FINAL REPORT TO
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN RESEARCH

TITLE: PERSONAL POWER AND ELITE CHANGE IN ROUMANIA

AUTHOR: Vladimir Tismaneanu

CONTRACTOR: Foreign Policy Research Institute

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Vladimir Tismaneanu

COUNCIL CONTRACT NUMBER: 903-04

DATE: August, 1989

The work leading to this report was supported by funds provided by the National Council for Soviet and East European Research. The analysis and interpretations contained in the report are those of the author.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Personal Power and Elite Change in Romania

by Vladimir Tismaneanu

Panegyrics to Ceaușescu and the ostensible conformity of the Romanian population notwithstanding, the Ceaușescu regime is probably the most unstable in East-Central Europe. Despite the grooming of Ceaușescu’s son Nicu for the succession, it is highly likely that upon Ceaușescu’s death, or even before, there will be a struggle for power and the emergence of a powerful anti-Ceaușescu coalition made up of party apparatchiks, technocrats, and intellectuals.

Romania exemplifies an unusual pattern among communist countries for the transition from oligarchic to autocratic leadership: the gradual elimination of independent-minded bureaucrats and the takeover by a clique of blood relatives.

The factors that have contributed to the development of a deep and potentially explosive social, political, and economic crisis in Romania include: a highly centralized model of leadership based on clan instead of party dictatorship; an obedient and demoralized political class; reliance on coercive methods of domination; and Ceaușescu's opposition to glasnost-style reforms.

A Short Liberalization: 1965-1971

When Nicolae Ceaușescu succeeded Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej as Romanian Communist Party general secretary in March 1965, he inherited a limited margin of independence in foreign policy and a Stalinist system controlled by an ideologically orthodox party. To consolidate his power, he initiated some liberalization in domestic policy and expanded Romania’s international autonomy. He eliminated former members of Dej’s team such as “Old Guard” rivals like Gheorghe Apostoi and Alexandru Drăghici, and helped younger party cadres into the hierarchy. The new “party apparatus group” became Ceaușescu’s
power base. Many of them had worked under Ceaușescu since the mid-1950s, when he was Dej's lieutenant in charge of personnel. They identified themselves with the general secretary's effort to modernize Romanian institutions and accelerate economic growth.

Ceaușescu's calls for an independent Romania enhanced his image as the chief exponent of an increasingly self-assertive international policy. Consistently neutral in the Sino-Soviet conflict, he rejected Moscow's claim to hegemony within world communism. He rehabilitated nationalistic symbols and values and incorporated them into the official party ideology.

During this first stage of his rule, Ceaușescu favored an oligarchic power structure. He insisted on collective leadership, criticized past repressions, encouraged economic experimentation, and abandoned socialist realism as the mandatory cultural style. He curbed the prerogatives of the secret police and passed regulations in order to separate party and state institutions. Thanks to this strategy of moderate reforms, living standards improved and his authority was strengthened.

Re-Stalinization: 1971 to the Present

In the early 1970s, however, confident that his power had been consolidated, Ceaușescu began to engage in a personalist leadership style, ignoring and often challenging the collective leading bodies. Subordinates increasingly worried about the emergence of a neo-Stalinist dictatorship, so Ceaușescu accelerated elite turnover, demoting such influential members of the "party apparatus group" as Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Gheorghe Pană, Ion Iliescu, and Ion Stănescu. Some committed suicide or died under strange circumstances.

The first signs of the personality cult had appeared in the late 1960s, when the media started to celebrate Ceaușescu's unique contribution to creative Marxism-Leninism. His pronouncements on socialist democracy, economic
development and international relations were codified as "Ceaușescu Thought." According to this doctrine, the leader symbolized both the party and the country, and loyalty to his person was an indication of political reliability. Conversely, criticism of Ceaușescu amounted to subversion and betrayal.

The development of the personality cult presaged the rise to political prominence of Ceaușescu's wife, Elena. Elected to the Central Committee in 1972, she shot up the career ladder. By 1979, at the 12th RCP Congress, Elena was the second most powerful person within the party leadership. Chair of the CC Personnel Commission, she supervised all significant party and government appointments. Many of the couple's relatives were also entrusted with powerful assignments, including control of the army and the security police. Their son Nicu was appointed an alternate member of the Political Executive Committee. He may soon be elected a CC secretary.

The general secretary and his wife thus formed a new center of power consisting of themselves and close associates. They short-circuited and often overruled the decisions of such official ruling bodies as the Central Committee, Political Executive Committee and Secretariat, although there were no statutory provisions to justify this concentration of power within a single family. In the 1980s, several major shake-ups of the party elite took place to ensure this successful exercise of power, including the replacement of Prime Minister Ilie Verdeț, one of the last members of the "party apparatus group," by Elena's protege, Constantin Dăscălescu.

**Deterioration**

The economic situation deteriorated because of the leadership's refusal to engage in reforms. In addition, Ceaușescu's 1982 decision to accelerate the pace of the repayment of Romania's foreign debt led to harsh austerity measures. Other factors contributing to the fragmentation of domestic consensus and to
increased international isolation included Ceaușescu’s social engineering projects, including the plan to create "agro-industrial centers" by razing half of Romania’s villages and the attempts to suppress the cultural identity of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Transylvania.

Although dissent in Romania has long been an individual rather than a collective option, in the mid-1980s prospects for the end of Ceaușescu’s dictatorship improved. A major catalyst was Soviet glasnost, which reformist Romanians saw as a stimulus to their resistance. The personality cult, the policy of cultural autarchy and overambitious investments contributed to the radicalization of important members of the political and intellectual elites. Members of the party apparatus criticized Elena’s excessive power and high-handed behavior. Even within the secret police -- the mainstay of Ceaușescu’s power -- there was increased concern about potential social explosions in response to unpopular presidential decisions. Signs of unrest within the army top command also appeared.

The Succession

As long as the presidential clan continues to wield unlimited power, a change in leadership is more likely to come from a party apparatus-security police coalition than from collective pressure from below. Although the party has lost many of its traditional attributes and privileges and become a transmission belt for Ceaușescu’s directives, its members retain the only political strength which could force him out of power.

Domestic and external factors will undoubtedly obstruct the fulfillment of a dynastic succession scenario. Once Nicolae leaves the scene, the chances that Elena and Nicu will be able to resist an attack by disgruntled apparatchiks are very slim; the clan will probably be held responsible for the political decay of recent years. A far more likely succession scenario is that a candidate will emerge from
among the security police and the Moscow-educated political officers who belong to the top party bodies (including Ion Coman, Ion Dincă and Constantin Olteanu). It is also possible that a post-Ceaușescu leadership could develop from among members of the once powerful "party apparatus group" (including former CC secretaries Ion Iliescu and Paul Niculescu-Mizil, and former Premier Ilie Verdeț).

If the succession question is not resolved in the near future, a major upheaval could occur, creating a situation comparable to that in Hungary in the fall of 1956. This would add an exceptional epilogue to the already long list of Romanian uniquenesses. Because of his international isolation, Ceaușescu would not find any supporters either in the Warsaw Pact or in the West. Relations between Ceaușescu and Gorbachev are strained. At this juncture, Moscow has no interest in defending an unreconstructed Stalinist. The Soviets would not stand by and watch the debacle of the Romanian situation, and it is likely that they would alert pro-Soviet elements within the Romanian military, party apparatus and secret police to be prepared to seize power. Nor would the West be interested in making any gesture on behalf of an increasingly compromised dictatorship.

Ceaușescu has sought for more than twenty years to expand his personal power by weeding out all opposition. He has capitalized on national symbols and patriotic aspirations to gain mass support for his policies. In recent years, however, the elite consensus has disintegrated and the breakdown of "dynastic socialism" appears inevitable.
Personal Power and Elite Change in Romania
by Vladimir Tismaneanu

Romania offers a fascinating case of neo-Stalinist radicalism cloaked in the language of extreme nationalism. The price for this unabated commitment to the Stalinist model has been gradual institutional erosion, deterioration of the social fabric, the heightening of economic tensions, and intellectual asphyxiation. Among the factors that have contributed to the development of a deep and potentially explosive social, political, and economic crisis are: a hyper-centralized model of leadership based on clan instead of party dictatorship; an obedient, corrupt and strikingly incompetent political class; a marked preference for coercive rather than persuasive methods of domination; and stubborn opposition to reforms.

The conflict between state and society has been exacerbated by President and Romanian Communist Party (RCP) General Secretary Nicolae Ceaușescu's willful and increasingly idiosyncratic behavior. Having achieved an unprecedented level of monopolization of power, Nicolae Ceaușescu has initiated a process of dynasticization of socialism -- the gradual but quite conspicuous transfer of power to immediate members of his family -- which makes the Romanian political experiment increasingly distinct from other Soviet-type regimes in East-Central Europe. To carry out this project, Ceaușescu has eliminated many of his former supporters and surrounded himself with close and distant relatives as well as other presumably trustworthy underlings.

The only requirement for a party career in Ceaușescu's Romania seems nowadays to be unquestioning loyalty to Ceaușescu, his wife Elena and their youngest son, Nicu: the dynastic scenario appears to envision Elena and Nicu succeeding Nicolae.¹ There are, however, many indications that the party
apparatus would be unwilling to endorse this. Many apparatchiks resent Ceauşescu’s autocratic methods and fear that the current economic and political crisis could lead to a major social explosion. They feel encouraged by reformist developments in other communist countries and would be glad to engage in a Romanian version of perestroika. Authoritative representatives of the intelligentsia are worried about Ceauşescu’s policies of "systematization" -- the planned razing of half of Romania’s 13,000 villages -- and "urban renewal" -- the bulldozing of historical monuments in Bucharest and other cities -- which jeopardize the cultural identity of the Romanian nation. At the same time, Hungarians from Transylvania oppose their forced assimilation and denounce the "systematization" campaign as an instrument for Ceauşescu’s long-planned cultural genocide against one of Europe’s largest ethnic minorities.

Relations with other Warsaw Pact countries are uneasy as a result of Ceauşescu’s adamant refusal to engage in political and economic reforms. Stubbornly pursuing its policy of self-reliance, Romania has continued to obstruct any attempt at economic integration within the Eastern bloc. Furthermore, because of Ceauşescu’s intransigent ethnocentrism, polemics with Hungary have intensified and thousands of refugees from Romania have fled to that neighbor country. In March 1989, for the first time in the history of the Soviet bloc, a communist state (Hungary) sponsored a UN resolution condemning another communist regime (Romania) for violations of international agreements on human rights.²

Because of these human rights infringements, relations with the West have also grown increasingly sour. Emulating President Mitterrand of France, no Western leader seems interested in visiting Romania or inviting Ceauşescu as an official guest. In 1988 Portugal and Denmark closed their embassies in Bucharest, and it is not unlikely that other West European states will follow. Speaking in
February 1989 at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva, French Prime Minister Michel Rocard called all governments to raise their voices on behalf of the "unfortunate Romanian people." In March 1989 France recalled its ambassador to Bucharest "for consultation," the European Economic Community cancelled its planned cooperation talks with Romania, and the European parliament in Strasbourg expressed its "shock" at the Romanian government's deplorable human rights record.3

The origins of the current predicament lie in the prevailing traditions of the communist political culture in Romania: authoritarianism, sectarianism, anti-intellectualism, clientelism, ideological conformity and dogmatism, and, most important, a perpetual deficit of political legitimacy.4 The latter feature explains the evolution of the RCP especially after 1960, when the national communist elite headed by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej challenged Nikita Khrushchev's integrationist plans and engaged on an autonomist course.5 The Romanian "deviation" -- a self-styled version of national communism -- resulted in a successful attempt by the ruling group to restructure the official ideology and assimilate populist and nationalist values. As Joseph Rothschild notes: "The background to the Soviet-Romanian tensions of the 1960s lies in the grievances and aspirations generated by expectations of change within a context of political backwardness."6 The emphasis on anti-Soviet themes has consistently been accompanied by strident appeals for national solidarity, ethnic cohesion and rejection of domestic reforms.

Like the Yugoslavs, the Romanian communists resented Soviet hegemonism and aspired to a non-aligned international status. The architects of the Romanian-Soviet separation in the early 1960s -- Romanian Workers' Party First Secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901-1965), Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer (born in 1907, retired in 1974) and their closest associates,
including the then CC Secretary and Politburo member Nicolae Ceaușescu -- were certainly influenced by the Yugoslav autonomist model. They saw the Sino-Soviet split and Khrushchev's beleaguered position within the Soviet elite as a marvelous opportunity to foster a strategy based on a new philosophy of international relations. Moscow would lose its privileged role within world communism. In the summer of 1964, many Western analysts could conclude that: "Both Communist Romania and Communist Yugoslavia had been mavericks in the ideological quarrel between Moscow and Peking." In 1964-65, Romanian representatives to the Preparatory Commission for the organization of an international communist conclave (Paul Niculescu-Mizil and Ștefan Voicu) staunchly opposed Soviet attempts to engineer the ostracization of China. This increasingly self-assertive Romanian foreign policy, as well as the strategy aimed at national revival orchestrated by Dej's team, appeared to one Western observer to develop "with the precision and confidence of a well-made symphony."8

This benevolent approach to Romanian exceptionalism was the prevailing Western view until the early 1980s, when Ceaușescu's image suffered a rapid and, it seems, irreversible deterioration. The more the Romanian media lionized Ceaușescu as the "Genius of the Carpathians," the "Hero of Peace" and the "Danube of Thought," the more he was portrayed in the West as "the Idi Amin of Communism" and the leader of a "megalomaniac gang." The following sounds a common theme of the mounting international concern with Ceaușescu's despotism: "So personal and unsystemic is Mr. Ceaușescu's rule that Romania could perhaps hope to shake off its effects if he were to make the one contribution he could any longer that would help: getting out of office."10

For many years, political stability in Romania was guaranteed by the continuity and cohesion of the elite, the powerful secret police apparatus, and the systematic repression of dissent and opposition. In recent years, however, this
stability has become increasingly problematic as a result of the sharp economic
decline and the failure of the ruling team to maintain an elite consensus of goals
and values. Ceaușescu has lost touch with the party and government bureaucracy,
and the prospects for an intra-party coup similar to the anti-Khrushchev putsch in
October 1964 cannot be underestimated.

