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982).
7. The celebration of Martin Luther as a "progressive" personality and rehabilitation of Prussian militaristic traditions in the GDR seems to have helped Erich Honecker instill a sense of East German identity among the population. See A. James McAdams, East Germany and Detente: Building Authority after the Wall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 189. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that Albania and North Korea were the first to use national Stalinism to preserve a power elite jeopardized by Moscow-backed reformism. For an illuminating discussion of the ideological and motivational similarities between Romanian and North Korean domesticist strategies, see Kenneth Jowitt, Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania, 1944-1965 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 175-179. In 1963 and 1964, RCP CC secretary and Politburo member Nicolae Ceausescu accompanied Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer in his missions to China and North Korea. "It is likely that Ceausescu was particularly impressed with Kim Il-sung's criticism of Khrushchevism. Romania was also the only Warsaw Pact country which maintained for a long time party-to-party relations with Albanian communists and refused to propagandize against Enver Hoxha. Hoxha, however, did not reciprocate and stigmatized Ceausescu as a notorious "revisionist" because of his cordial relations with the West. A comparative analysis would probably show an interesting common pattern in the "nationalization" of communist elites from agrarian, backward countries, particularly those with a memory of humiliating treatment by the Comintern. For the nature of power in Enver Hoxha's "tribalist dictatorship," see Arshi Pipa, "The Political Culture of Hoxha's Albania," in Tariq Ali, ed., The Stalinist Legacy: Its Impact on Twentieth-Century World Politics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 434-464.
8. For a provocative analysis of the national-communist strategy, see Mihai Botez, "East European Intellectuals and the National-Communist State: The View from Bucharest," The World & I (March, 1988), pp. 675-685. Botez, a leading Romanian scholar and human rights activist, presented this paper at the conference "Will the Communist States Survive: The View from Within," organized by the Foreign Policy Research Institute in New York in October 1987.
9. For the fate of Marxism in Soviet-type regimes see Leszek Kolakowski, Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origin, Growth and Dissolution, Vol 1: The Breakdown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Ferenc Feher, Agnes Heller, Geörgy Markus, Dictatorship over Needs (New York: St. Martin's

- Press, 1983), especially the chapter "Ideology, Dogma, Culture," pp. 187-204; Vladimir Tismaneanu, The Crisis of Marxist Ideology in Eastern Europe: The Poverty of Utopia (London and New York: Routledge, 1988).
10. For Romania's rebellion against Khrushchevism, rather than against the USSR, see Helene Carrere d'Encausse, Big Brother: The Soviet Union and Soviet Europe (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1987), pp. 162-166. As Mme. Carrere d'Encausse rightly notices, the rebellion against Soviet hegemonism allowed the unrepentant Stalinists at the helm of the RCP to preclude any intellectual and political "thaw."
 11. For a perceptive approach to the evolution of the Romanian communist political culture, especially before the post-1971 neo-Stalinist radicalization, see Jowitt, Revolutionary Breakthroughs. For Ceausescu's attempt to elaborate a Romanian concept of socialism--the "multi-laterally developed socialist society"--see "Programul Partidului Comunist Roman de faurire a societatii socialiste multilateral dezvoltate si inaintare a Romaniei spre comunism," in Congresul al XI-lea al Partidului Comunist Roman (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1975), pp. 614-749; Trond Gilberg, "The Communist Party of Romania," in Stephen Fischer-Galati, ed., The Communist Parties of Eastern Europe (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 280-325.
 12. See Kenneth Jowitt's provocative contribution, "Moscow 'Centre'," Eastern European Politics and Societies 1:3 (Fall 1987), pp. 296-348.
 13. See Declaratia Partidului Muncitoresc Roman in problemele miscarii comuniste si muncitoresti internationale (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1964).
 14. See J. F. Brown, The New Eastern Europe: The Khrushchev Era and After (New York: Praeger, 1966), pp. 202-211.
 15. With regard to Gheorghiu-Dej's ability to outmaneuver Khrushchev in the aftermath of the CPSU 20th Congress, the best analysis remains Haupt's essay "La genese."
 16. For the relationship between Soviet de-Stalinization and East European attempts at de-satellization see Michael Shafir, "Eastern Europe," in Martin McCauley, ed., Khrushchev and Khrushchevism (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 156-179.
 17. Regardless of Dej's personal involvement in the Cominform's anti-Yugoslav campaign, Tito welcomed Romania's autonomist course and cooperated closely with the RCP leader. These contacts have intensified under Ceausescu, who has tried to

emulate Tito's non-aligned foreign policy. The political cultures of Yugoslav and Romanian communisms explain the basic distinctions between Tito's and Ceausescu's strategies of de-Sovietization. See Ronald H. Linden, Communist States and International Change: Romania and Yugoslavia in Comparative Perspective (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

