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COMMUNISM AND POST-COMMUNISM IN ROMANIA: CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

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Summary: The peculiarities of Romania's exit from communism were caused by enduring authoritarianism, a profound moral crisis that affected negatively the development of civil society, reluctant privatization, and the beleaguered and factionalized status of the democratic forces. Ion Iliescu's regime symbolized Romanian communism's afterlife: a syncretic combination of simulated pluralism and residual Leninism, lip service to democratic values and nostalgia for bureaucratic authoritarianism. Indeed, the nature of Romania's post-1989 regime cannot be fully understood without reference to the cultural and political legacies of both the communist and precommunist past. The November 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections in Romania have ushered in a new stage of that country's democratization. The new leaders have announced their decision to pursue radical and political reforms, oppose corruption, and consolidate pluralist institutions. Ion Iliescu's defeat symbolizes the end of his policies of procrastination and neo-authoritarian restoration. The victory of the democratic forces can be described as an electoral revolution that allows for the radical disbandment of the Leninist legacies in that country. The changes inaugurated by the November 1996 elections are revolutionary in that they affect all layers of the body politic, as well as the economic infrastructure. Indicative of this watershed in Romania's democratic consolidation, the establishment of public control over the secret services and the ouster of the compromised former Securitate cadres from top positions in these institutions have remained major topics in the post-Iliescu political debates.

Introduction

This report is based on intensive research conducted during the last year in Romanian archives; in-depth interviews with major political personalities (including President Emil Constantinescu, Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea, and Foreign Minister Adrian Severin); and analysis of the most significant cultural and political debates in the post-communist Romanian media. My primary point is that the traditions of the Romanian communist and pre-communist political cultures have affected the path, priorities, and general orientation of the post-communist transition. Thus, to understand the Romanian transition one needs to take into account the pre-communist values, ideas, and mentalities, as well as the peculiar blending of nationalism, collectivism, and authoritarianism that characterized Romanian communism especially after 1960. In other words, my research has shown that communism in Romania cannot be perceived as a compact historical bloc that would allow for a clearcut distinction between "them" (the communists) and "us" (the people). In agreement with other authors (Dan Chirot, Mary Ellen Fischer, Troud Gilberg, Ken Jowitt, Gail Kligman, Michael Shafir and Katherine Verdery), my research confirmed that it was the uniquely original feature of the

²The author wishes to thank Trevor Wysong for research and editorial assistance.

Ceausescu regime to incorporate and functionalize national symbols in order to develop and strengthen its ideological foundations. The Iliescu regime (1990-96) strove to maintain several institutional and symbolic continuities with the old order. In spite of its professed break with communist values, Ion Iliescu's regime cultivated and perpetuated a strong suspicion of pluralism, market, and civil society.¹ Mixing symbols and ideas derived from both radical left and right, this regime suffered from a chronic deficit of democratic legitimation provoked by its problematic takeover of power in the nebulous circumstances of the December 1989 revolution.

Unable to engage in full-fledged restoration, Iliescu and his allies espoused a politics of procrastination: no genuine coming to terms with the past was encouraged; corruption became all pervasive; cynicism and demoralization were pandemic; significant reforms were systematically shunned. In fact, substantive democratization started for real in Romania only after the election of Emil Constantinescu to the presidency and the parliamentary victory of the Democratic Convention in November 1996.²

Only now it is possible to freely examine the most significant documents dealing with the communist past and thus complete the political history of Romanian communism. I started this project almost ten years ago and I hoped that the collapse of the Ceausescu regime would allow me to enter the Central Committee archives in order to enlarge my data base, compare oral history information to documents and test my main hypotheses. This became possible (but only to a limited extent) after 1994, when I was permitted to read in the Central Committee archives held by the General Staff of the Romanian Army. The victory of the democratic forces in November 1996 has made this research easier. Unlike Ion Iliescu and many of his associates, Romania's new leaders have no vested interests in keeping the archives closed. Even if access to archives has remained difficult and bureaucratic constraints and inertia continue to mar unfettered research, it is now possible to consult the most important Romanian Communist Party (RCP) secret documents, including not only transcripts of Politburo and Secretariat meetings but also secret police materials dealing with such cases as the 1952 "right-wing deviation" of Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca and Teohari Georgescu, the elimination, trial and execution of Lucretiu Patrascanu and the 1958 purge of the party veterans and the reshuffle of the RCP elite. No less important, the important documents related to Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej's politics of autonomy, the conflict with Nikita Khrushchev and the preparation of the April 1964 "Romanian Workers' Party Declaration" which formulated the Romanian neutral stance in the Sino-Soviet polemic are now accessible.

I include in this report some of my most important findings regarding the stages of Ceausescuism; the December 1989 revolutionary upheaval; the tortuous birth of the new order; the main crises of the Iliescu regime; and the ongoing transition from post-communist semi-authoritarian presidentialism to democratic pluralism. For reasons of space, I do not dwell on some important chapters in the history of Romanian communism. They will be fully developed in the book I am

writing for the University of California Press (Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism). Any thoroughgoing analysis of the post-communist elites in Romania needs to consider the legacies of national communism.³ Many of the major political actors, including Ion Iliescu, were active in the first and second echelons of the Romanian Communist Party and continued to nourish nostalgia for the semi-Titoist, autonomist course championed first by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (after 1962) and then by Ceausescu between 1965-1971. To give just one recent example, when Prime Minister Victor Ciorbea spoke in April 1997 about the need to de-Sovietize the country's secret police, Iliescu reacted angrily and declared that this de-Sovietization had taken place already in the early 1960s. This is not a minor issue. As in other former state socialist countries, the past continues to be part of Romania's present and cannot simply be denied or ignored.