Based as it is on fear, corruption and intrigues, Ceaușescu's power is
extremely fragile. Given the immense accumulation of resentment and frustration
over his all-embracing mismanagement, the convulsions over his succession may
take violent forms, including riots and armed clashes.

**Gheorghiu-Dej's Legacy**

Nicolae Ceaușescu succeeded Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej as Romanian
Communist Party (RCP) general secretary in March 1965. Born on January 26,
1918 to a poor peasant family in Scornicești (Olt County), Ceaușescu had been
active in the minuscule underground Romanian Communist Party since 1933. In
1933-34 he joined the short-lived National Anti-Fascist Committee, a Communist-
controlled front with no mass following. In the late 1930s he became one of the
leaders of the Communist Youth Union, was repeatedly arrested and imprisoned
for revolutionary activities and spent the war years in the Tîrgu-Jiu concentration
camp. During the war he became a member of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's inner
circle (the "Center of the prisons") and participated in the factious struggles which
culminated in the removal in April 1944 of Ștefan Foriș, the Moscow-appointed
RCP General Secretary, on charges that he had been "an agent of the bourgeoisie
and the imperialists" and had collaborated with the Romanian secret police
(Siguranta).11

Between April and August 1944, the clandestine RCP was led by a
triumvirate made up of Constantin Pârvulescu, Emil Bodnăraș and Iosif Rangheț.
Constantin Pârvulescu, who had returned from Moscow in 1943, represented the link between the domestic RCP leadership and the Moscow emigré Center headed by Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca. Also influential in the post-Foriș provisional leadership were: Lucrețiu Pâtrașcanu, who represented the RCP in the negotiations with the democratic parties and the Palace for the preparation of the anti-Fascist coup, Emil Bodnăraș, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Ileana Răceanu (Ilona Papp), Mihail Roșianu, Constanța Crăciun, and Ana Toma (Grossmann), who was at that time Pârvulescu's wife. Through Ion Gheorghe Maurer, a lawyer who had often defended the communists in the trials of the 1930s, the underground nucleus maintained permanent contacts with the Center of the prisons headed by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. The most influential members of Dej's team, closely associated with him in the anti-Foriș operation and actively involved in the emergence of an alternative leadership were: Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Angheliu, Emil Bodnăraș, Pintilie Bondarenko (Pantiusa), Nicolae Ceaușescu, Iosif Chișinevschi, Chivu Stoica, Miron Constantinescu, Alexandru Drăghici, Teohari Georgescu, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Alexandru Moghioroș, Grigore Preoteasa, Alexandru Sencovici and Janos Vincze.

After August 23, 1944, the RCP was legalized. With Gheorghiu-Dej's support, Ceaușescu became a professional apparatchik and was assigned important party and state government tasks: leader of the Communist Youth Union, secretary of the party organization in Dobrogea, deputy minister of agriculture, chief of the Main Political Directorate of the Romanian Army. According to RCP veterans, in all these appointments Ceaușescu was remarkable for his extremely servile attitude toward his superiors and his notorious rudeness toward his subordinates. An inflexible Stalinist committed to the implementation of the militaristic model of socialism, he participated wholeheartedly in all repressive campaigns, including the forced collectivization of agriculture and the
Sovietization of the Romanian Army. In February 1948, at the 6th RCP Congress (the 1st Congress of the Romanian Workers’ Party), Ceaușescu was elected a member of the Central Committee with a "large majority of votes." In the early 1950s, he went to Moscow for a stage at the "Frunze" Military Academy. As a prominent political general, he established close contacts with Emil Bodnăraș, the Romanian Defense Minister and a full Politburo member who had served a prison term for espionage on behalf of the Soviets in the 1930s. Ceaușescu’s deputy as head of the Main Political Directorate was Mihail Florescu (Iacobi), a former Spanish Civil War and French maquis fighter who is still a member of the RCP Central Committee and reportedly Elena Ceaușescu’s confidant at the National Council for Science and Technology.

Ceaușescu’s rise to prominence within the RCP hierarchy was facilitated by the gradual elimination of the non-ethnic Romanians from top party positions. This process of Romanianization of the RCP elite started with the purge of the Ana Pauker-Vasile Luca-Teohari Georgescu faction in June 1952. However, far from representing the emergence of a national communist platform within the RCP, the elimination of the "Muscovites" was fomented by "home" Stalinists with direct support from the Soviet advisors. Like the Slansky affair in Czechoslovakia, Ana Pauker’s downfall was an episode of the anti-Semitic second stage of the East European purge, when the victims were selected among prominent Jewish communists suspected of Zionist ("cosmopolitan") inclinations.

Ana Pauker’s indictment during the May 1952 Plenum of the Romanian Workers’ Party Central Committee was prepared by a secret ideological commission supervised by Mark Borisovich Mitin. Himself Jewish, Mitin was a member of the Soviet Central Committee, co-author of Stalin’s Short Biography and editor-in-chief of For Lasting Peace, For People’s Democracy, the organ of the Bucharest-based Cominform. For almost six years, between 1950 and 1956,
Mitin had been the Soviet pro-consul in Bucharest, using his enormous leverage to initiate personnel changes in the Romanian *nomenklatura* and influence policy options. But he was only the most powerful and visible officer of a large contingent of Soviet advisors who were keeping all Romanian institutions under strict surveillance, and as the chief of the Main Political Directorate of the Romanian Army, Major General Nicolae Ceaușescu established close and enduring contacts with the advisors sent from Moscow to assist him in the indoctrination of the military.

In April 1954, Ceaușescu, who had been elected a candidate Politburo member in June 1952, replaced Alexandru Moghioroș as secretary of the Central Committee in charge with organizational affairs. His mounting status was confirmed during the 6th RCP Congress (the 2nd Romanian Workers' Party Congress) in December 1955, when he delivered the Report concerning the party's statutes and was elected a full member of the Politburo and reconfirmed as a CC secretary. His chief responsibilities included overall control over the personnel appointments and the surveillance of local party organizations.

In 1957, Ceaușescu supported Gheorghiu-Dej in his struggle against a Khrushchevite faction within the RCP headed by Politburo members Miron Constantinescu and Iosif Chișinevschi. Adamantly opposed to economic reforms and ideological relaxation, the Dejites were haunted by the specter of a spontaneous mass uprising like the Hungarian Revolution. In 1958-59, Ceaușescu presided over a massive purge of the party and state apparatus which resulted in tens of thousands of expulsions from the party and coincided with vicious anti-intellectual and anti-Semitic campaigns. This neo-Stalinist offensive put a drastic end to the short-lived Romanian liberalization and re-established monolithic party control. Police actions were undertaken against rebellious students in Bucharest, Iași, Cluj, Tîrgu-Mureș, and Timișoara, and the most radical students were jailed.
after sham trials. Since one of his responsibilities as CC secretary was to direct youth organizations, Ceaușescu cooperated with Alexandru Drăghici, the Minister of Internal Affairs, in "restoring order" within universities. His closest associates in these operations were: Virgil Trofin, Ion Iliescu, Ștefan Andrei, Cornel Burtică, Cornel Pacoste, Ștefan Bârlea, and Mircea Angelescu, the leaders of the Communist Youth Union (UTC) and the Union of Romanian Students' Associations (UASR). Having unflinchingly implemented the party line, these activists established close personal links with Ceaușescu, who helped them climb the ladder of party hierarchy. Appointed to key party positions, they became a major pressure group within the elite after 1965. Some of them -- like Ștefan Andrei and Cornel Pacoste -- are still members of the top Romanian Nomenklatura, while others -- like Virgil Trofin, Cornel Burtică and Ion Iliescu -- have been eliminated in recent years.

During successive party purges, Ceaușescu asserted himself as one of Gheorghiu-Dej's most faithful lieutenants. After the 8th RCP Congress in 1960, when he was re-elected to both the Politburo and the Secretariat, it was clear that Ceaușescu had become one of Dej's closest associates.22 He was instrumental in the self-serving reinterpretation of RCP history at the November-December 1961 Central Committee plenum, where the Dejites spelled out their opposition to Khrushchev's attempts to prompt de-Stalinization in Romania.23 Other influential members of this group were Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Gheorghe Apostol, Emil Bodnăraș, Petre Borilă, Chivu Stoica, Alexandru Drăghici, Alexandru Moghioroș, and Leonte Răutu. On that occasion, Ceaușescu lavishly praised Gheorghiu-Dej for his alleged opposition to the Stalinist methods imported from the Soviet Union by the "right-wing deviators" Ana Pauker and Vasile Luca. According to him, thanks to Dej's clearsighted vision and commitment to collective leadership, there was no need for the RCP to engage in a soul-searching
examination of its Stalinist past. De-Stalinization was thus rejected as inappropriate under specific Romanian conditions.

Worried by Khrushchev's "second thaw" and encouraged by the deepening of the Sino-Soviet rift, the Dejites tried to resist de-Stalinization by devising a nationalist platform to attract the intelligentsia and bridge the gap between the party elite and the population. Between 1962 and 1965, Gheorghiu-Dej and his comrades mounted a successful propaganda campaign against Soviet economic pressure on Romania. Capitalizing upon legitimate national concerns, they managed to generate a new image for the RCP as a champion of Romanian opposition to Moscow's plans to transform Romania into an agricultural base for the Soviet bloc. The RCP skillfully exploited the Sino-Soviet schism in order to pursue an increasingly autonomous course in its foreign policy. Contacts with Tito's Yugoslavia were enhanced, Romanian delegations headed by Maurer and Ceaușescu visited both Moscow and Beijing in 1963 and 1964, and the RCP endorsed Italian communist leader Palmiro Togliatti's polycentric vision of world communism.

The April 1964 RCP Declaration on the main problems of the world communist movement summed up this new philosophy of international relations. In this fundamental document, Romanian communists broke with the Soviet concept of socialist internationalism and emphasized their commitment to the principles of national independence and sovereignty, full equality, non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states and parties, and cooperation based on mutual advantage. The Declaration squarely rejected Moscow's privileged status within the world communist movement.

Particularly influential in the conception of this trail-blazing document was Vice-premier Alexandru Bârlădeanu who, as Romania's permanent delegate to the CMEA, had been involved in direct clashes with Khrushchev and other Soviet
Incensed by Bârlădeanu's defense of Romanian economic interests, Khrushchev demanded his expulsion from the Romanian government. Instead, Gheorghiu-Dej promoted Bârlădeanu as a candidate Politburo member. Meanwhile, tensions with the Soviets intensified at the editorial board of the Prague-based *World Marxist Review*, to which Romanian leaders (Ion Gheorghe Maurer and Nicolae Ceaușescu) contributed articles advocating their party's autonomist and "neutralist" course.

At the same time, Romania showed growing interest in warming up relations with the West. Vice-premier and President of the State Planning Committee Gheorghe Gaston Marin visited the United States in 1963, and Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer went to France in 1964. In the summer of 1964, at the 20th anniversary of the August 23 anti-Fascist coup, the RCP had gained both national and international recognition as the exponent of a domesticist political platform opposed to Soviet interference and dedicated to fostering the country's political and economic autonomy. "Ideological nationalization" -- to use a concept coined by Zbigniew Brzezinski -- permitted Romanian communists to recoup long-dormant social energies and develop for the first time in their history a sense of political legitimacy.25

The rehabilitation of prominent figures of the national intelligentsia greatly contributed to the domestic political and cultural relaxation. This co-optation strategy, implemented by cultural dictator Leonte Răutu,26 permitted the publication of previously banned works by Octavian Goga, Lucian Blaga, George Bacovia, G. Călinescu, Nicolae Iorga, Tudor Vianu, Șerban Cioculescu, Vladimir Streinu, Liviu Rebreanu, Vasile Voiculescu, Gib Mihăiescu and many others. Among the intellectuals who endorsed the party's national communist platform, albeit with different degrees of enthusiasm, were such respected personalities of the pre-revolutionary epoch as: historians Andrei Oțetea, C. C. Giurescu and
Constantin Daicoviciu; literary critics G. Călinescu, Șerban Cioculescu, and Tudor Vianu; philosophers D. D. Roșca and Lucian Blaga; and such sociologists as Mihail Ralea, Traian Herseni and H. H. Stahl. The same party which in August 1944 counted no more than 1,000 members experienced after 1960 a political transfiguration into a forceful movement championing long-repressed national grievances. Bygone were the times of such Stalinist hacks as Mihail Roller, the former deputy chief of the CC Agitprop Department, who authored a *History of the Romanian People's Republic* glorifying the "traditional fraternal bonds" between Romania and Russia. Of course, Dej and his associates never acknowledged any personal responsibility for their crucial role in the country's satellization in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Instead, they shrewdly manipulated nationalist emotions to craft the image of the RCP elite as the guarantor of the country's dignity and independence.

The RCP strategy during Dej's last years contained, however, a dual potential. On the surface, Romania seemed interested in emulating Tito by engaging in a sweeping de-Sovietization that could result in domestic liberalization. In fact, instead of loosening controls over society, the RCP leadership further tightened its grip and refused to allow a genuine de-Stalinization. Hence, from its very inception, Romania's break with Moscow contained ambiguities: in accordance with the inclinations and interests of the leading team and international circumstances, domesticism could lead either to Yugoslavization, i.e., de-Sovietization coupled with de-Stalinization, or Albanization, i.e., de-Sovietization strengthened by radical domestic Stalinism. This dual nature of the RCP's divorce from the Kremlin stems from the contrast between its patriotic claims and the refusal to overhaul the Soviet-imposed model of socialism. Also a benchmark of the first stage of the Ceaușescu regime, this
ambivalence was rooted in the anxiety of the elite that reforms could unleash political unrest and jeopardize the party's monopoly on power.

**A Short-lived Liberalization**

From his predecessor, Nicolae Ceaușescu inherited a dynamic economy, an embryonic national consensus, and a growing prestige in the international arena. During the first stage of his rule (1965-1971), the new general secretary sought to consolidate his authority and power by stressing the values of national independence and patriotic consciousness. At the same time, he seemed to offer his subjects a new social contract based on a more sensitive approach to basic economic, political and cultural needs and aspirations. The economic opening to the West and the more rational investment policy raised the people's living standards.