18. "...the political conception of the Communist Party and the Romanian socialist state, of the RCP general secretary and President of the Socialist Republic of Romania, Nicolae Ceausescu, prominent political and statesman, a remarkable personality of the international political life.... The Ceausescu Doctrine is a brilliant example of the aptitude to apply Marxist theory and practice as well as the noble virtues of the Romanian people in the building of a better and more just world." These are the introductory and concluding sentences of the entry (the longest in the entire book) on the "Ceausescu Doctrine" in Ovidiu Trasnea and Nicolae Kallos, coordinators, Mica Enciclopedie de politologie (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1977), pp. 136-145.
19. See Shafir, Romania, p. 68.
20. See Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Miron Constantinescu or the Impossible Heresy," Survey 28:4 (Winter 1984), pp. 175-187.
21. With regard to the origins, nature, and dynamics of Romanian communism, see Ionescu, Communism in Romania; King, A History; Frunza, Istoria Partidului. I tried to explore the peculiar features of the Stalinist heritage within the Romanian Communist Party in my studies "The Ambiguity of Romanian National Communism," Telos, No. 60 (Summer 1984), pp. 65-79 and "Ceausescu's Socialism," Problems of Communism (January-February, 1985), pp. 50-66.
22. During World War I, Rakovsky (1873-1941) took an internationalist position and joined the Zimmerwald Left. Arrested in Romania, he was freed by Russian troops and joined the Bolshevik Party in December 1917. In March 1918 he became prime minister of the Ukrainian Soviet government. Rakovsky represented the Balkan revolutionary federation to the founding congress of the Third International. Later, he joined Trotsky's Left opposition, was expelled from the party, deported, and eventually was tried together with Rykov and Bukharin in the third Moscow show trial in March 1938. See Branko Lazitch in collaboration with Milorad Drachkovitch, Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern: New, Revised, and Expanded Edition (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1986), pp. 383-384.
23. For the attempts to emphasize the national credentials of the

- current RCP leadership in contrast to the interwar, pro-Soviet orientation, see the volume In slujba cercetarii marxiste a istoriei P.C.R. published by the Party's Institute for Historical and Social-Political Studies (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1971).
24. Most of the RCP "old timers" I had the opportunity to talk to agreed that the party's membership before August 23, 1944 was actually under 1,000.
 25. In a book written in 1941, Lucretiu Patrascanu tried to offer a Marxist interpretation of the disintegration of Romania's democratic system and the ascent of the Iron Guard. Holding a strictly economic conception, he failed to give adequate attention to the characteristics of the national political culture. On the other hand, Patrascanu's analysis does not point out the counterproductive strategy of the RCP after the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, which involved accepting the Comintern directives (1940) and welcoming the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. See Lucretiu Patrascanu, Sub trei dictaturi (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1970).
 26. See Mircea Eliade, Memoire II: Les Moissons du solstice (Paris: Gallimard, 1988). For a superbly documented study of the Romanian stage in Mircea Eliade's intellectual trajectory, see Mac Linscott Ricketts, Mircea Eliade: The Romanian Roots, 1907-1945 (Boulder: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1988), 2 volumes.
 27. Document quoted from the archive of the Central Committee of the RCP, in Mircea Musat and Ion Ardeleanu, Romania dupa Marea Unire, Vol. II, Part I (Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica si Enciclopedica, 1986), p. 593.
 28. In 1928 Lukacs challenged the Comintern's orthodoxy with his "Blum Theses" on the "democratic dictatorship" of the proletariat and peasantry as a transitional stage leading to the dictatorship of the proletariat. See Kolakowski, Breakdown, pp. 261-262.
 29. Musat and Ardeleanu, Romania, p. 594.
 30. The resolution is fully reproduced in Musat and Ardeleanu, Romania, pp. 607-608. When Lucretiu Patrascanu (nom de guerre Mironov) dared to challenge this aberrant definition of Moldavian as a nationality different from Romanian, Bohumil Smeral accused him of ignoring the Comintern's guidelines and potential "right-wing opportunism." See Musat and Ardeleanu, Romania, p. 609,

31. Vitali Holostenko had been a delegate from Bessarabia to the First RCP Congress in May 1921. Arrested in Iasi in March 1921 he was released in June 1922, went to the Soviet Union and became a member of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian CP and a Comintern activist. Holostenko's "election"--in fact a Comintern decision--consecrated the purge of the real or potential recalcitrants from the highest echelons. The whole party leadership was thus removed and replaced with militants without political authority among the party's rank and file.
32. See Nicolae Ceausescu, Romania pe drumul desavirsirii constructiei socialiste (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1968), pp. 357-358. Ceausescu's criticism of the Comintern's treatment of the RCP has become a major theme of his anti-Soviet propaganda. No Communist Party could boast of preferential status in Moscow's eyes, but the RCP seems to have garnered Soviet distrust. How else can we explain the fact that the RCP was the only European party which was "honored" to have two general secretaries recruited from "brotherly" Comintern sections, one of them (Alexander Stefanski) hardly able to speak or to read Romanian? In what other party did the Politburo members communicate between themselves in a foreign language?
33. See Musat and Ardeleanu, Romania, p. 616.
34. Among the RCP activists there were a few who could not easily digest the Comintern's anti-Romanian nationality rhetoric. But, as loyal Leninists, they did not challenge the hierarchical command structure and preferred to refrain from open criticism of the doctrine of Romania as a "multi-national, imperialist" state. Victor Frunza reads the whole interwar RCP history as a tension between an internal versus an external (exiled) party. The former, in turn, was divided between the prison faction and the underground home leadership. In my view, the RCP was faction-ridden, but in terms of basic allegiance to Moscow it was indefectibly monolithic. According to Frunza the leaders of the internal party were activists like Gheorghe Stoica (Moscu Kohn), Stefan Foris, Lucretiu Patrascanu et al. who had all lived in Moscow for longer or shorter periods of time. See Frunza, Istoria Partidului, p. 43. Contrary to the official Bucharest line, the RCP was entirely committed to implementing the Comintern directives, even when those blatantly contradicted Romanian national interests.
35. Born in 1901 into a well-off jewish family and a lawyer by profession, Marcel Pauker was a founding member of the RCP and a leading militant until 1930. Between 1925 and 1928, he represented the RCP in the Comintern. At the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in August 1928, Pauker was elected member of