Ceaușescu himself frequently bemoaned the cultural nihilism of the Stalinist years. Shortly after his election, he initiated meetings with representatives of the creative unions, where he denounced the Zhdanovite dogmas of socialist realism and acknowledged the right to cultural diversity. Both on these occasions and in private conversations with prominent Romanian intellectuals he pledged to oppose any administrative intervention in the field of artistic creation.

In the same vein, he advocated a creative approach to Marxism. He lambasted dogmatic attitudes in analyzing such questions as role of the state and the nation, the advancement of socialist democracy, and the relationship between national and international elements in the building of communist societies. He attacked the nefarious effects of dogmatism on the uninhibited development of scientific research. The Romanian media published scathing criticisms of bureaucratic sluggishness and political inertia. Articles signed by party ideologue
Dumitru Popescu in *Scînteia* called for intellectual creativity and an uncompromising break with any form of mystical doctrinarism. Patriotic symbols were incorporated into the official ideology.

New personalities were needed to carry out the new policy. Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Leonte Răutu’s successor as ideological pontiff, announced an epoch of increased tolerance and relaxation; the Central Committee’s Ideological Department was run by dynamic party intellectuals committed to the elaboration of a Romanian model of socialism based on national traditions and an opening to international dialogue. Most of these activists shared the illusion that Ceaușescu was intent upon reforming ossified Stalinist institutions and encouraging experiments in economic and cultural liberalization.

What followed was the first genuine thaw in post-war Romanian culture, with the party encouraging intellectual de-Stalinization and temporarily renouncing bureaucratic-administrative methods in cultural matters. Ceaușescu also summoned the "activists" of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, i.e., the secret police, and criticized the excesses of the Stalinist period. In August 1965, after a new Constitution was passed and the Romanian People’s Republic changed its name into the Socialist Republic of Romania, Ceaușescu spoke to the Grand National Assembly and promised the full observance of socialist legality by the party and state organs: "The state organs, the judiciary institutions have obligations of great significance in the defense of the revolutionary gains of the working people, of all the state laws against those who attack the interests of the people, of the socialist cause; all their activity must express concern for the human being and responsibility for full observance of socialist legality."

To ensure his power, Ceaușescu counted on the help of the party apparatus, a political group whom, as a CC Secretary, he had supervised since 1955 and from whose ranks he had recruited the new RCP leading team. The 9th
RCP Congress (July 1965) offered Ceauşescu the opportunity to rejuvenate the party elite and promote his partisans to influential positions. Overwhelmingly dominated by Ceauşescu and his supporters, the Congress consecrated his supremacy within the party hierarchy, his victory in the succession struggle and his undisputed authority within the RCP elite, thereby inaugurating a new stage in the history of communist Romania.  

The next period was indelibly marked by Ceauşescu's populist-authoritarian leadership methods and by his personal ambitions, goals, anguishes and resentments. On the last day of the Congress, he engineered a mini-coup by imposing a new organizational structure for the party's ruling bodies. The nine-member Politburo was dissolved and supplanted by a more comprehensive, fifteen-member Executive Committee (EC) that included representatives of the party apparatus group directly linked to the general secretary. To appease the fears of the "Old Guard," a Standing Presidium was elected which included seven former Politburo members (Nicolae Ceauşescu, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Bârlădeanu, Emil Bodnăraş, Chivu Stoica, Alexandru Drăghici, and Ion Gheorghe Maurer). At the same time, Ceauşescu's protégés were elected candidate members of the EC and/or secretaries of the Central Committee (Iosif Banc, Maxim Berghianu, Petre Blajovici, Janos Fazekas, Mihai Gere, Petre Lupu, Manea Mănescu, Vasile Patilineţ, and Ilie Verdeţ). Some of them were former instructors of the CC Organizational Department controlled between 1954-65 by Ceauşescu. Others had cooperated with him as first secretaries of regional party committees.

A seasoned Stalinist apparatchik himself, Nicolae Ceauşescu demonstrated firmness and astuteness in consolidating power by removing Dej's holdovers and promoting his own men to key party and government positions. During the first three years in power, he extolled the virtues of collective leadership, berated Dej's
dictatorial methods, and insisted on the need to organize large-scale consultations with the rank-and-file. This approach did not include, however, an innovative conception about the democratization of society, and it excluded any limitation on the party's monopolistic hold on society. On various occasions Ceaușescu underlined the traditional Leninist logic of monolithic party unity and discarded neo-Marxist, revisionist calls for intra-party democracy and pluralism. From the very outset, he underscored the inviolability of the principle of the party's leading role. At the same time, he seemed to favor a more flexible approach to both party history and the Marxist-Leninist doctrine. To Ceaușescu, the RCP had inherited the best traditions of the Romanian working class and socialist movement. He denounced the Comintern's practice of appointing non-Romanian general secretaries during the clandestine years and stressed the need to consolidate a new type of relations within world communism. According to him, the role of the communist party consisted of galvanizing all national energies to accelerate Romania's economic and political modernization.

In Ceaușescu's view, the RCP was not a self-appointed vanguard separated from society, but rather the "nerve center" of national life. In the light of this conception, the party's political mandate was granted and confirmed by history itself. Furthermore, in accordance with his Stalinist outlook, Ceaușescu believed that only a strongman at the party's helm could ensure the implementation of the program to turn Romania into an industrially developed nation. This combination of vibrant nationalism and pragmatic Stalinism was the major ideological underpinning of the Ceaușescu's regime.

To avoid oversimplification, however, one should note that between 1965 and 1971 Ceaușescu tested domestic liberalization. He gradually realized that genuine liberalization would diminish his personal power and jeopardize the party's monopoly. The hardening of the Stalinist line should be therefore
understood against the need of the ruling elite to preserve its interests and avert the spread of heterodox views and dissident activities. Convinced that only a monolithic formation could ensure the fulfillment of his ambitious modernization program, Ceaușescu rejected neo-Marxist calls for more intra-party democracy. For him, as for Stalin, the party should not be a "discussion club," but a disciplined avant garde of arduous revolutionaries.

During this first stage, Ceaușescu relied for his power on an emerging, often strained coalition between the party apparatus and the intelligentsia. But since these two groups had different agendas and different priorities, their alliance could not endure. The apparatus was basically interested in reinforcing its political power and pursuing the policy of economic development; the intelligentsia regarded the party's dictatorship as a political straitjacket bound to preclude democratic development and hinder further opening to the West. At the same time, Ceaușescu's confirmation as the architect of the country's independent foreign policy pre-empted potential opposition to the increasing personalization of power. To be sure, there were already early indications of Ceaușescu's arbitrary leadership style, but the official line between 1965 and 1968 continued to celebrate collective leadership and censure Stalinist violations of socialist democracy. The general secretary himself insisted on the necessity for a scientific character for societal management and initiated a number of institutional changes to release scientific and technological creativity from bureaucratic constraints.³⁸

In December 1967, however, Ceaușescu unequivocally opposed Vice-premier Alexandru Bârlădeanu’s proposals for economic reforms. At the RCP National Conference -- the first one since October 1945 --, the general secretary questioned the validity of market-oriented experiments and reiterated his commitment to an orthodox Stalinist central planning. He emphasized the role of socialist ownership of the means of production and argued that the leading role of
the communist party was a constitutionally sanctioned "objective reality ... and an indispensable necessity of progress". Shortly after the National Conference, in glaring contrast to his own claims in the Political Report to the 9th Congress of the need to separate party and state responsibilities, Ceaușescu replaced Chivu Stoica, a veteran party member and one of Gheorghiu-Dej's closest allies, as president of the State Council. The path to absolute power was thus open. Several years later, in 1974, the presidential office was created and Ceaușescu became president of the Socialist Republic of Romania and, ipso facto, commander-in-chief of the Romanian Army.

To enhance his legitimacy, he organized an intense campaign calculated to de-mythologize Gheorghiu-Dej's historical role and curtail the influence of the "Old Guard." First, in May 1965, he discreetly rehabilitated a group of RCP veterans expelled by Dej from the Central Committee (Constantin Doncea, Dumitru Petrescu, Ofelia Manole, Ileana Răceanu, etc.). Second, also in 1965, Ceaușescu dropped his arch-rival Alexandru Drăghici as Minister of Internal Affairs and appointed his trustworthy supporters Cornel Onescu, Ion Stănescu, and Nicolae Doicaru as heads of the three major branches of this institution: the militia (regular police), the Securitate, and the counter-intelligence. In 1966, he established a Commission for the investigation of the abuses of the Stalinist period. Co-chaired by veteran Comintern activist and former Spanish Civil War fighter Gheorghe Stoica (Moscu Cohn), whom Ceaușescu had promoted to full Political Executive Committee and State Council membership, and by party apparatus stalwart Vasile Patilineț, a candidate PEC member and a CC secretary, the Commission gathered an immense number of documents incriminating Gheorghiu-Dej and his camarilla for their personal involvement in the atrocities of the 1950s. The April 1968 Plenum analyzed the Commission's conclusions and rehabilitated Lucrețiu Pătrașcanu, a leading communist personality who had
represented the RCP as minister of justice in the first anti-fascist government following the August 1944 break with Germany. Publicly attacked by Gheorghiu-Dej in 1946 for alleged chauvinism, Pătrăşcanu lost his Politburo seat and was dropped from the CC at the 6th Congress (February 1948) after a slanderous onslaught on him by Teohari Georgescu, Minister of the Interior and member of the ruling "foursome." He was arrested as a "Titoist nationalist" and executed in April 1954 on charges of espionage. In addition to Pătrăşcanu, also rehabilitated were the Romanian communists exterminated during the Great Purge in the Soviet Union; Ştefan Foriş, the former RCP general secretary assassinated in 1946; and Miron Constantinescu, the former Politburo member who had called for Dej's resignation after Nikita Khushchev's denunciation of Stalin's "cult of personality" at the 20th CPSU Congress in February 1956.

Ceauşescu played a crucial role in the orchestration the momentous April 1968 Plenum. He urged party veterans, including Miron Constantinescu, Constantin Pârvulescu, Teohari Georgescu, and Victoria Foriş (Ştefan Foriş's widow, who had herself spent more than ten years in Dej's jails), to expose Dej's involvement in the bloody purges of the Stalinist period. He attacked Alexandru Drăghici for his direct participation in Pătrăşcanu's judicial murder and obtained Drăghici's expulsion from the party. Also expelled was the former NKVD agent and head of the Securitate in the 1950s, Pintilie Bodnarenko (Pantiuşa), who had murdered Ştefan Foriş personally. The April Plenum's final resolution mentioned Dej's responsibility for the Stalinist terror in Romania and promised a full-fledged examination of his role in the RCP history. In the months following the Plenum, the Romanian media printed countless articles exposing the atrocities of the past and calling for legal retribution against their perpetrators. However, the Plenum proceedings were not published and the anti-Dej campaign did not
deeply question the institutional-systemic factors which had made possible the mass repression of the 1950s.

As an effect of this anti-Stalinist offensive, Ceaușescu consolidated his authority among both the intelligentsia and the RCP rank-and-file. At a time when the Prague Spring was in full swing, it seemed that he was intent upon abolishing the Stalinist legacy. In the summer of 1968, he proclaimed his solidarity with the Czechoslovak reformers, refusing to join other Warsaw Pact countries in criticizing "socialism with a human face." He visited Prague a few weeks before the Soviet invasion, and on August 21, 1968 reached the apogee of his domestic and world prestige with an unequivocal indictment of the action.

Paradoxically, it was precisely at this moment that the Romanian liberal interlude started to lose momentum. The lesson Ceaușescu apparently drew from the Soviet military intervention was deep scepticism about the possibility of pursuing radical domestic reforms. Romanian Communist Party propaganda began to emphasize the need for a monolithic national front around the general secretary as the unique guarantor of the country's independence. According to this new line, if Romanians wanted to avoid the fate of Czechoslovakia they had to postpone their dreams of domestic democratization. During confidential party briefings, the RCP leaders maintained that the times were not propitious for unnecessary conflicts of opinion, the rhetoric of de-Stalinization had to be toned down, and national cohesion defended against all odds.

In 1969, the general secretary attended the Moscow International Conference of communist and workers' parties and made no direct criticism of the Soviet suppression of the Prague Spring. At the same time, however, he tried to expand contacts with communist parties and groups critical of Soviet hegemonism. It was later apparent that the rationale for this attitude was not Ceaușescu's interest in creating an anti-Stalinist coalition, but rather his concern that a Soviet
action could force him out of power. Good relations with China and Yugoslavia intensified, and Ceaușescu initiated frequent meetings with Western communist personalities hostile to the Kremlin's expansionism: the Italians Luigi Longo, Enrico Berlinguer and Giancarlo Pajetta; the French Waldeck Rochet and Georges Marchais; and the Spanish Dolores Ibarruri and Santiago Carrillo. At the same time, the RCP cooperated with Italian and Yugoslav communists in supporting the "revisionist" Greek Communist Party (of the Interior).45

In August 1969, at the 10th RCP Congress, Ceaușescu introduced his concept of the "multilaterally developed socialist society" as an original Romanian contribution to Marxism-Leninism. This was an implicit disagreement with Brezhnev's notion of "developed socialism," which emphasized economic growth to the detriment of institutional reforms.46 Unlike the Soviets, Ceaușescu claimed to put forward a comprehensive program of socialist renewal, a strategic blueprint including the expansion of socialist democracy and the "free development of personality." The major objectives formulated by Ceaușescu were: first, the intensive growth of economic forces and economic modernization; second, the development of science, education and culture, which were described as "basic factors of progress and civilization"; third, improving living standards and ensuring a new quality of life, including spiritual development of all working people and a just distribution of goods in accordance with the principles of "socialist justice and equity"; and fourth, continuous perfecting of productive relations, creation of an institutional framework allowing growing popular participation in decision-making, extension of civic freedoms and enhanced socialist democracy.47

Delegates competed to extoll the general secretary's "pathbreaking" ideas and reassure him of their unswerving loyalty. On the last day of the Congress, Constantin Dăscălescu, the first secretary of the Galați county party organization,
attacked for alleged immorality Gheorghe Apostol, one of the most prominent members of the "Old Guard," who only four days earlier had delivered a stormily applauded speech. Although Apostol boldly defended himself, he was not re-elected to the Central Committee and soon thereafter lost his position as chairman of the General Council of Romanian Trade Unions. The composition of the newly-elected ruling bodies reflected Ceaușescu's triumph. He was now the absolute leader of the RCP, strongly supported by the party apparatus whose representatives eventually received the long-expected rewards for their loyalty. Ceaușescu’s long-time associates Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Gheorghe Pană, Virgil Trofin and Ilie Verdet were elected to the Permanent Presidium of the Executive Committee. Another newcomer to this supreme body was Dumitru Petrescu, a former railroad workers' leader who had spent the war years in Moscow, returned to Romania with the Soviet-created "Tudor Vladimirescu" Division of former Romanian prisoners of war and served as finance minister and vice-premier until Dej purged him in 1958.48 Entirely controlled by Ceaușescu, the CC Secretariat now included, in addition to the general secretary, such representatives of the party apparatus as Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Gheorghe Pană, Vasile Patilineț, Dumitru Popescu, Virgil Trofin and Mihai Gere.49

**Neo-Stalinist Dynamics**

In 1971 Ceaușescu decided to interrupt the limited liberalization and restore the party's absolute control over society. The origins of this re-Stalinization were both political and psychological: they lay in Ceaușescu’s worries about the critical ferment among the Romanian intelligentsia and in his adamant belief that only a growing concentration of power in his hands would guarantee the success of his modernization strategy. In the spring of 1971, the general secretary visited China and North Korea, where he was impressed with the climate
of revolutionary fervor and mass worship of Mao Zedong and Kim Il Sung. Probably influenced by his wife Elena, who accompanied him on this trip, Ceauşescu came to the conclusion that the cult of personality could be a major instrument in the preservation and enhancement of his own power. It was also during this Asian trip that relations between Ceauşescu and Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer started to cool off. A personal friend of Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, Maurer was reportedly upset with the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. An intellectual himself, he tried to moderate Ceauşescu's unqualified enthusiasm with Mao's and Lin Biao's anti-intellectualism.

Immediately after his return to Bucharest, Ceauşescu launched a "mini-cultural revolution" to energize the masses, restore political conformity, and promote his image as a great Marxist-Leninist thinker. He presented himself as the creator of Ceauşescuism, a doctrine presented as no less original and uplifting than Maoism and Kim Il Sung-ism. From then on, the RCP engaged in systematic anti-intellectual campaigns to eliminate any source of criticism of the president's decisions.

This process did not unfold without obstacles and conflicts. For example, distinguished writers like Eugen Jebeleanu (a CC candidate member), Geo Bogza (a member of the Romanian Academy) and Marin Preda (Romania's most prominent novelist) expressed their worries about the neo-Zhdanovist campaign. At the November 1971 Plenum, in spite of Ceauşescu's admonishments and charges of "liberalism," Ion Iliescu refused to indulge in self-criticism, thereby losing his seat in the Secretariat. In 1974, following a dispute with Ceauşescu on economic priorities, Prime Minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer resigned and was replaced by Manea Mănescu. The latter had enthusiastically espoused Ceauşescu's mythological approach to the economy and endorsed the strategy of crash acceleration of industrial growth.
The 11th (1974) and 12th (1979) Congresses contributed to the gradual marginalization of the party apparatus group and the rise of a new political elite closely linked to the general secretary and his wife Elena. The 11th Congress elected Elena a full member of the Political Executive Committee (PEC). The newly elected Secretariat sanctioned the political decline of the two major spokesmen for the party apparatus group, Paul Niculescu-Mizil and Virgil Trofin, who lost their seats in favor of two members of the immediate presidential clique, Ștefan Andrei and Cornel Burtică. Party veteran Chivu Stoica was elected a candidate member of the Political Executive Committee and Chairman of the Party Control Commission, but shortly thereafter he committed suicide, apparently as a consequence of a violent conflict with the general secretary. At the same time, especially after 1977, other members of the president's family received important party and government appointments.

A spectacular challenge to Ceaușescu occurred, however, at the 12th Congress. Constantin Pârvulescu, a party "old-timer" and former Politburo member, sharply criticized Ceaușescu for having usurped political power, transformed the party into a mere instrument for his glorification, and imposed a family (neam) dictatorship. Instead of backing off, the president and his wife launched reprisals against him, enhanced the cult rituals, removed senior members of the party apparatus group like Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Ion Ioniță, Gheorghe Pană, and Virgil Trofin from crucial party and government positions and replaced them with younger activists who owed their lightning careers exclusively to Ceaușescu's protection. The main beneficiaries of this drastic reshuffle were a group of cynical apparatchiks who specialized in sycophancy and self-effacement: Ștefan Andrei, Iosif Banc, Emil Bobu, Ion Coman, Virgil Cazacu, Constantin Dăscălescu, Ion Dincă, Petru Enache, Manea Mănescu, Constantin Olteanu, Gheorghe Oprea and Dumitru Popescu. Several years later, former
prime minister Ilie Verdet, another member of the party apparatus group and one of Ceaușescu's closest associates since 1955, lost his seat on the Political Executive Committee. It seems that his unique fault had been to have voiced mild reservations about the scope of Elena Ceaușescu's personality cult. Meanwhile, the general secretary and his wife had begun to consider the possibility of grooming their son Nicu to succeed his father. Romania entered the 1980s with an economy in decline, the party apparatus dismayed by the cult of personality and the presidential clan's power abuses, and the society beset by widespread malaise.

**Political Decay in the 1980s**

Since the dramatic turnovers in elite of the early 1980s and Elena Ceaușescu's ascent as the party's second-in-command, the party leadership has become a simple appendage of the general secretary's personal coterie. Assisted by her devoted underling Emil Bobu, a Central Committee secretary in charge of security police affairs and a former Minister of Internal Affairs, Elena Ceaușescu presides over the CC Commission for Cadres and determines the party's personnel policy. The Political Executive Committee elected at the 13th Congress in November 1984 was entirely controlled by the Ceaușescu clan. In the name of a better representation of women to top party echelons, Elena arranged important appointments for her protégés. Lina Ciobanu and Alexandrina Găinușe were elected full PEC members while Maria Ghîțulică, Suzana Gâdea, Ana Mureșan and Elena Nae became candidate PEC members. Emilia Sonea, Aneta Spornic and Cecilia Stan were elected Central Committee members and received important assignments within the party and government apparatus. Other women who entirely owed their careers to Elena's support joined the Party Control Commission: Elisabeta Stătescu became a vice-president and Viorica
Boiborean, Maria Cebuc, Angela Isăroiu, Niculina Moraru and Maria Ștefan became members. The network of Elena’s influence extends to the National Council of the Socialist Democracy and Unity Front chaired by the general secretary; its executive president is Tamara Dobrin, also a CC member who was instrumental in the anti-student repressions of the late 1950s.55

The repository of power in contemporary Romania thus lies in an informal faction headed by Nicolae and Elena. The existence of this non-statutory group is not officially acknowledged and Ceaușescu tries to maintain certain Leninist appearances by summoning occasional PEC meetings and CC plenums. In addition to the President and his wife, this clan includes their son Nicu, Ceaușescu’s brother Ilie, and a tiny group of top party, government and security police officials (Prime Minister Constantin Dăscălescu, Vice-president of the State Council Manea Mănescu, CC Secretaries Emil Bobu, Ion Coman and Constantin Olteanu, Vice-premiers Ion Dincă and Gheorghe Oprea and Minister of Internal Affairs Tudor Postelnicu). It is noteworthy that Emil Bobu, who started his career under Gheorghiu-Dej as a party activist in Suceava county in northern Moldavia, served as Ceaușescu’s Minister of Internal Affairs in the 1970s. Political generals Ion Dincă, Ion Coman and Constantin Olteanu served as heads of the Main Political Directorate of the Romanian Army, which was Ceaușescu’s position in the early 1950s. Although Ion Dincă was apparently linked to the late CC Secretary Virgil Trofin, his presence within the Romanian inner sanctum suggests his ability to switch allegiances.56 Both Dincă and Coman graduated from Soviet military-political schools where they established long-term contacts with rising stars of other Warsaw Pact armies. Ion Coman was a protégé and close friend of former Minister of Defense Ion Ioniță, whose death several years ago passed unmarked by any official obituary.57 General Constantin Olteanu, Coman’s successor as Minister of Defense, was soon replaced by Vasile
Milea. Olteanu then served as first secretary of the Bucharest Party organization, until his recent appointment as CC secretary responsible for ideology.

These men's rise to prominence and apparently stable status in Ceaușescu's entourage indicates a degree of support for the general secretary on the part of a group of influential political officers. On the other hand, because of their affinities and contacts in the army, these apparatchiks cannot ignore the discontent of military men forced to execute such economic tasks as agricultural labor and running electrical power stations. In addition, an important role is played by the general secretary's advisors appointed by the CC Commission for Cadres (Emilian Dobrescu, Constantin Mitea, Eugen Florescu and Ilie Văduva). For all practical purposes, the RCP highest apparatus is now an extension of the Ceaușescu clique.

The meetings of the Political Executive Committee and the Central Committee plenums consist of endless paeans to the general secretary and his wife. With its 3.6 million members, the RCP is proportionately the largest Communist Party in Europe, which makes it a mammoth military formation rather than a living political organism. At the same time, the increase in size of both the CC and PEC has turned them into mere rubber stamp bodies, totally devoid of independence and unable to initiate any move against the ruling team.58

But these elements alone cannot explain Ceaușescu's successful, almost miraculous hold on power. Another factor which should be taken into account is the anxiety of the elite: top party and security police apparatchiks have endorsed Ceaușescu's excesses for so long that they would be unable to disassociate themselves from him if an anarchic mass uprising actually occurred. Because the members of the inner circle have been stripped of political and intellectual credentials, accomplices as they are in the ruin of the country's economy and the overall repression, they must persevere in this game. Theirs is a deliberate
blindness rooted in fear, self-contempt and despair: as British scholar Mark Almond has stated, "whatever rivalries and ambitions exist within the elite, they know that if they do not hang together, they will certainly hang separately. If they fall with each other, the release of pressure from below may well lead to an uncontrollable explosion."59

As a result of this situation, the Stalinist features of the regime have been exacerbated: the fascination with heavy industry and the reliance on central planning as a panacea to cure economic difficulties; the cult of the leader as a main mobilizational technique; the paralysis of the party and the monopolization of power in the hands of a conspiratorial clique; the decisive role for the security police in preventing any form of resistance; harassment of intellectuals and frequent ideological purges.

Ceaușescu's personalistic leadership style and his Messianic drive to turn Romania into a Communist "paradise" during his lifetime have aggravated these characteristics even more. In 1982, he decided that Romania should become financially independent by paying its more than $10 billion foreign debt at breakneck speed. To achieve this, he imposed drastic austerity measures forcing the people to lower their electricity and gas consumption by using one 40-watt light bulb per household; the country's agricultural exports were stepped up to bring in foreign currency, and ration cards were introduced for vital foodstuffs. The foreign debt was halved in five years, but living standards have declined proportionately.60 In April 1989, Ceaușescu proudly announced that Romania had fully paid its foreign debt. He did not mention, however, the toll this exploit had exacted from the people. On the contrary, he warned Romanians not to raise their expectations since the party's policy of gigantic industrial investments would proceed as in the past. Moreover, a special law codified Romania's decision not to accept any foreign loans. Opening the CC Plenum on April 12, 1989,
Ceauşescu solemnly declared: "I wish to tell the Plenum, the party as a whole and all our people that Romania fully repaid its foreign debt by the end of March. This is a brilliant result of our people's work for the economic and social development of the country. It proves the might of the Romanian socialist economy and opens wonderful prospects for the implementation of the party program of building the multilaterally developed socialist society and for Romania's advance to communism." 61

The general social landscape in Ceauşescu's Romania after 1982 has thus been reminiscent of Enver Hoxha's Albania: instead of more opening to the West and political relaxation, the regime has seemed intent upon reinforcing controls, suppressing all opposition and overplaying its nationalist rhetoric. Ceauşescu apparently conceives of his increasingly reclusive country as a besieged fortress surrounded by mortal enemies, whose unique chance for survival consists of his enlightened guidance.

Ceauşescu's ambition to turn his country into a modern industrial society has not succeeded for want of incentives for social participation. The shocking decline in living standards after 1980, associated with his grandiose schemes of forced industrialization and total economic autarky, have engendered widespread feelings of despair and helplessness.

Whereas all the other East European regimes have renounced the Stalinist autocratic pattern in favor of an oligarchic one, Ceauşescu has abolished any form of collective decision-making. His is an ideal of a totally regimented, organically unified community, guided by an all-embracing ideology and unflinchingly fulfilling the behests of the leader. As a committed Stalinist, Ceauşescu has continued to pay lip service to the Communist party's leading role despite the party's degeneration into an instrument of his power: "The party is the vital core of our whole nation, which emits energy and revolutionary fervor, that
gives an impetus to the whole socioeconomic activity. It is well-known that there cannot be life on earth without the energy and heat of the sun. In the same way, without a revolutionary party, there cannot be progressive changes and we cannot successfully build socialism and communism -- the golden dream of mankind."62

In no other East European country is the chasm between rhetoric and reality so painfully experienced as in Ceaușescu's Romania. Not only are Romanians compelled to acquiesce in this distressing display of self-congratulation, but they are also required to endorse it as the apex of political democracy. In its major features, Ceaușescu's cult of personality represents the climax of the Stalinist attempt to annihilate independent initiative and to solidify a national consensus based on emotional identification with the supreme leader.63 While the party proclaims that living standards have magnificently improved, Romanians know that they have never lived under such abject conditions since World War II.64 Attracted out of political and psychological insecurity to monumental forms of immortalizing his role in history, the president has wasted the country's resources on a new civic center in Bucharest. The price has been the destruction of many architectural masterpieces, the demolition of the historic center of the city, and the forced evacuation of thousands of families from their houses.65 Rhetorical delirium and architectural extravaganzas merge in his pledge to the future: "Today, I have inaugurated the task of building the House of the Republic and the Boulevard of the Victory of Socialism, the grandiose and luminous foundations of this epoch of profound transformations and innovations, of monumental buildings which will persist across the ages."66 But, as one Western observer has remarked, "the majestic horror conjures up images of Dante's inferno."67

Instead of delivering food to his starving population, Ceaușescu has indulged in ruinous economic projects and organized relentless campaigns for the
total "homogenization of the socialist Romanian nation." The 1987 decision to bulldoze more than 7,000 villages was linked to Ceaușescu's view of the countryside as a repository of "reactionary" individualist nostalgia and anti-socialist resentment. Moreover, he envisioned this operation as a means of extirpating the roots of the Hungarian cultural identity in Transylvania. The creation of the "agro-industrial centers" has thus been the latest in a series of ill-conceived measures dictated by the President's inclination for social engineering.