its executive committee under the pseudonym Popescu. He played a leading role in the factional struggles within the RCP under the name Luximin. Following the Comintern's September 1930 Resolution on the "unprincipled factional struggle and on the revival of the Communist Party in Romania" and the defeat of his "leftist" opposition, Pauker emigrated to the Soviet Union. He was arrested in 1936 as a member of "Trotskyite-Zinovevite Center" and was executed without a trial in 1937. Vladimir and Tania, Ana Pauker's children from Luximin, benefited from the mother's international image--she was then jailed in Romania and escaped the tragic fate reserved for the offspring of the "enemies of the people." They survived in a children's house near Moscow: Vladimir is now an engineer in France and Tania, married Bratescu, is a Russian teacher in a Bucharest high school. Ana Pauker had another daughter, Marie, born in France when she was acting as a Comintern instructor (1931-33). According to reliable sources, Marie's father was the Czechoslovak militant Eugen Fried, the Comintern's chief advisor at the Central Committee of the French CP. Marie (Masha) Pauker emigrated from Romania in the mid-1960s and lives now in Paris. For biographical details on the Pauker couple, see Lazitch and Drachkovitch, Biographical Dictionary, pp. 353-355; Ionescu, Communism in Romania, p. 355. I had myself the chance to meet some members of the Pauker family and discuss Ana's attitude toward her late husband, particularly after her return to Moscow in 1940. It appears that in personal conversations, she refrained from any criticism of Luximin; she did not consider changing her name or that of her children; after she came back to Romania in September 1944, Luximin's sister was invited to live in her house and this thing could not have passed unnoticed to Soviet advisors in Bucharest.

36. See Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, 30 de ani de lupta a partidului sub steagul lui Lenin si Stalin (Bucuresti: Editura PMR, 1952).
37. See Ionescu, Communism in Romania, pp. 41-46.
38. For extensive excerpts of the proceedings of the Fifth Congress, see Musat and Ardeleanu, Romania, pp. 624-641. As prominent members of Ceausescu's historiographic team, the authors emphasize the contrast between the absurd tenets espoused by the RCP leadership ("Romania as a colonialist, predatory power") and the "realistic" views held by the "healthy," working-class rank and file in Romania.
39. For the Bolshevik militaristic model, see Robert V. Daniels, Is Russia Reformable? Change and Resistance from Stalin to Gorbachev (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), pp. 19-38.

40. After the war, Goldberger was the secretary of the RCP Committee of Northern Transylvania. In 1948, he became a chief of sector in the Agitprop Department, but in the 1950s, he was charged with "anti-Sovietism" and demoted to director of the "Janos Herbak" shoe factory in Cluj. After 1956 until his death in the mid 1970s, he served as deputy director of the RCP Institute for Historical and Social Political Studies. Thanks to Nicolae Ceausescu's support, the Ninth Congress (July 1965) reelected him (after three decades) to the Central Committee. His wife, Fanny, was the head of the CC Chancellery in the 1950s and later served as personal secretary to Politburo member and deputy prime minister Petre Borila.
41. This assessment is based on my personal interviews with Vanda Nicolski and other direct participants in the Fifth Congress. They were convinced that Stefanski's election to the helm of the RCP contributed to the party's rejuvenation and improved its relations with the International. Stefanski had a major role in the elaboration of a political platform which allowed the RCP to spearhead the railway workers' strike from the "Grivita" workshop in Bucharest in February 1933, one of very few mass actions inspired by the communists. Though barely speaking Romanian, Stefanski benefited from his intimate relationship with Elena Filipovici (1903-37) who, under the pseudonym Maria Ciobanu, was the deputy general secretary. Lucretiu Patrascanu was also closely linked to the Polish RCP leader.
42. It is interesting that none of the members of this home Secretariat perished during the Great Purge. Most of them, like Lucretiu Patrascanu, Bela Breiner, and Alexandru Sencovici were in Romania, whereas Gheorghe Stoica was a political commissar with the International Brigades in Spain.
43. The delegation included as members with deliberative vote Nicolae Goldberger, Vanda Nicolski, Marcel Pauker, as well as N. Dubinski and Manea Ehrlich, as members with consultative vote. See Frunza, Istoria Partidului, p. 40.
44. Just one example: when my mother left Bucharest in 1937 to work as a nurse for the International Brigades in Spain, she was asked by her superior party liaison to announce to comrades there that "eventually we will have a Romanian general secretary," i.e., Boris Stefanov.
45. In his history of the RCP, Victor Frunza lists Boris Stefanov among the victims of the Great Purge in the USSR. See Frunza, Istoria Partidului, p. 231. The truth is that thanks to his close connections with Gheorghe Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov, the influential Bulgarian leaders of the Comintern, Stefanov escaped this fate and remained the official general

secretary of the RCP until his replacement by Stefan Foris in 1940. Indeed he witnessed the almost complete extermination of the RCP's Old Guard without trying to defend his comrades harassed by the NKVD. In May 1939, when my parents arrived in the Soviet Union after the end of the Spanish Civil war, Stefanov received them in his capacity of RCP general secretary and refrained from any remark about the fate of Romanian communists during the Terror. In the fall of 1939, however, Stefan Foris visited Moscow and held conversations with Dimitrov and Manulski on the restructuring of the RCP leadership. Stefanov's demotion was ostensibly provoked by an article he published in the Communist International (December 1939) in which he tried to draw lessons for the RCP from the recently concluded Nazi-Soviet Pact. His unforgivable blunder consisted of publicly urging Romanian communists to return to the old tenet of the struggle for Bessarabia's "self-determination," i.e., its annexation by the USSR. Even more disturbing, he advocated Romania's alliance with the USSR against the British and French "imperialist warmongers." The Soviet Narkomindel (Foreign Ministry) officially denied the view that Stefanov represented the position of the Soviet government. See Ionescu, Communism in Romania, p. 59, and Drachkovitch and Lazitch, Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern, p. 445. After that incident, Stefanov ceased to have any influence within the party he had led for five years and to which he had belonged for almost two decades. During the war Stefanov continued to work within the Comintern, then he joined Bulgarian exiled communists and returned to Bulgaria where he became a minor party activist. In the 1950s, he visited Romania and expressed the wish to be received by Gheorghiu-Dej, but the request was denied.