Fidelity to the original intentions of Stalinism has indeed been the paramount characteristic of Ceaușescuism. In his refusal to surrender to the logic of common sense, in his romance with a nebulous future, and in his adversity to reform-minded proposals, he has found more than mere instruments for political survival: his orthodoxy is genuine, and so is his indignation at Marxist revisionism and liberalism. Like Stalin and Mao, he has transformed the communist party into a simple vehicle for the leader's wishes. More than once he has attacked "intra-party democracy" as a slogan concocted by political enemies. Instead of guaranteeing stability to the party elite, Ceaușescu has instilled among his subordinates a sense of insecurity, fear, and powerlessness. Promotions as well as demotions take place in an erratic way. Apparatchiks do not enjoy safeguards against the omnipotent presidential ire.

At least until 1977, when he ordered the imprisonment of strikers' leaders in the Jiu Valley, Ceaușescu's strategy has not been to physically exterminate real or imaginary enemies. He has preferred to neutralize, besmirch and eventually emasculate his opponents. To deter potential critics, Ceaușescu has demoralized and humiliated the party apparatus, undermined its esprit de corps, engineered a vacuum of power which was filled in by the dynasts. There is no exaggeration in
saying that, like Stalin, Ceaușescu does not preside over a victorious elite, "but over a crushed party, army, state bureaucracy, and even police."\(^{70}\)

Ceaușescu despises his East European peers for being "wimps"; in turn, they are shocked by his histrionic showmanship. To many officials in Yugoslavia, Hungary and Poland both the ideology and the practice of Ceaușescuism represent a self-styled version of socialism, a "deviation" from what is now considered the "mainstream" direction of Soviet-style regimes.\(^{71}\) Even Georges Marchais, the general secretary of the French Communist Party whose dogmatism is well-known, finds Ceaușescu an embarrassment and refuses to see Romania as a socialist country. The President himself is thus primarily responsible for Romania's international isolation.\(^{72}\)

In the myriad of inefficient institutions in Ceaușescu's Romania, the cult is probably the most perfunctory and counter-productive. Instead of fostering Ceaușescu's power, it has become a major liability. Since the official propaganda attributes all real or imaginary accomplishments to the president's "visionary genius," the unofficial inclination is to hold Ceaușescu guilty for all failures, blunders, and hardships. The reverse of Ceaușescu's public idolization is his private demonization.

How successful has been Ceaușescu in the attempt to use the cult of his personality as the chief ideological underpinning of the regime? Have the symbology and iconology of the cult affected the collective psyche and generated mass emotional identification with the leader? In order to be effective, a cult must be subjectively persuasive, institutionally guaranteed, and socially integrative.\(^{73}\) None of these conditions is met in Ceaușescu's Romania. Unimpressed by Ceaușescu's rhetorical exaltation of the party, the apparatus perceives the cult as a limitation of its institutional prestige and authority. Consistently humiliated and publicly chastised for failure to live up to the
President's expectations, party and government officials resent his eccentric and unpredictable conduct. A chasm has emerged between the top echelon made up of Ceaușescu's cronies and the middle and low-level bureaucracy.

Of course, Ceaușescu still enjoys the generously-financed support of the political police, but no uplifting idealism lies there. As for the socializing dimension, Romanians simulate allegiance to their leader, but their real feelings transpire in the disparaging anecdotes and rumors about the Ceaușescu clan.74 Party propaganda describes Ceaușescu as the demiurge of national destiny, the "architect of world peace," and a coryphaeus of revolutionary thought. The entry on Ceaușescu in the Romanian encyclopaedia is larger than those on Marx, Engels, and Lenin combined. Ceaușescu is lionized as the "Hero among the Nation's Heroes," "Great Revolutionary Helmsman" and "Most Beloved Son of the Fatherland." Countless articles, essays, poems, plays, and novels pay tribute to his "grandiose achievements." According to the authors of these texts, Ceaușescu's years in power will be remembered as the most heroic and decisive in Romanian history. Novelist Eugen Barbu, one of the most prolific artisans of Ceaușescu's cult, went so far as to compare the president's morality to that of a saint. Similarly enraptured, party ideologue Dumitru Popescu has likened Ceaușescu to Julius Caesar, Alexander of Macedonia, Pericles, Cromwell, Napoleon, Peter the Great, and Lincoln. The president's wife, Elena Ceaușescu, enjoys a parallel cult of personality. Not only Nicolae Ceaușescu's birthday, but also Elena's, have become occasions for eulogizing the couple's "revolutionary ardor," "immense merits in the building of the most just society," "scientific genius," "unlimited selflessness," etc.

The cult is experienced as a surreal amalgam of empty symbols and baroque hyperboles. It simulates rather than creates authority. Precisely because of its sham nature, the cult must be continuously refueled and enhanced, in total
disregard for the genuine feelings of the population. The less popular the president and his camarilla, the more extravagant the rhetoric of the professional propagandists. This is the crux of the Romanian paradox: despite the amazing volume of panegyrics and the ostensible conformity of the population, Ceaușescu's regime is probably the most vulnerable in East-Central Europe.

Domestic and external factors will undoubtedly obstruct the fulfilment of a dynastic scenario. But if succession is not resolved in the near future, a major social explosion could break out, creating a situation comparable to that in Hungary in the fall of 1956. This would add an exceptional epilogue to the already long list of Romanian peculiarities: because of his international isolation, Ceaușescu would not find any supporters either in the Warsaw Pact or in the West. At a historical juncture when Gorbachev seeks to humanize communism, Moscow has no interest in defending a Stalinist dictatorship. Neither would the West be interested in making the slightest gesture on behalf of a bankrupt regime with an abysmal human rights record.

This self-induced disaster would be the ultimate effect of a political make-up never purged of the most repressive features of national Stalinism. As J. F. Brown has noted: "The greatest single factor in Romania's internal debacle has been Ceaușescu capriciousness. No European leader in the second half of the twentieth century has so personified the debilitating effects of power more than he has." 76

**Prospects for the Opposition**

For many years Western reports on Eastern Europe have described Romania as a state where political opposition was conspicuously absent. References to that country focused on the Ceaușescu's cult of personality, the economic decline, and some autonomous initiatives in foreign policy which were
often misconstrued as indicative of a Titoist propensity. Unlike other Soviet bloc nations, it seemed that Romanians had abandoned any hopes of change for the better. To be sure, there were several endeavors to develop autonomous initiatives: suffice it to mention Paul Goma’s human rights movement in 1977 and the short-lived attempt to create an independent trade union 1979, but they were both suppressed. A milestone in post-war Romanian history was the strike of the coal miners in the Jiu Valley in the summer of 1977. Ceaușescu and his clan backed off temporarily, but not surprisingly, as soon as the strikers resumed work, severe reprisals were unleashed against the main organizers.

But is Romania really a country without civil society? Have the Communist party and its current leader so been so successful as to have eliminated the very thought of resistance? All forms of political dissent have met with the severe reaction of the ubiquitous Securitate, the regime’s secret police, perhaps Romania’s only efficiently functioning institution. The development of a structured network of independent initiatives has thus been prevented by the regime’s traditional Stalinist methods of terrorist controls. Creative unions -- writers, theater and film workers, composers, graphic artists and art critics -- cannot exert any influence on political dynamics. They have lost even a vestigial degree of influence since 1981, when their party organizations were dissolved in order to preclude the development of autonomous discussion groups. Indicatively, the last Conference of the Writers’ Union took place in the spring of 1981. To the dismay of the party hacks, on that occasion the most vocal supporters of Ceaușescuism (Eugen Barbu, Adrian Păunescu, Dinu Săraru, Paul Anghel, Dan Zamfirescu, Ion Brad, Ion Dodu Bălan, Ion Lâncranjan, Mihai Ungheanu and Nicolae Dragoș) were denied seats in the Union’s Council. Since then, members of this demagogic faction have gone out of their way to slander
their liberal opponents to satisfy the presidential couple's yearning for glorification.\textsuperscript{80}

To express their opposition to dictatorship, liberal Romanian writers have become masterful practitioners of allusive, Aesopic language. Quite frequently, their writings express political discontent and moral outrage, but they have avoided public utterances of collective grievances in the manner of Ludvík Vaculík, Václav Havel or Pavel Kohout in Czechoslovakia during the historical Writers' Congress in the summer of 1967.\textsuperscript{81} Saturated with hackneyed slogans, Romanians envy Hungarians and Poles for what they perceive as a tolerant political environment. But for a democratic opposition to emerge and coalesce, basic elbow room would be needed: autonomous spaces where informal communication could ensure the free flow of opinions.\textsuperscript{82}

In Romania, unlike Poland and Hungary, the methodology of domination has not been softened. Ideological conditioning and political coercion remain the foundation of the regime. In a country where all typewriters must be registered with the police, where access to xerox machines is kept under strict surveillance and a siege mentality is feverishly entertained, the chances to create a samizdat counterculture are dramatically reduced.

For a long time, political opposition in Romania has been diffuse and evanescent, surviving at a level of individual moral indignation rather than as a political coalition of like-minded activists. Attempts have been undertaken to reestablish the traditional political formations -- the National Liberal and the National Peasant parties -- banned since 1947. In March 1987, a group of independent union activists issued a platform calling for urgent political, economic, and social changes.\textsuperscript{83} The constitution of underground resistance networks further bears out the radicalization of the anti-Ceaușescu opposition and is indicative of the painful revival of the civil society. The programmatic
statement of Romanian Democratic Action -- an underground group with anonymous membership formed in 1985 -- blends classical liberalist ideas with theses inspired by Christian Democratic and Social Democratic political philosophies. Mention should also be made of the student demonstration in Iaşi in May 1987 -- the largest in Romania since the student unrest in 1968. But the major problem remains the absence of an organized oppositional network able to articulate alternatives to Ceauşescu's course. Even informal contacts between dissidents and working class activists have been almost non-existent. This is not because these are not perceived as necessary in Romania, but rather because security police controls make them practically impossible. True, working class radicalism has intensified since 1977, but, until very recently, it has failed to arouse the kind of broad popular support it has enjoyed in Poland. However, there was a spectacular recent manifestation of popular resistance, the working class demonstration in Braşov on November 15, 1987, which showed that those in power cannot long ignore deep-seated frustrations without the risk of violent confrontations.

All this notwithstanding, for as long as the presidential clan continues to wield unlimited power, political change is more likely to come from a party apparatus-security police coalition than from collective pressure from below. Although the party has itself lost many of its traditional attributes and privileges and become a mere transmission belt for the leader's directives, its members remain the only force which could do away with Ceauşescu. As Mihai Botez, the Romanian human rights activist, put it: "I don't believe the Soviets have enough power to replace the Romanian leadership or impose a new one. But such change could come from within the party."86

Among the characteristics of oppositional behavior in a post-totalitarian society are first and foremost that one must repudiate the official forms of
manipulation and establish a personal code of sincerity and honor. In other words, one must live in truth and dignity. According to the Czech writer and Charter 77 activist Václav Havel, the criteria for the definition of the dissident subculture include: its visibility, its independence from official infiltration, the appeal of its ideas not only to various groups in the concerned country, but also to the West.87

Because of the peculiarities of the Romanian neo-Stalinist political culture, then, the consolidation of such a collective dissident effort has failed to materialize.88 To gain maturity and stir responsive chords among different social groups, dissident activities must transcend solitary expressions of despair, but the Romanian regime's strategy has consisted in stripping its critics of the possibility to publicly articulate their views. There is absolutely no forum or channel for disaffected intellectuals to spell out their grievances.

Resistance to Ceaușescu's politics is thus largely an individual rather than a collective option.89 Some of the regime's critics have been forced into exile, others have continued their activities in Romania. Those who manifest the slightest doubt about the leader's omniscience are publicly castigated, expelled from the party, turned into non-persons, or even forced to commit suicide.90 Unfortunately, because of the prevailing repressive conditions these activists have failed to mobilize significant social support.91 There is no exaggeration in saying that Ceaușescu's main ally remains the psychology of terror. In the words of a Romanian dissident: "The present situation is characterized by a paralyzing fear. Pressure is exerted upon all of us, the pressure of force directed against common sense..."92

Until very recently, it seemed that Ceaușescu could count on the political apathy of the working class. At the same time, his supremacy within the party elite was basically unquestioned. The regime's surprising stability has been based
on classical totalitarian methods combined with original devices of social mobilization such as the exploitation of nationalism. Ceaușescu's self-styled national Stalinism capitalizes on deep-seated collective frustrations and anguishes. It is an attempt to compensate for the Communist party's conspicuous deficit of legitimacy through the creation of a simulated sense of national cohesion against alleged foreign conspiracies. If we want to speak about a "social contract" in communist Romania, then it deals primarily with the party's post-1963 posture as the guarantor of the country's autonomy from the Soviet Union. In other words, national independence has been simulated in order to maintain a political order inimical to social autonomy.

The Rebellion of the Old Guard

Despite all-pervasive controls, political opposition to Ceaușescu has continued to develop. To his dismay, a major attack on his autocratic rule came from his former political comrades. At the beginning of March 1989, six former top figures of the Romanian Communist Party addressed an open letter to Ceaușescu. The document represents both a scathing indictment of his calamitous course and alternative political platform. Undoubtedly stimulated by Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, the signatories accused Ceaușescu of having discredited the image of socialism. Avoiding unnecessary offensive remarks about the cult of personality and the monopolization of political power by the presidential clan, they advocated the establishment of a lawful socialist state through strict observance of constitutional stipulations. They said that they considered the ongoing "systematization" campaign an insult to all Romanian citizens and decried their country's alarming isolation both East and West. Significantly, the letter did not touch on intra-party issues and focused its demands on basic human rights. One cannot forget, however, that by sending
their letter abroad the six veterans transgressed the crucial Leninist taboo according to which party affairs must be discussed within the party organization; but there is no real party life in Romania, anyway. The authors apparently decided to engage in this extremely dangerous factious action as a desperate gesture. This group reached the conclusion that Ceaușescu's vagaries and tantrums have jeopardized both the cultural and biological survival of the Romanian nation. The text of the six veterans' pathbreaking document is reproduced below.

To President Nicolae Ceaușescu:

At a time when the very idea of the socialism for which we fought is discredited by your policy, and when our country is being isolated in Europe, we have decided to speak up. We are perfectly aware that by doing so we are risking our liberty and even our life, but we feel duty bound to appeal to you to reverse the present course before it is too late.

1. The international community is reproaching you for the non-observance of the Helsinki Final Act which you have signed yourself. Romanian citizens are reproaching you for the non-observance of the constitution on which you have sworn. Here are the facts:

   A) The whole plan for systematization of villages and the forced removal of peasants to three-storey apartment blocks run against Article 36 of the constitution which protects the right to personal property of a household, with annexes and the terrain on which they are situated.

   B) The decree forbidding Romanian citizens to have contact with foreigners has never been voted by the legislative body and never published, thus lacking legal power. And yet our citizens are threatened with being fired, harassed, arrested and sentenced on that basis.

   C) The civic center, the biggest multi-billion lei investment of Romania, has no public budget and is being built against all existing laws regulating constructions and their financing. The cost of that immense building has tripled because of changes you are ordering every month in the interior and exterior of the building.

   D) The Securitate, which we created to defend the socialist order against exploiting classes is now directed against workers demanding their rights, against old members of the party and honest intellectuals exercising their right to petition (Article 34) and freedom of speech (Article 28) guaranteed by the constitution.
E) Factories and institutions are ordered to force their employees to work on Sundays in contravention of Article 19 of the constitution and the labour code.

F) Mail is systematically violated and our telephone conversations cut off in contravention of Article 34 guaranteeing their privacy. To sum up, the constitution is virtually suspended and there is no legal system in force. You must admit, Mr. President, that a society cannot function if the authorities starting from the top, show disrespect for the law.

2. Planning no longer works in the Romanian economy. The meetings of the Executive Political Committee are all past-oriented, exhorting the workers to make up for the unfulfilled plan of previous year, previous semester or previous month. An increasing number of factories lack raw materials, energy or markets.

3. Agricultural policy is also in disarray. Harsh administrative measures are directed against the peasants who, according to your own data, provide 40 percent of vegetables, 56 percent of fruit, 60 percent of milk and 44 percent of meat, though they have only 12 percent of the arable land. But, of course, predominant in the villages is now the fear of being "systematized" with seven or eight thousand villages threatened with razing. Above all economic, cultural and humanitarian objections of the civilized world to that program, a legitimate question arises: why urbanize villages when you cannot ensure decent conditions of urban life in the cities, namely heating, lighting, transportation, not to mention food. A government which five winters in a row has been unable to solve such vital problems for the population proves incompetent and incapable to govern. Therefore, we are not pressing on you any demand in this respect.

4. The very fact that Germans, Hungarians and Jews are emigrating en masse shows that the policy of forced assimilation should be renounced.

5. Finally, we are deeply worried that Romania’s international position and prestige is rapidly deteriorating. As you know, this is concretely shown by the decision of quite a few states to close their embassies in Bucharest. Most alarming, embassies of such European states as Denmark and Portugal have already been closed and others may follow. Our growing isolation affects not only diplomatic relations. We have lost the the most-favored-nation status for trade with the United States and as a result some of our textile factories have no orders. The EEC is unwilling to extend its trade agreement with Romania, which will negatively affect other sectors of our economy. You have always maintained that summit meetings are decisive in improving interstate relations. But how are you going to improve Romania’s external relations when all the leaders of the non-communist nations of Europe refuse to meet with you? Romania is and remains a European country and as such must advance
along with the Helsinki process and not turn against it. You started changing the geography of the countryside, but you cannot remove Romania to Africa.

To stop the negative processes both domestic and international besetting our nation we appeal to you, as a first step, to take the following measures:

1. To state categorically in unequivocal terms that you have renounced the plan of systematization of villages.
2. To restore the constitutional guarantees regarding the rights of citizens. This will enable you to observe the decisions of the Vienna conference on human rights.
3. To put an end to food exports which are threatening the biological existence of our nation.

Once such measures are taken, we are prepared to participate in a constructive spirit in a dialogue with the government on the ways and means to overcome the present impasse.

The panicked reaction of the Ceaușescu dictatorship to the memorandum showed that it touched the president’s major vulnerability: his chronic deficit of revolutionary credentials, and its corollary, his pathological need for adulation. No myth has been more intensely entertained by the official media than that of Ceaușescu's "heroic anti-fascist past." To cement this myth, Ceaușescu needs recognition by the "Old Guard." With the letter, the legend was subverted by people whose loyalty to the party could not be denied. After the letter was broadcast by the BBC World Service (March 10, 1989), the secret police placed the six signatories under house arrest and phone contacts with them were impossible. As of the time this text was written, they had been deported to unknown places and rumors circulated about the preparation of a show-trial against those "enemies of the people." It seems Romania has come to a point where the slightest form of dissent or even calls for respect for existing laws are automatically criminalized.93

Some information about the signatories' background is indispensable. Gheorghe Apostol started his career as a trade-union militant. Between 1944 and 1953 and again in the 1960s, he was the chairman of the Romanian Trade Union
Council. He was a full Politburo member between 1944 and 1969 when he was
demoted to a peripheral position as Director General of the General Directorate
of State Reserves. Between April 1954 and October 1955, Apostol was the party's
First Secretary. Until his retirement in 1988, he was Romania's ambassador to
Brazil.

Alexandru Bârlădeanu is an economic expert who played a key role in the
Romanian-Soviet break in 1963-64. He is said to have been one of the main
authors of the RCP Declaration of April 1964, which sanctioned Romanian
autonomism under Ceaușescu's predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. In 1967,
as first Vice-president of the Council of Ministers he advocated economic reforms
similar to those undertaken in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. He resigned from all
party and government positions in December 1968 after a clash with Ceaușescu on
investment and planning policies. A member of the Romanian Academy of
Sciences, he has long headed its economic section.

A former general and ambassador to Budapest, Corneliu Mănescu was
Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1961 and 1972. He contributed
decisively to the improvement of Romania's international image, but lost his job
because of Ceaușescu's intolerance of other people's independent-mindedness
and political prominence. Between 1973 and 1977 he was vice-president of the
National Council of the Socialist Democracy and Unity Front, a mass organization
whose president is Ceaușescu himself. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Mănescu
served as ambassador to France and permanent Romanian delegate to UNESCO.
He failed to be re-elected to the Central Committee at the 13th Congress in 1984.

Constantin Pârvulescu, who fought with the Red Guards in Odessa in 1918,
participated in the formation of the RCP in May 1921. A former student of the
Leninist School in Moscow, he joined the RCP Politburo in the 1930s and became
general secretary in 1944. He was dropped from the Politburo at the 8th
Congress in 1960. Between 1948 and 1960 he was chairman of the Party Control Commission. Pârvulescu came under severe criticism under Gheorghiu-Dej, and when Ceaușescu came to power, he was rehabilitated. He became chairman of the Central Auditing Commission and was overwhelmed with honors and titles, including "Hero of the Socialist Republic of Romania," until he publicly attacked the general secretary at the 12th RCP Congress in 1979. After that, the ailing Pârvulescu -- he was born in 1895 -- was kept for many years under house arrest. He is the only Romanian citizen, with the exception of Ceaușescu himself, to have been granted the Lenin Order by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Grigore Ion Răceanu is a veteran of the RCP underground years who was persecuted in the late 1950s for having criticized the dictatorial methods of the party leadership. Expelled from the party in 1958, he was rehabilitated by Ceaușescu in 1965. His wife, Ileana Răceanu, a CC member between 1955 and 1958, was purged by Dej and rehabilitated by Ceaușescu, who offered her the title of "Hero of Socialist Labor" in 1971. She died in 1981.

Silviu Brucan is a political scientist and journalist who served in the 1950s as acting editor of the party newspaper Scînteia. For many years, he belonged to Gheorghiu-Dej’s group of speechwriters. In the 1960s he was ambassador to the United States and the United Nations and later he taught Marxism-Leninism at the Medical School in Bucharest. In November 1987 he issued an appeal on behalf of the Brașov demonstrators. During his visit to the United States in 1988, he voiced strong criticism of Ceaușescu’s personalistic regime. It is thus obvious that Ceaușescu’s challengers belong to the elite of Romanian communism. It can be assumed that their letter will stir responsive chords among members of the disgruntled party Nomenklatura.

Other recent events should be mentioned: the day after the letter of the six veterans was published in the West, Scînteia announced the arrest of Mircea
Răceanu, former deputy director of the U.S. and Canada desk in the Romanian Foreign Ministry, on the charge of "high treason on behalf of a foreign power." It seems that Mircea Răceanu's unique "guilt" was to carry with him a copy of the "letter of the six." Since he is the step-son of Grigore Răceanu, one of the six signatories, one can see this retaliatory action as attempt to intimidate his step-father. Using a method reminiscent of the worst excesses of Stalinist times, the Romanian media published letters from "angry citizens" demanding the merciless punishment of the "despicable traitor."

In January 1989 three journalists of the government newspaper *România Liberă* -- Mihai Creangă, Anton Uncu and Petre Mihai Băcanu -- were arrested while trying to print a special issue condemning the dictatorship. No information has been released about their fate and there are indications that the *Securitate* has also imprisoned their families. At the beginning of March, poet Dan Deşliu addressed an open letter to Nicolae Ceauşescu to protest his absolute power, the destruction of villages and the worsening of the economic situation. After the letter was broadcast by Western radio stations, Deşliu was attacked on the street by security police agents. To protest this treatment, he started a hunger strike. The regime reacted by having him forcibly interned in a psychiatric hospital.

**The Soviet Factor**

A recent article in the Hungarian daily *Nepszabadsag* referred to the six old-timers who signed the March letter to Ceauşescu as "the true representatives of the Romanian people." More than an expression of Hungarian exasperation with Ceauşescu's wilful nationalities policy, this statement indicates Romania's isolation within the Warsaw Pact. With Mikhail Gorbachev enjoining East European leaders to engage in economic and political restructuring, Ceauşescu cannot count on the Soviet "benign neglect" of Romanian affairs. His adamant
opposition to reforms and the unequivocal criticism of Gorbachev's de-Stalinization campaign have created new tensions in Romania's relations with its powerful Eastern neighbor. To be sure, Soviet officials deny any intention to interfere in Romanian internal affairs.

The Kremlin leaders cannot, however, ignore the dramatic aggravation of the political, social, and economic crisis in Romania. Well informed about this explosive situation, the Kremlin can use its leverage to accelerate the succession. A popular uprising in Romania followed by repression would be for the Soviets a most unwelcome occurrence at the moment Gorbachev wrestles to revitalize the socialist system and establish new forms of legitimation based on the recognition of a "state of law." Symptomatically, a prominent member of the Polish leadership described Ceaușescu's rule as "a slap in the face of socialism." Even more outspoken, a senior Hungarian diplomat commented on Romania: "Just to own the means of production doesn't make you a socialist country. A fascist can do that, too." This open disapproval of his leadership methods must sound quite ominous to the Romanian president, who has branded Gorbachev's politics of glasnost a "right-wing deviation" from orthodox Marxism-Leninism. Faithful to his Stalinist convictions, Ceaușescu clings to the hidebound dogma of class struggle as the driving force of history. At the April 1989 CC Plenum, he openly rejected Gorbachev's "new thinking" with its preference for "universal human interests": "There is no way in which one can think of socialist development and talk about renouncing, in one way or another, or diminishing the class struggle. Class struggle has always been the basis of mankind's progress and social development. The struggle between oppressors and oppressed and between the old and the new has always been the foundation of human social development. To say today that the class struggle should be replaced by other concepts means to
sentence socialism to stagnations and to come, in one form or the other, to the aid of capitalism and imperialism."101

For the time being, the Soviets seem interested in preserving their image as neutral observers of the ongoing events in Ceaușescu's fiefdom.102 However, their apparent low profile should not be taken for indifference to Romanian matters. Moreover, they realize that for the first time in Romanian history, a Soviet-supported leadership would enjoy genuine popular support. Even Romanian intellectuals, traditionally suspicious of anything imported from Moscow, seem now tempted by Gorbachev's experiment with glasnost. Since the Romanian media carry only in abridged and severely censored versions of Gorbachev's major pronouncements, publications like Pravda and Ogonyok are surreptitiously circulated by those fascinated with the Soviet thaw.

Poet Mircea Dinescu's euphoric portrayal of Gorbachev is illustrative of this fascination with Soviet changes: "Gorbachev's arrival and his astonishing reforms revealed that the pretext of the Muscovite "boogieman" had perfectly suited the needs of the dogmatic leaders from other socialist countries, who had exploited it for their own purpose, to put the breaks on opposition and perpetuate their own Stalinism. I do not know whether he is or is not considered a 'good Tsar' . . . (in the Soviet Union), but millions who had been forced into silence . . . in Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and Romania perceive him as the Messiah of socialism with a human face."103

The Soviets cannot watch impassively the debacle of the communist regime in Romania. It is thus very likely that they will alert pro-Soviet elements within the Romanian military, party apparatus and secret police to be prepared for the redistribution of power within the top elite.

Succession Dilemmas
A negative consensus is the hallmark of the Romanian political equation: increasingly alienated from the civil society, the ruling group has lost any political authority, and only fear, repression, and a paralyzing feeling of powerlessness among the ruled explain the perpetuation of the Ceauşescu regime. In other words, the country is experiencing a classic pre-revolutionary situation.

In this closed society, the conducător’s rule is totally unchecked. No institutional bodies or legally consecrated principles of accountability limit Ceauşescu’s absolute power. His orders must be unfailingly carried out and endless subservience is the prescribed pattern of conduct for anybody interested in worldly achievements. To maintain a minimal amount of ideological purity, the Communist party has ostensibly continued to function, but its prerogatives have been drastically curtailed. For all intents and purposes, the party apparatus has been annihilated as a center of political initiative. Stripped of any autonomy and morally dismayed, its role is to obey Ceauşescu’s injunctions.