46. Born on November 8, 1901, Dej joined the RCP at a relatively late age in 1931. Together with other militants (Vasile Bigu, Constantin Doncea, Dumitru Petrescu, Gheorghe Vasilichi) he organized the workers' strikes in January-February 1933. Sentenced to a ten-year prison term, he became the acting leader of the "prison group" while jailed first at the Doftana Penitentiary and later, in the Tirgu-jiu concentration camp (1940-44). In the mid-1930s, the RCP helped Doncea, Petrescu, and Vasilichi to escape from prison. It seems that Dej could never forgive this dismissive treatment on the part of the underground leadership and its Moscow protectors. Elected in absentia a member of the Central Committee, Dej consolidated his authority within the party organization of the prisons ("the center of the prisons") with the help of a group of Soviet agents imprisoned in Romania (Pintilie Bondarenko-Pantiusa, Sergey Nikonov-Nicolau, Ivan Goncharuk, Vasile Bucikov, etc.). Between 1941 and 1944, the "prison center," which controlled all the communist networks in Romanian jails and camps,

including those in Transnistria, engaged in a desperate struggle with the underground Central Committee headed by Stefan Foris. In an operation similar to the internecine struggles within the clandestine Polish CP, Foris was eventually ousted in April 1944 and executed in 1946. After his escape from Tirgu-jiu (August 1944) Gheorghiu-Dej became the de facto leader of the RCP, until his official election as a general secretary at the national Conference in October 1945. Between 1944 and 1952, the RCP experienced a "duality of power" with Dej and his domestic faction, which shared control over the party with the Muscovites headed by Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca. From the early 1940s until Dej's death in 1965, Nicolae Ceausescu was his most faithful follower. Dej's political biography--interspersed with plots, purges, and skillful manipulations--remains to be written. For revealing information on this obscure period in the history of Romanian communism, I am indebted to Mircea Oprisan, a former RCP militant and a high government official until 1974, now residing in Canada, as well as to a number of confidential sources.

47. RCP general secretary between 1940 and 1944, Foris faithfully executed the Comintern's directives, including those bound to weaken and destabilize his own party. During the war, he was accused by the "center of the prisons" headed by Dej of having sabotaged the organization of partisan warfare in Romania after June 1941. As the conflict with Dej's group intensified, both Foris and his adversaries were flooding the Comintern with mutually incriminating reports, usually channeled through the Soviet consulate in Varna. After his arrest by a special RCP commando unit, Foris was held in secret residence until his savage assassination in 1946 by the Soviet chief agent in Romania, Pintilie Bodnarenko. The decision to kill him without trial was signed by the then hegemonic RCP foursome, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca, and Teohari Georgescu. Foris's mother was drowned with millstones hung on her neck in the Cris river and his wife, Victoria Sirbu, spent fifteen years in Dej's prisons. The April 1968 Plenum rehabilitated Foris without totally clarifying the exact circumstances of his political and physical elimination. In Nicolae Ceausescu's presence, at the Bucharest party aktiv meeting following that Plenum, Victoria Foris delivered a heartbreaking speech mentioning the names of the main culprits in her husband's murder, including Teohari Georgescu, another participant in the gathering, but her plea for justice was not published. A whole issue of the monthly journal Magazin istoric containing an article on Foris was withdrawn and pulped in 1969. Foris' daughter, who lives in Bucharest and receives a "personal pension," could never mentally recover after the traumatic experiences of the '40s and '50s.

48. Throughout the years, I interviewed Romanian survivors of the Comintern's purge in the late 1930s who continued to regard Stalin and the USSR as the only source of hope in the anti-Fascist struggle. Their rationalizations were based on the assumption that initially the purge had a necessary character. Second, they had all been marked by the mechanism of terror. Few parties were more tragically bedeviled by personal resentments and mutual denunciations than the RCP. An example: in July 1968 while in Leipzig I met Basil Spiru (Erich Kutschnecker), one of the founders of the RCP. In the 1930s, Spiru had been a member of the RCP delegation to the Comintern, then he headed Radio Moscow's Romanian Department until Walter Ulbricht recruited him to work with German POWs in the USSR (1942-45). After the war, Spiru settled in East Germany where he taught the history of international communism at the "Karl Marx" University in Leipzig. When I mentioned to him the recent rehabilitation by Nicolae Ceausescu of Elena Filipovici (April 1968), Spiru commented sardonically: "Yes, she was shot, but only after she had given (to the NKVD) so many people." Back in Bucharest, I was shocked to learn from another RCP old-timer that Spiru himself had been instrumental in fomenting the charges against Elena Filipovici and other exiled militants. In this Borgesian story of unexpiated crimes nobody could really claim innocence, least of all those who, openly or covertly, had eased the murderous tasks of the "organs."
49. See J. V. Stalin, On the Opposition (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1974), p. 811.
50. The daughter of the well-known socialist militant Zamfir Arbore, she was expelled from Romania in 1924 and, as a physician, held important offices in the health system of the Soviet Ukraine before her arrest and execution in 1937. See Frunza, Istoria Partidului, pp. 89-90.
51. Born in 1879, Alexandru (Sasha) Dobrogeanu-Gherea was the son of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, the patriarch of Romanian socialism. He was elected a socialist deputy in 1919. In November 1920 he went to Moscow with a Romanian delegation and met Lenin. A founding member of the RCP, he joined Marcel Pauker's left-wing faction. Arrested by the Romanian police in 1928, he was freed in 1929 after a hunger strike. In 1932 he emigrated to the USSR where he was arrested in 1936 and died in 1938. He was rehabilitated by the RCP Central Committee Plenum in April 1968.
52. Elek Kőblös (1887-1937) started his revolutionary career as a communist militant in 1918 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, then after 1919, was active in the Romanian woodworkers' union and was a delegate to the founding congress of the RCP. In August 1924, the Third RCP Congress held in Vienna elected