A skilled manipulator, Ceauşescu is suspicious of even his closest collaborators. In the intrigue-ridden universe of communist power, he has learned that no associate is trustworthy since plots are usually fomented by precisely those who pledge the greatest fidelity. From his predecessor, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Ceauşescu has learned the advantages of the old divide et impera politics. Hence, since his ascent to power in March 1965, Ceauşescu’s main concern has been to neutralize his would-be adversaries. No method has been considered too devious to achieve this goal: for example, Ceauşescu first drew former prime minister Ion Gheorghe Maurer into his camp, only to oust him some years later because of Ceauşescu’s fear that Maurer’s international prestige could overshadow his own reputation. Identical methods resulted in the purge of other influential apparatchiks and secured the general secretary’s hegemony within the party elite.
To ensure the dynastic succession, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu have expedited the political career of their youngest son, Nicu. A candidate-member of the Political Executive Committee, Nicu is the first secretary of the Sibiu county party committee. This seems to be only a transitional phase, a required *rite de passage* towards his appointment as a Central Committee secretary. Ramifications of the Ceaușescu clan can be found among the military - a brother, Ilie Ceaușescu, is the chief of the Main Political Directorate of the Romanian Army and a first-deputy Minister of Defense, - and in the security police, with another brother, Nicolae A. Ceaușescu, in charge of the personnel department. Other close and distant relatives hold influential positions in the Ministry of Agriculture, the State Planning Commission, the mass media, etc. Each of them has created his own clientele, but their political survival decisively depends on Ceaușescu’s staying in power. Not a single member of the extended Ceaușescu family would politically outlive his protector’s downfall.

Regardless of Nicu Ceaușescu’s grooming for the succession, this scenario seems most unlikely, for he is associated with the worst abuses of the the Ceaușescu era. His indulgence in luxury, alcoholism, and womanizing are well-known in Romania. As the leader of the Communist Youth Union, he was instrumental in setting up forced labor sites. Of course, he may try to distance himself from his parents’ policies and project a more liberal image, but nobody in the party apparatus would support the establishment of a Ceaușescu dynasty. On the contrary, it can be safely assumed that a negative unanimity will deprive Nicu Ceaușescu of any political power at the moment the succession issue becomes urgent. The same can be said about Elena Ceaușescu: Even those party personalities who owe their career to her cannot forget and forgive her supercilious, tactless conduct. Widely perceived as the chief person responsible for the ongoing catastrophic course, Elena’s political legitimacy is universally
disputed. As with Jiang Qing (Mme Mao) in post-Maoist China, pillorying Elena Ceaușescu would be therefore the most convenient method to accomplish necessary political exorcism when a new leadership claims political innocence. The same people who have worshipped Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu will discover a reservoir of legitimacy in stigmatizing their reign.106

The pinnacle of power in Ceaușescu's Romania is populated by colorless, obedient people, frightened by the whims of those whom they profess to worship. But favorable external and internal circumstances could embolden these bureaucrats. There are deep resentments and painful frustrations in their souls. Most of them have grown disaffected with Ceaușescu's erratic decisions. Hence, an internal party coup is no longer a far-fetched hypothesis.

One of the most likely candidates to succeed Ceaușescu is Ion Iliescu, once the president's protégé and presumably the favorite of the party apparatus. Educated in Moscow in the early 1950s, where he reportedly met Gorbachev, Iliescu belongs to a younger generation of reform-minded Communists. In 1971, Iliescu -- then a party secretary in charge of ideology -- lost his seat in the Secretariat because he opposed the "mini-cultural revolution."107 His alleged sins, "intellectualism" and "liberalism", might be conveniently evoked in a confrontation with Ceaușescu and his supporters. During Gorbachev's visit to Romania in May 1987, Iliescu was asked to leave Bucharest for one week to avoid an encounter with his potential Soviet protector. Later, in a very unusual article published in the main Romanian literary magazine in September 1987, Iliescu advocated "the development of effective forms of social control over the power and decision-making factors." Written in a Gorbachevite style, Iliescu's essay referred to these power forces as inherently conservative, interested in preserving the status quo, and therefore a major source of social alienation.108
Any succession scenario depends on the attitude of the security police and the military. Recently promoted as a Central Committee Secretary in charge of ideology, General Constantin Olteanu -- who is also a full member of the Political Executive Committee -- might become a contender himself. As a CC secretary in charge of military and justice issues, former Defense Minister Ion Coman could mobilize support both from the party apparatus and the army. Former prime minister Ilie Verdet, who suffered a major demotion in 1984, apparently because of his resistance to Elena Ceausescu's directives, could also emerge as a likely candidate for heading a regenerated party leadership. Other contenders could be former propaganda chief Paul Niculescu-Mizil and deputy prime minister Stefan Andrei. Niculescu-Mizil's name symbolized the liberal promises of the first post-Dej years and his low profile in recent years can be interpreted as an attempt to preserve his political credit for the forthcoming struggles. On the other hand, it seems quite unlikely that Emil Bobu, widely perceived as the most loyal lieutenant of the current general secretary, could succeed him in the event of an intra-party coup. More likely, he would be held accountable for the security police abuses and the virtual dissolution of the party as an independent institution.

There are, of course, other possible scenarios for the end of Ceausescu's reign. One issue to consider: any leader who would succeed the incumbent leader would have to reassess the Stalinist legacy and explain how Romania embarked on a course so deviant and exceptional that it has culminated in almost total estrangement from the international community. How were Titoist promises of the 1960s abandoned on behalf of an experiment in hyper-Stalinist personalistic autocracy? How did the unbound glorification of Ceausescu's "universal genius" come to replace the official Marxist ideology? Is the current Romanian regime an exception in the history of Soviet-type regimes, or is it rather one of the possible
developments of these societies under certain historical conditions, linked to economic backwardness and the scarcity of local democratic traditions?

**Conclusion**

A post-Ceauşescu leadership will necessarily restore the prerogatives of the party apparatus and rehabilitate the concept and practice of "collective leadership." Return to the "Leninist norms" of party life will be the slogan of the new leading group. After the distressing experience of Ceauşescuism, it is unlikely that the elite would accept again the rise of another "strongman." Like Khrushchev's successors, the post-Ceauşescu Romanian leaders will expose his schemes as regrettable distortions of the party's correct "general line."

The expanding social unrest in various Romanian cities, as well as resistance to Ceauşescu spelled out by members of the nomenklatura suggest that for many in that country it is urgent to do something before it is too late. Even influential members of the security police fear the consequences of an anarchic social explosion. The emergence of an anti-Ceauşescu coalition made up of frustrated party apparatchiks, disenchanted technocrats, and liberal intellectuals thus seems increasingly likely.

For more than twenty years, Ceauşescu has succeeded in deterring his domestic opponents by manipulating national symbols and patriotic aspirations. Unfortunately, the autonomist potential has been wasted because of Ceauşescu's unreconstructed Stalinist beliefs and methods. To solve the country's problems, a new leadership will have to renounce totalitarian practices, overhaul the party's dogmatic ideology, and finally embark on the much too long postponed reforms.
NOTES

1 The Ceauşescus have three children: Valentin, born in 1947, a nuclear physicist; Zoia, born in 1948, a researcher in mathematics; and Nicu, born in 1951, who graduated from the Faculty of Physics of the University of Bucharest in 1975. Although Zoia held important positions in the Communist Youth Union while a student at the University of Bucharest in the late 1960s, it seems that of the three children only Nicu has expressed real commitment to political activism.


9 "Ubu Conducator", his wife, empress Elena, his pitiable son Nicu, his brothers Ilie and Ione lead their nation to wreckage and oppress the Hungarian and German minorities which have lived in that country for centuries." See Yves Cuau, "Ubu Conducator," L'Express (Paris), February 24, 1989, p. 8.


11 These accusations against Foriş were used to legitimize Dej's factious activities during the war and present Dej and his allies as the "nucleus of healthy forces" within the illegal RCP. Following the CPSU 22nd Congress and Khrushchev's renewed anti-Stalin campaign, Dej needed to preempt any attempt to point to his personal role in the organization of Stalinist terror in Romania. See Robert R. King, The History of the RCP, pp. 43-44.

12 Other prominent members of the RCP Moscow Center were: Petre Borilă (Iordan Dragan Rusev), Dumitru Coliu (Dimitar Kolevj, Constantin Doncea, Vanda Nikiški, Dumitru Petrescu, Leont Răutu (Lev Oigenstein), Valer Roman (Ernst Neuländer), Aurel Stancu and Gheorghe Stoica (Moscou Cohn). Many of the RCP founders were executed in the USSR during the Great Purge: Imre Aladar, Ecaterina Arboe, Alexandru Dobrogeanu-Gherea, David Fabian, Eugen (Jeno) Rozvany, Timotei Marin, Gelber Moscovici, Marcel Pauker (Luximin) et al. Among other "sins," these RCP veterans were reproached for their long association with Dr. Christian Rakovskiy, a towering personality within Romanian Social Democracy before his involvement in Bolshevik politics.

13 Most of the CC members were elected unanimously. Ceauşescu's whimsical, often cantankerous behavior was well-known to former prison-mates from Doftana and Tîrgu-Jiu. At the RCP National Conference in October 1945, it had taken a most persuasive effort by Gheorghiu-Dej to ensure Ceauşescu's election as a CC candidate member.
See Bodnărescu's biographical sketch in Ionescu, *Communism in Romania*, op. cit., p. 350. Together with Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Bodnărescu was instrumental in ensuring Ceaușescu's appointment as general secretary following Dej's death in March 1965. Fascinating details on the succession struggle within the RCP can be found in an interview granted by Gheorghe Apostol to an emigre Romanian newspaper in 1988 and broadcast by the Romanian Service of the Voice of America on March 12, 1989. See "Gh. Apostol la 'Vocea Americii' grație 'Universului'," *Universul Liber* (N. Hollywood, CA.), No. 95, March 1989, pp. 3 and 13.

Mihail Florescu is also the last Jewish member of the Romanian Central Committee. Before leaving Romania for Spain in 1937, Florescu headed the Jewish Student Association in Bucharest. He is probably the last exponent of the RCP's internationalist wing still to hold a significant position in Romania.


Among the Romanian artisans of Ana Pauker's ouster, the most active were Gheorghiu-Dej, Emil Bodnărescu, Iosif Chișinevschi, Miron Cîntinănescu, Alexandru Moghiroș, and Leonte Răutu. In the spring of 1952, Dej and Chișinevschi visited Moscow several times and held intense consultations with Stalin about the forthcoming purge in Romania.

For instance, the decision to postpone the 7th RCP Congress in the summer of 1954 was made during a visit by Dej, Gheorghe Apostol and Iosif Chișinevschi at Mitin's residence in Bucharest. The Congress convened more than one year later, in December 1955. The chief of the CPSU delegation was Alexey I. Kirichenko, a Presidium member and first secretary of the Ukrainian CP. The Hungarian delegation was led by Matyas Rakosi who had recently triumphed over his arch-enemy Imre Nagy.

As a non-voting Politburo member Ceaușescu did not sign the death sentence against Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu in April 1954. After Gheorghiu-Dej's death, Ceaușescu consolidated his liberal image by accusing his rivals (Apostol and Drăghici) and former allies (Chivu Stoica and Emil Bodnărescu) of having participated in the assassination of "one of the most brilliant party theoreticians and activists."

The other members of the Politburo were: Gheorghie Gheorghiu-Dej (CC first secretary), Gheorghe Apostol, Emil Bodnărescu, Petre Borilă, Iosif Chișinevschi, Chivu Stoica, Miron Cîntinănescu, Alexandru Drăghici, Alexandru Moghiroș and Constantin Părăvulescu. Although a full Politburo member and a CC secretary, the official order of precedence in the new Politburo listed Ceaușescu last. The candidate Politburo members elected at the 7th Congress were: Dumitru Coliu, Leonte Răutu, Leontin Sâlâjan, and Ștefan Voicu. In addition to Dej, the CC Secretariat included: Iosif Chișinevschi, Nicolae Ceaușescu, Janos Fazekas, and Ion Cosma. See Ionescu, *Communism in Romania*, op. cit., p. 241.

In October 1961, he accompanied Gheorghiu-Dej to Moscow to attend the proceedings of the 22nd CPSU Congress. In 1962, Ceaușescu opened the national gathering summoned to celebrate the completion of the collectivization of agriculture.


31 Ion Iliescu, a former leader of the Communist Youth Union (UTC), became first the head of the Propaganda Department and then after 1970 he replaced Niculescu-Mizil as the CC secretary in charge of ideology. Iliescu surrounded himself with party intellectuals including the economists Gheorghe Badrus, Gheorghe Dolgu and Costin Murgescu as well as the Marxist doctrinaires Ilie Rădulescu, Constantin Vlad and Dumitru Ghise. Together with Miron Constantinescu, Iliescu favored the renaissance of sociological

26 Born in Bessarabian city of Balti in 1910, Leonte Rătu (Lev Oigenstein) joined the RCP in the late 1920s as student in mathematics at the University of Bucharest. Because of his communist activities he was expelled from the University and never completed his degree. After a short prison term in the early 1930, Rătu became the editor-in-chief of the party newspaper Scânteia and a key-member of the party Agitprop nucleus. After the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia in June 1940, Rătu and his family emigrated to the U.S.S.R. where he was appointed the chief of Radio Moscow's Romanian Service. He returned to Romania in 1945 and was elected a member of the RCP Central Committee at the 6th Congress in February 1948. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Rătu played a crucial role in the Sovietization of the Romanian culture. Perceived by the intelligentsia as the Romanian Zhdanov, he stigmatized in his articles and speeches the heresies of "objectivism, formalism and cosmopolitanism." One of Gheorghiu-Dej's confidants and his principal speechwriter, Rătu exerted absolute control over Romanian culture until Ceaușescu replaced him as chief ideologue with his former deputy, Paul Niculescu-Mizil. However, because of his privileged relation with both Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, Rătu remained a member of the Political Executive Committee and rector of the Party Academy until 1981. The ostensible reason for his disgrace was the decision of his youngest daughter to emigrate to the United States. With Rătu's forced retirement, Gheorghie Rădulescu remains the last Muscovite in the top Romanian elite.

27 A long-time associate of Iosif Chișinevchi (Roitman) and Leonte Rătu, it seems that Roller committed suicide shortly after he was blamed for "factionalism" at the June 1958 CC Plenum. Together with such dilettantes as the "aesthetician" Nicolae Moraru (Iuliu Șafran), the party journalists Traian Selmaru and Sorin Toma, and other former underground militants catapulted to the leadership of the "ideological front," Roller symbolized the most aggressive form of Romanian Zhdanovism. Other pillars of Rătu's Directorate of Propaganda and Culture were: Ofelia Manole, Zina Brâncu (Haia Grinberg), Paul Niculescu-Mizil, Pavel Țugui, Nicolae Goldberger, Ștefan Voicu (Aurel Rothenberg), Tatiana Bulan (Leapis), Nestor Ișnat, Constanța Crăciun, Valter Roman et al. From all sectors of party activity, the propaganda system was visibly and overwhelmingly dominated by non-ethnic Romanians. Some of them, such as Nicolae Moraru, were totally ignorant of Romanian cultural traditions and spoke with unmistakable Russian accents. In June 1957, perhaps aware of this abnormal situation, Dej had Grigore Preoteasa, a Romanian intellectual who had contributed to pre-war leftist publications, elected CC secretary in charge of culture and propaganda. However, after Preoteasa's death in a plane crash in Moscow in November 1957, Rătu restored his position and continued to enjoy undisputed control over Romanian spiritual life. Since Preoteasa appeared to be the rising star after 1955, others within the Politburo, including Nicolae Ceaușescu, may have felt relief upon learning of his disappearance.

28 For the periodization of Romanian communism, see my contribution to the collective volume Romania: A Case of "Dynastic" Communism (New York: Freedom House, 1989), pp. 5-7 and 25-30.


30 This trend started in reality under Dej and Rătu. In February 1965, one month before Dej's unexpected death, the Conference of the Romanian Writers allowed for unprecedented attacks on socialist realism. Mihai Beniuc, the Romanian Surkov, who had presided over countless witchhunts, lost his chairmanship and became the target of scathing criticism from his emboldened colleagues. Similar attacks were encouraged by Rătu against Constantin Barschi, a sculptor long celebrated for his monumental projects.

31 Ion Iliescu, a former leader of the Communist Youth Union (UTC), became first the head of the Propaganda Department and then after 1970 he replaced Niculescu-Mizil as the CC secretary in charge of ideology. Iliescu surrounded himself with party intellectuals including the economists Gheorghe Badrus, Gheorghe Dolgu and Costin Murgescu as well as the Marxist doctrinaires Ilie Rădulescu, Constantin Vlad and Dumitru Ghise. Together with Miron Constantinescu, Iliescu favored the renaissance of sociological

ibidem, p. 443. More recently, Brzezinski has corrected his initial downplaying of the enduring features of local Stalinist traditions in Romania and points to Ceaușescu's rule as the epitome of extreme totalitarianism. See zbigniew Brzezinski, The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in the Twentieth Century (New York: Scribner's, 1989), pp. 134-135.
Among the Romanian victims the Stalinist Great Purge re habilitated by Ceaușescu were four former general secretaries (Imre Aladár, David Fabian, Elek Köblös and Jenő Rozvaniy) as well as other leading revolutionaries: Christian Rakovsky, Ecaterina Arbore, Gelber Moscovici, Timotei Marin, Elena Filipovici, Ion Dic-Dicescu et al. In September 1968, Scînteia announced the legal, i.e., not political, rehabilitation of Vasile Luca who had died in prison in the early 1960s. The anti-Stalinist meaning of this campaign cannot be overlooked. It coincided with similar actions in Czechoslovakia and could only antagonize the Soviet leadership who considered the chapter of the "cult of personality" definitively closed. Unlike the powerful rehabilitation movement in Czechoslovakia which led to the reconsideration of repression not only against communists, but also against exponents of...
the democratic parties, in Romania the whole action was strictly limited to party-assigned topics and never touched such delicate and potentially explosive issues as: the extermination of tens of thousands of prisoners at the Danube-Black Sea Canal, in fact Romania's biggest concentration camp in the early 1950s; the monstrous psychological experiments in "re-education" undertaken by the Securitate on students jailed in Piteşti; the frame-ups against the leaders of the National-Peasant and National-Liberal Parties (Iuliu Maniu, Ion Mihalache, Dinu and George Brătianu); the persecution of the Social-Democrats; and the physical destruction of the Romanian intelligentsia in the regime's labor camps and prisons.


44 However, in an oblique way, Ceaușescu excoriated the Soviets for their hegemonist behavior and emphasized the need to oppose any mandatory recipes or universal patterns for the world revolutionary movement. See "Cuvântare la Consfătuirea internațională a partidelor comuniste și muncitorești — 9 iunie 1969 —," in Nicolae Ceaușescu, Opere alese, vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 578-582.

45 The Greek Communist Party's Central Committee split in January 1968. Ceaușescu personally encouraged the leaders of the "independents" (Mitsos Partsalidis, Zisis Zografos, Panos Dimitriu) and for a long time shunned contacts with the pro-Moscow party (KKE) headed first by Kostas Kolyannis and then by Harilaos Florakis. It is worth mentioning that at the time of the split the Greek Central Committee, as well as its radio station (the "Voice of Truth") and journal (Neos Kosmos), were located in Bucharest. The current KKE general secretary, the Moscow-educated journalist Grigoris Farakos was the editor-in-chief of Neos Kosmos.


48 Petrescu died several months later, and his role as the leading pro-Ceaușescu exponent of the RCP veterans who had suffered under Dej was assigned to the recently rehabilitated Miron Constantinescu.


51 I owe to Mihai Botez invaluable information about the tensions between the "accelerators" and the "moderates." The clash between Ceaușescu and Maurer was catalyzed by the Prime Minister's speech in Cluj where he criticized Ceaușescu's economic policy and referred to Lenin's slogan: "Better less, but better." — personal interview with Mihai Botez, March 3, 1989.


53 In the early 1980s Burtică lost his PEC seat and was fired from his postion as Minisiter of Foreign Trade after having dared to contradict the general secretary on economic issues. Ștefan Andrei served for several years as Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs. Later he became CC secretary in charge of economy and in 1988 he was appointed Minister of Foreign Trade and Vice-Prime-minister. The fact that he is still a candidate PEC member
shows that although influential within the presidential camarilla, Andrei has not convinced Nicolae and Elena of his unconditional loyalty.

54 Emil Bobu’s wife, Maria, is herself a CC member and Minister of Justice.


56 Widely perceived as the favorite of the party apparatus group and a major contender in a succession struggle, Trofin died in 1984 after having been publicly pilloried by Ceaușescu for failure to implement the party’s economic decisions. Expelled from the CC, his last job was director of state farm in Ițîov County.

57 In the 1970s, General Ion Ioniță voiced strong criticism of the regime’s virulent nationalism. He opposed the pseudo-patriotic pageants organized by the then favorite court poet Adrian Pâunescu under the emblem of the “Flacăra Circle of Revolutionary Youth.” Ioniță’s disgrace was seemingly provoked by his courage to denounce the President’s chief flatterer as the reincarnation of Iron Guard fanaticism and obscurantism. In the late 1970s, Ioniță’s wife, Cecilia, a historical researcher of Jewish background and party veteran herself, was publicly attacked in the pages of Pâunescu’s weekly Flacăra for allegedly using her husband’s position to inflate her scientific merits. According to a party veteran and now most prominent Communist critic of the Ceaușescu regime, Gheorghe Apostol, Ioniță was the most likely candidate to succeed Ceaușescu, but died under strange circumstances in 1986. See the interview with Gheorghe Apostol, Universul liber, March 15, 1989, p. 13. During his last years, Ioniță did not conceal his disenchantment with the autocratic methods used by the general secretary. However, he considered Elena the main responsible for her husband’s alienation from what was originally his power base, i.e., the party apparatus group. At the same time, Ioniță expressed admiration for the dynamic reforms initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev in the Soviet Union.


66 Ibidem.


68 In spite of Ceaușescu’s harsh austerity measures, Romanians continue to defend their traditional mores. A recent traveler thus noticed the existence of a different Romania, "... one of villagers in settings of almost medieval innocence and of townspeople struggling to preserve their dignity amid the degradations of shortages and repression, because village life, in its variety and picturesqueness, continues outside those areas where President Ceaușescu has started to impose his 'systematisation.'" See Simon Kolka, "A peasant time in Romania," Financial Times, April 8, 1989.

69 See "Pogrom in Romania," The Economist, September 3, 1988; Michael Shafir, "The Historical Background to Rural Resettlement," Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian SR/10, August 23, 1988, pp. 3-8. Referring to Ceaușescu’s "systematization" program, Hungarian Politburo member Imre Pozsgay went so far as to call it "an injury to European civilization, a crime against humanity." See Kenneth W. Banta, "Where Glasnost Is Still a
Dirty Word," *Time*, September 5, 1988. There is no doubt that Ceaușescu's inordinate actions have greatly contributed to the heightening of the Hungarian-Romanian polemics in recent years. Ironically, Ceaușescu's xenophobic attitudes allowed Hungarian communist leaders to champion as adamant defenders of their nation's dignity.


78 For a description of the Jiu Valley events based on an extensive account provided by Istvan Hosszu, a direct participant in the movement, see Vladimir Socor, "Eyewitness on the 1977 Miners' Strike in Romania's Jiu Valley," *RFER*, RAD Background Report/110 (Romania), August 13, 1986.


For the emergence of the working class opposition in Romania, see Mihnea Berindei, "La Roumanie à l'heure polonaise: Le pouvoir face à l'opposition ouvrière," _L'Alternative_ (Paris), special issue on crisis and repression in Romania, supplement to no. 20, January 1983, pp. 26-29.


For the characteristics of Romanian "national-communism" as a "transformist-revolutionary regime" based upon manipulative and mobilizational techniques including extravagant nationalism, vibrant exaltation of the supreme leader, extreme political centralization and unbound personalization of power, see Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The Ambiguity of Romanian National Communism," _Telos_, Summer 1984, pp. 65-79; Michael Shafir, _Romania_, op. cit., pp. 47-63. The myth of the party as a predestined avantgarde, a fraternity of chosen fighters committed to a transcendent cause (the advent of an earthly paradise) has dominated the political culture of Romanian communism since its very outset. Unlike other communist parties in East-Central Europe, the RCP has not reached the stage of ideological secularization. Ironically, the perpetuation of the Messianic drive has been favored by the incorporation in the official doctrine of political myths characteristic of the far-right philosophy of the nation as a community of destiny and suffering and by the gradual abandoning of the internationalist pretense. Ceausescu's patriotic proclamations are thus essentially different from the anti-Soviet and anti-revisionist stances of the Albanian communists.


See Mihai Sturdza, "Interviews with Romanians Published in Paris," _RFER_, Romanian SR/6, April 29, 1988, p. 17.

For an English translation of the memorandum, see "To President Ceausescu," _The New York Review of Books_, April 27, 1989, p.9. For the significance of this letter see William Pfaff, "Romania: Breaking the Silence," _The New York Review of Books_, April 27, 1989, pp. 8-9; Gilles Schiller, "Ceaușescu accablé par des veterans du parti," _Liberation_ (Paris), March 13, 1989; Mihai Botez "Primavara de la Bucuresti," _Univers Libér_ (Hollywood), No. 95, March 1989; Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Semnificațiile unui memoriu și legitmitatea autorilor lui," _Lumea Liberă_ (New York), March 18, 1989; Michael Shafir, "Former Senior RCP Officials Protest Ceausescu's Policies," _Radio Free Europe Research_, Romania/3, March 29, 1989, pp. 3-14. As part of this new repressive wave, poet Mircea Dinescu lost his job as an editor of _România Literară_, the Writers' Union weekly, because of an interview published in the French newspaper _Liberation_ on March 17, 1989. In a letter to Dumitru Radu Popescu, the Writers' Union president and editor-in-chief of _România Literară_, Dinescu protested this measure as well as his harassment by the security police. In April, seven prominent writers sent a memorandum to D. R. Popescu to voice their concerns about the persecution of their colleagues Dan Deșliu and Mircea Dinescu. Among those who signed the letter were Geo Bogza, the patriarch of Romanian letters and a leading anti-Fascist writer during the inter-war period; Dan Hăulică, the editor-in-chief of _Secolul XX_ (a prestigious quarterly journal of world literature); Octavian Păler, a novelist and journalist who was in the 1970's a candidate CC member, the editor-in-chief of _România Liberă_, the daily sponsored by the Front of the Socialist Democracy and Unity and Chairman of the Journalists' Union; and Andrei Pleșu, a brilliant art critic. I owe to Dorin Tudoran important information about the current turmoil among Romanian writers.

At that moment Ceaușescu managed to mobilize support from party veterans against Pârvulescu's criticism. Three party veterans -- Leonte Rătuțu, Ion Popescu-Prețuțu and George Macovescu -- took the floor to stigmatize Pârvulescu's "factious" attitude and reassure the general secretary of their total loyalty.

For Brucan's conception on the renovation of socialism, see his book _World Socialism at the Crossroads: An Insider's View_ (New York: Praeger, 1987); for a critical assessment of...


98 Hinting at Romania's refusal to embark on restructuring, during Ceaușescu's visit to Moscow in October 1988, Mikhail Gorbachev argued that the general image of socialism reflects not only the successes, but also the failures of each communist country. See *Scintelea*, October 6, 1988.


105 Maurer has remained, however, Ceaușescu's confidant and political advisor. Since his retirement in 1974, Maurer and his family have enjoyed a privileged status second only to the general secretary himself.


107 Currently, Iliescu is the director of the Technical Publishing House in Bucharest.


110 Personal communication to the author.


112 For penetrating discussions of various succession scenarios in Romania, see Vladimir Socor, "Toward a Post-Ceaușescu Leadership in Romania," *RFE*, RAD Background Report/5 (Eastern Europe), January 10, 1986; Michael Shafir, "Coalitions and Political Succession in Communist Systems: A Comparative Analysis of the Future of Romanian Leadership," *Sudosteuropa* (Munchen), Heft 3/4, 1986, pp. 201-222...