Köblös RCP general secretary. In 1925, after the RCP was banned, he advocated the strategy of a front bloc to allow the RCP to remain politically active. Criticized at the Fourth Congress in 1928, Köblös was condemned in December 1929 by both the Russian CP Central Committee and the Comintern and was forbidden to take part in political work in the RCP. It seems that in private conversations with other members of the Romanian exiled community in the Soviet Union, he expressed criticism of the Stalinist repressive course. Most of the historical leaders of Romanian communism collaborated in the early 1930s with the Soviet Foreign Languages Press in the translation of basic Marxist literature into Romanian. In addition, their association with Rakovsky certainly played a major role in arousing Soviet suspicions about the Romanians' "Trotskyite" leanings. See Lazitch and Drachkovitch, Biographical Dictionary of the Comintern, pp. 219-220; M. C. Stanescu and L. Gergely, Elek Köblös (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1978). The monographs published by the Romanian Institute for Historical and Social-Political Studies do not highlight the details of the destruction of the RCP elite during the Great Purge. It can only be hoped that the recent promises about opening the Comintern archives to historians would also provide more information about one of the most unsettling "blank spots" in Soviet-Romanian relations.

53. Patrascanu's attempt to delineate an original political program in his book Problemele de baza ale Romaniei (Bucuresti: Editura Partidului Comunist Roman, 1946), may have been one of the sources of Gheorghiu-Dej's animosity toward him. Dej and Ana Pauker knew all too well that political strategies for the "people's democracies" were to be dictated by Stalin and that theoretical inventiveness was therefore a most adventurous temptation. The endeavor to define a "Polish way to socialism" was indeed one of the major errors attributed to Gomulka after his removal from the Polish party leadership in 1949. For the Romanian Stalinists, Patrascanu's theoretical studies were an indication of subversive propensities. Leonte Rautu took great care to incriminate Patrascanu's texts in his notorious speech against "cosmopolitanism and objectivism in social sciences" in 1949, when the straitjacket of Zhdanovism was imposed on Romanian culture. The issue of the Sovietization of Romanian culture and Rautu's role in the anti-intellectual campaigns are currently a matter of interest for this author. For the purge patterns in Eastern Europe and the elimination of "national Communists", see Zbigniew Brzezinski, The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 91-97.
54. Codified at the Fifth Congress, the RCP's anti-Gherism originated in the communists' discontent with Dobrogeanu-

Gherea's reformist outlook. In 1951, in his speech on the 30th anniversary of the RCP, general secretary Gheorghiu-Dej reiterated the strong condemnation of Gherea's "right-wing opportunism." This was the official party line regarding its most brilliant forerunner until Nicolae Ceausescu's speech in May 1966 on the 45th anniversary of the RCP, when Dej's successor admitted that "with all its shortcomings and limits, Dobrogeanu-Gherea's work has a great significance in the history of social sciences in Romania, in the dissemination of Marxist ideas, and the development of the revolutionary conception of the proletariat." See "Partidul Comunist Roman--Continuator al luptei revolutionare si democratice a poporului roman, al traditiilor miscarii muncitoresti si socialiste din Romania," in Nicolae Ceausescu, Opere alese, Vol. 1 (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1982), p. 153. The process of recuperation of Gherea's theoretical legacy by the ideologues of the Ceausescu regime is worth a detailed examination.

55. For Goldman, see Robert A. Gorman, ed., Biographical Dictionary of Neo-Marxism (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 169-171; Mitchell Cohen, "The Concept of Community in the Thought of Lucien Goldman," Praxis International 6:2 (July 1986), pp. 220-234. While a law student in Bucharest, Goldman was involved in the heated political and theoretical discussions organized by the communists at the "Schuler" Jewish dormitory. It was there that he became friends with Miron Constantinescu, then a sociology student interested in Hegelian-Marxism, social philosophy, and radical politics. There is no better account of the intellectual diversity in the Bucharest of the 1930s than Eugene Ionesco's volume Nu, initially published in Bucharest in 1934. See Eugene Ionesco, Non (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).
56. See Lucretiu Patrascanu, Sub trei dictaturi (Bucuresti: Editura politica, 1970).
57. Nicolae Ceausescu joined the National Anti-Fascist Committee in 1934, shortly before its dissolution. Though the Committee's impact on the country's political life was negligible, after Ceausescu's coming to power the official historiography has presented it as the driving force of the national anti-fascist resistance movement.
58. Indeed, the Romanian battalion in the Spanish International Brigade was called "Ana Pauker." To express their admiration for the most celebrated figure of Romanian communism, many RCP leaders gave her name to their daughters (Miron Constantinescu, Chivu Stoica, Leonte Rautu, Leontin Salajan, etc.).
59. The Democratic Student Front was created in 1936 to counter

the advance of the Iron Guard in Romanian universities. Its president was Gheorghe (Gogu) Radulescu, now a member of the Permanent Bureau of the Political Executive Committee and Vice President of the State Council.

60. The Jewish presence in East and Central European radical left political movements admits sociological, psychological and moral explanations. It is one of the most complex human phenomena of the modern times which is still waiting for a thorough and uninhibited examination. For a tentative approach, see Jerry Z. Muller, "Communism, Anti-Semitism & the Jews," Commentary (August, 1988), pp. 28-39.
61. See Ewa Czarnecka and Aleksander Fiut, Conversations with Czeslaw Milosz (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), p. 159.
62. According to Ghita Ionescu, the RCP recruited 600 volunteers and led regiments, companies, and batteries in the International Brigades. See Ionescu, Communism in Romania, p. 53. The organizers of the recruiting operations included Leonte Rautu, Mihail Florescu, and Gheorghe Radulescu in Romania, and Gheorghe Vasilichi, and Alexandru Buican (Arnoldi) in France. Prominent Romanian communists who were active in the International Brigades included Petre Borila, Constantin Doncea, Minea Stan, Gheorghe Stoica, Valter Roman, Mihail Boico, Julien Botos, Grigore Naum, Mihail Burca, Manole H. Manole, Mihail Patriciu, Pavel Cristescu, Mihail Florescu, Carol Neumann, and Basil Serban. Professor Ionescu writes that G. Katowski was Valter Roman's pseudonym. In fact, Valter Roman was the pseudonym adopted by Ernst Neulander, a militant of Hungarian-Jewish background born in Oradea who was to play an important role in post-war Romanian history, first as Chief of Staff of the Romanian Army and Minister of Telecommunications, then as a major candidate for a show trial designed to purge the CP of "Titoists" and "agents of Western powers." Rehabilitated after 1953, Roman was the director of the Political Publishing House and a member of the CC until his death in 1983. Grigore Cotovschi, a Jewish militant from Bessarabia, fought with the International Brigades, spent the war years in the USSR, then returned to Romania where he worked in the propaganda apparatus until his expulsion from the party in 1958.
63. See the entry on Nicolae Ceausescu in Mic Dictionar Enciclopedic, p. 1178.
64. See Nicolae Ceausescu's speech at the Doftana Museum (former prison for communists), during his visit to Prahova County, Scinteia, September 26, 1986. For an English translation, see FBIS, Eastern Europe: Romania (October 2, 1986), pp. H5-6.

65. They were all rewarded with important party and state positions especially after the elimination of the Pauker-Luca-Georgescu group in 1952. At the time of Dej's death in 1965, Apostol, Ceausescu, Draghici, and Moghioros were all full members of the Romanian Workers Party CC Politburo.
66. Born in 1905 at Balti, Bessarabia, Iosif Chisinevschi (Roitman) was widely considered as the NKVD's man within the RCP. He graduated from the Leninist School in Moscow in the early 1930s, then became a leader of the Bucharest Party organization and cooperated with Foris and Rautu in the Agitprop. He spent the war years in the Tirgu-jiu concentration camp, unlike most of the Jewish communists who were deported to Transnistria. Closely linked to Lavrenty Beria, Stalin's police chief, Chisinevschi became after the war a kind of eminence grise within the RCP supervising cadres and ideological affairs. Together with Dej he masterminded the Pauker-Luca affair and organized Lucretiu Patrascanu's show trial in April 1954. Chisinevschi lost all party and government position in June 1957 under the accusation of having engaged, together with Miron Constantinescu, in fractionist activities, and died of cancer in 1963. Unlike Constantinescu, he was not rehabilitated by Ceausescu in 1968. Leonte Rautu, born at Balti in 1910, enrolled at the University of Bucharest (Faculty of Mathematics) in the early 1930s, but never graduated because of frequent arrests for communist activities. After the Soviet Union annexed Bessarabia in 1940, Rautu followed the RCP's directive for Bessarabian activists to emigrate ("repatriate") to the USSR and joined the Moscow RCP exiled center. Between 1942 and 1945 he headed Radio Moscow's Romanian section and adopted Soviet citizenship. After the war he presided over the Sovietization of the Romanian culture, conspired together with Dej and Chisinevschi against Ana Pauker, his initial protector, then with Dej against Chisinevschi, until he became the absolute czar of Romanian intellectual life during Dej's last years (1957-65). A self-styled disciple of the Soviet propaganda boss Mikhail Suslov, Rautu has learned to change his beliefs in accordance to the party's latest about-face. He was removed from the Political Executive Committee in 1981 because of his daughter's decision to emigrate to the US, but has maintained good relations with Nicolae Ceausescu who appointed him a permanent collaborator of the RCP Institute for Historical and Social-Political Studies.
67. For extensive quotations from those Comintern Directives, see Nicolae Ceausescu's speech on the 45th anniversary of the RCP, in Nicolae Ceausescu, Opere alese, Vol. 1, p. 177.
68. See Deutscher's essay "The Tragedy of the Polish Communist

Party," in his book Marxism, Wars and Revolutions (London: Verso, 1948), pp. 91-127. Deutscher convincingly described the mechanisms of utopian internationalism and the nefarious effects of the mythology of unconditional solidarity with the USSR: "What was decisive, however, was the Party's psychological attitude--its misguided conception of solidarity with the Russian Revolution, its belief that any conflict with Moscow must be avoided, no matter at what cost. The moral authority of the Soviet Party, the only one which had led a proletarian revolution to victory, was so great that the Polish Communists accepted Moscow's decision even when Moscow abused its revolutionary authority. Stalinism was indeed a continuous succession of abuses of this kind, a systematic exploitation of the moral credit of the revolution for purposes which often had nothing to do with the interests of communists but served only to consolidate the bureaucratic regime of the USSR" (p. 100). This judgement of the political wreckage of a whole generation applies a fortiori to the Romanian case, where the RCP elite lacked such internationally prominent leaders as Adolf Warski and Wera Kostrzewa.

69. See Deutscher, "The Tragedy," p. 123. For a critical approach to the dilemmas of the Polish left, see Adam Michnik, Letters from Prison and Other Essays (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
70. For the inner dynamics of Hungarian communism, see Charles Gati, Hungary and the Soviet Bloc (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986); Miklos Molnar, De Bela Kun a Janos Kadar: Soixante-dix ans de communisme hongrois (Paris: Presse de la fondation nationale de sciences politiques, 1987).
71. See Philippe Robrieux, Maurice Thorez: Vie secrete, vie publique (Paris: Fayard, 1975), pp. 145 and 656. While a Comintern emissary to France under the pseudonym Marina, Ana Pauker belonged, together with Ernő Gerő, Georges Kagan and others, to the college de direction of the French CP headed by the Czechoslovak militant Eugene Fried (Clement)
72. In the early 1970s the RCP Central Committee's Institute for Historical and Social-Political Studies printed a number of strictly confidential volumes containing documents destined to help the Commission which was to write the party's history, including the texts of the letters sent to the Comintern by three rival factions: the Bucharest party committee, headed by Petre Gheorghe, Ivanca Rudenco, and Ronea Peisahovici-Gheorghiu; the "center of the prisons," led by Gheorghiu-Dej; and the Central Committee, controlled by Foris and his supporter Remus Koffler.
73. Patrascanu lost his Politburo seat in 1946, after having been

publicly scored by Gheorghiu-Dej for alleged nationalism. At the Sixth RCP Congress (the First Congress of the Romanian Workers' Party) in February 1948 he was not re-elected to the Central Committee and subsequently lost his government position as Minister of Justice. Soon thereafter he and his wife Elena (Hertha) Patrascanu were placed under house arrest. According to reliable witnesses, the RCP leadership formed by the four CC secretaries (Dej, Pauker, Luca, Georgescu) was united in the decision to arrest Patrascanu in 1948. In his speech during the April 1968 Plenum, Ceausescu placed greater emphasis on Dej's personal responsibility for Patrascanu's judicial murder and indirectly tried to present Teohari Georgescu as an opponent to the staging of a Romanian show trial with Patrascanu playing the role of a Kostov, Rajk or Slansky. For more on the Stalinist purges within the RCP, see George H. Hodos, Show Trials: Stalinist Purges in Eastern Europe (New York: Praeger, 1987), pp. 93-111.

74. Personal communication to the author.
75. See Conferinta Nationala a Partidului Comunist Roman: 19-21 iulie 1972 (Bucuresti: Editura Politica, 1972), p. 552.
76. See King, A History, pp. 92-93. For the initial charges against the "deviators," see the "Letter of the RCP Central Committee," Scinteia (June 2, 1952). The document had been secretly prepared by a special operational team headed by Miron Constantinescu, Iosif Chisinevschi and Alexandru Moghioros, under permanent surveillance from the Soviet advisors in Bucharest. Every single paragraph in this indictment of the Pauker-Luca faction was approved by the Soviet representatives. Stela Moghioros (Esther Radoshovetskaya) was the RCP delegate to the Bucharest-based journal of the Cominform. Her husband, Alexandru Moghioros, RCP Secretary in charge of organizational matters and Vasile Luca's former protege, further elaborated on the charges in the Cominform journal, For a Lasting Peace, for a People's Democracy, No. 187 (June 6, 1952).
77. Gheorghiu-Dej's closest advisor was Mark Borisovich Mitin, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and editor-in-chief of For a Lasting Peace, for People's Democracy, the organ of the Bucharest-based Informative Bureau of the Communist and Workers' Parties (Cominform).
78. For an accurate appraisal of that period in the history of the Soviet bloc, see Carrere d'Encausse, Big Brother, pp. 96-157.
79. For the Stalinist anti-Tito campaigns, see Adam Ulam, Titoism and the Cominform (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

- 1952); Lilly Marcou, Le Kominform: le communisme de guerre froide (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des sciences politiques, 1977).
80. Teresa Toranska, Them: Stalin's Polish Puppets (New York: Harper and Row, 1987).
81. See Francois Fejtö, A History of the People's Democracies: Eastern Europe Since Stalin (New York: Praeger, 1971), pp. 23-26.
82. As a result of the reorganization of the party's Politburo and Secretariat which took place only five days after Patrascanu's execution, Nicolae Ceausescu became a candidate member of the Politburo and a secretary of the Central Committee.
83. It is true that Gheorghiu-Dej encouraged the personal rivalry between Draghici and Ceausescu, but it should not be forgotten that in 1955-57 Grigore Preoteasa was the third "mounting star" as a candidate Politburo member, minister of foreign affairs, and after June 1957 CC secretary in charge of ideology and culture, thus becoming Leonte Rautu's superior. Preoteasa died in a plane crash in Moscow, in November 1957. As for Ceausescu and Draghici, they cooperated in the application of Dej's cadres policy, especially after the June 1957 Plenum. There was no indication that Ceausescu would have shown any liberal, Khrushchev-like inclinations, and their conflict originated in personal vanities rather than in conflicting political stances. In this respect, I find problematic the characterization of Draghici as a symbol of regime-anxiety versus the characterization of Ceausescu as the embodiment of regime-confidence. See Jowitt, Revolutionary Breakthroughs, p. 151.
84. Concerning the Chisinevschi-Constantinescu affair, see Ionescu, Communism in Romania, pp. 284-287.
85. The November-December 1961 Plenum was rightly described as "a massive exercise in diversion." See Ionescu, Communism in Romania, p. 333.
86. Personal communication with the author.
87. There is agreement among RCP veteran members that Dej had increasingly become victim of a persecution mania, suspecting even his closest collaborators of fomenting plots to subvert his power.
88. Regarding Ilie Verdet's fate, see Anneli Maier, "Growing Job Insecurity for Romanian Nomenklatura," Radio Free Europe

Research, Romanian SR/10 (September 11, 1986), pp. 13-17.

89. Personal communication with the author.
90. Dej's decisive role in the Romanian partial "de-Sovietization" and Ceausescu's self-serving propaganda are well described in an essay whose author preferred to remain anonymous. See "Birth and Death in Romania," New York Review of Books (October 23, 1986), pp. 10-18.
91. It is significant that during his last years, Miron Constantinescu was almost single-mindedly concerned with the nature of the Asiatic mode of production (what he called, drawing from the works of the prominent Romanian sociologist Henri H. Stahl, formatiunea sociala tributala) and the relevance of this Marxian category for the interpretation of Romanian social history. Miron Constantinescu's last book, Contributii la studiul formatiunii sociale tributale (Bucuresti: Centrul de multiplicare al Universitatii din Bucuresti, 1974) incensed some highly placed officials, including the then CC secretary for ideology Cornel Burtica and most likely Elena Ceausescu, who decided to withdraw from it the right of distribution. The book is therefore unavailable in any Romanian library and has been treated as non-existent. The whole episode took an enormous toll on Miron Constantinescu's health and may have expedited his sudden death in the summer of 1974.
92. Paul Niculescu has remained a member of the Political Executive Committee, but he has lost any political influence.
93. Poet Niculae Stoian, as quoted in Dan Ionescu, "Religious Elements in the Glorification of Ceausescu," Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian SR/2 (January 28, 1988), p. 10. See also the Letter addressed by the Political Executive Committee: "Like all the sons of the homeland, we fulfill the duty of our hearts and of our minds in reasserting our profound feelings of esteem and the high appreciation and gratitude we cherish for you, very beloved and esteemed Comrade Nicolae Ceausescu, the ardent communist militant, who, from the very early years of your life have identified yourself with the party's struggle for freedom and social and national justice. You are the builder of the most outstanding stage in the millennia-old existence of the Romanian people, the wise and farsighted leader of the great process of building the multilaterally developed socialist society and of ensuring our homeland's advance toward communism, and the hero of peace, friendship, and cooperation among all the peoples of the world." See Scinteia (January 27, 1988).
94. Concerning political leadership in contemporary Romania, see

Mary Ellen Fischer, "Idol or Leader: The Origins and Future of the Ceausescu Cult," in Daniel N. Nelson, ed., Romania in the 1980s (Boulder: Westview, 1980); for an insightful conceptual approach, see Daniel N. Nelson, "Charisma, Control, and Coercion: The Dilemma of Communist Leadership," Comparative Politics (October 1984), pp. 1-15; about Elena Ceausescu's political role, see Mary Ellen Fischer, "Women in Romanian Politics: Elena Ceausescu, Pronatalism, and the Promotion of Women," in Sharon L. Wolchik and Alfred G. Meyer, eds., Women, State, and Party in Eastern Europe (Durham: Duke University Press, 1985), pp. 121-137.

95. For recent attempts to aggrandize Ceausescu's role in Romanian history, see the rhetorical elephantiasis in the speech occasioned by the 23rd anniversary of the Ninth RCP Congress. In the symbology of Ceausescuism, the Ninth Congress is regarded as the actual rebirth of the RCP as a patriotic movement headed, as CC secretary Emil Bobu put it with untranslatable völkisch accents, "the Hero among the heroes of the nation" (Eroul între eroii neamului), Scinteia, July 24, 1988, p. 3.
96. Born Marta Cziko, the wife of the former Minister of Internal Affairs had been arrested during the war and received a life sentence for communist underground activity.
97. See Seweryn Bialer, The Soviet Paradox: External Expansion, Internal Decline (New York: Knopf, 1986), p. 195.
98. After having served as UTC First Secretary, Nicu was sent in 1987 to Sibiu as leader of the district (Judet) party organization. He is a candidate member of the CC Political Executive Committee.
99. See Michael Shafir, "Former Defense Minister Appointed Ideological Chief," Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian SR/8 (June 23, 1988), pp. 3-6; Michael Shafir, "Coalitions and Political Succession in Communist Systems: A Comparative Analysis of the Future of Romanian Leadership," Südost-Europa 35:3/4 (1986), pp. 201-222; Vladimir Socor, "Toward a Post-Ceausescu Leadership in Romania," RFER, RAD Background Report/5 (January 10, 1986), pp. 1-8.