My research has focused on the following topics: the political traditions of Romanian communism (sectarianism, marginality, dogmatism, monolithic uniformity and regimentation, post-1960 nationalist orientation, reluctant liberalization and re-Stalinization); the major crises within the Romanian communist elite; the increased monopolization of power by the Ceausescu clan in the name of the struggle for national independence and sovereignty; the weakness of reform-oriented trends and factions within the RCP; the absence of a revisionist, humanist Marxist tradition; opposition to Gorbachev; political decay; the December 1989 revolution; and the post-communist changes. In this report I emphasize the post-1989 trends and provide an analysis of the current stage of the democratic transition.

Before going into this, it is important to highlight the nature and main conclusions of my research on the political history of Romanian communism. Based on two recent trips to Romania (January and May 1997) and intensive archival research, I can now identify the crucial elements for understanding of the communist political culture in that country. In a very summary way, I would emphasize the following: the conflict between Moscow emigres and home communists; the road to power, the rise of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, and the elimination of Lucretiu Patrascanu; 1952 and the purge of the "internationalist," "right-wing" faction of Ana Pauker, Vasile Luca and Teohari Georgescu; 1956-58, when the RCP elite, headed by First Secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1901-65), managed to pre-empt de-Stalinization and initiated the process of gradual de-Sovietization (de-satellitization); 1963-64, when the RCP elite challenged the Moscow Center and espoused (manipulated) nationalist symbols and rhetoric; and, between 1965-89, the rise and fall of Ceausescu's version of national communism.

It is my assumption that communism and post-communism in Romania are intimately related: unlike other Soviet-style regimes, the Romanian one did not allow for the rise of any form of revisionist Marxism. Under Ceausescu, the regime managed to incorporate nationalist themes into its own legitimizing ideology and embraced many ideas characteristic of the inter-war extreme right: the

cult of the nation and mythological ancestors; the exaltation of the Leader (Conducator) as a charismatic "savior"; the obsessional insistence on ethnic homogeneity; rejection of Western patterns of democratic development and a conspiracy-minded treatment of the international community; isolationism, collectivism, and authoritarian populism. All these elements became salient features of the communist political culture in Romania and have continued to influence post-communist elite behavior. Ion Iliescu and his associates were formed within this political culture: their repudiation of Ceausescuism had more to do with a rejection of the most grotesquely irrational features of the regime, rather than a profound conviction that state socialism had failed in Romania and elsewhere.

Background

Until the November 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections, Romania presented scholars of the post-communist transitions with a striking paradox: the most abrupt break with the old order seemed to have resulted in its least radical transformation. Many old faces had remained in power while skillfully putting on new masks. The major themes addressed in this report are therefore linked to the widely perceived "exceptional" nature of Romania's transition from state socialism; the communist heritage in that country; and the ongoing efforts to overcome it and move in the direction of democratic consolidation, including economic reforms, the establishment of a state of law, and structural institutional transformations.⁴

Romania's break with the old order was unique in more than one respect: No other East European Leninist regime was overthrown by a violent popular uprising from below. In no other country of the region did the communist governments mobilize the army and secret police to repress peaceful demonstrators. After the breakdown of the Ceausescu dictatorship, continuities with the old regime were in many respects more marked in Romania than in other East European countries (except perhaps the former Yugoslavia and Slovakia). Some of these features are linked to the traditions of the country's political culture, but they do not make Romania a completely unique case. Indeed, the populist authoritarianism and other illiberal features can be detected in other countries as well: Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Slovakia, Russia, and to some extent Poland. Furthermore, although changes have taken place slowly in Romania, they cannot be simply dismissed as a smokescreen for unreconstructed authoritarianism. Under the Iliescu regime, there was a striking contrast between the emerging democratic forms and procedures, on the one hand, and the persistence of authoritarian, nationalist and collectivistic practices, on the other. No matter what Iliescu's unavowed agenda was, he had to accept the rules of the democratic game lest the country be internationally isolated and lose its chances for integration in the European structures. During the years that have passed since the collapse of the Ceausescu regime, Romania has established a proto-democratic institutional framework and reasonably fair electoral procedures. In addition, the country's civil society, although beleaguered, has continued to develop. As leaders of the Democratic Convention have often stated,

what is missing is social trust, a civic commitment to the values and institutions of the emerging democracy, a "de-emotionalization" of the public discussion of fundamental issues regarding the country's future, and a truly liberal political center constituted primarily on the basis of shared ultimate values rather than immediate party affiliations.

Until the 1996 elections and the victory of the Democratic Convention, advances on the road to an open society had been accompanied by disturbing attempts by the ruling elite to marginalize and delegitimize the opposition, maintain tight controls over national electronic media, and perpetuate its economic and political domination by use of symbolic manipulation and democratic rhetoric. Headed by Ion Iliescu's long-time associate and confidant Virgil Magureanu, the secret police continued to play a very significant role in orienting public opinion and influencing political debates and choices.⁵ In other words, there is a deep contrast between the pluralist forms and the lingering authoritarian methods and mentalities that have beset the transition from state socialism. As in the past, there is a gap between the Romanian pays légal and pays réel.⁶ The challenge of the current stage is to devise a coherent strategy for the country's democratic consolidation and the fostering of a true pluralist order. This involves continuous and convincing resistance to various anti-Western and anti-liberal trends.⁷ In Jacques Rupnik's terms: "The 'choice' of a tradition for a democratic present is by no means an easy task given the weight of two anti-liberal legacies: that of communist paternalism centred on the state, and that of pre-war nationalism centred on the rural community and orthodox Christianity. ... Indeed liberalism was and remains a marginal feature of Romanian political culture."⁸

The main moments in Romania's exit from authoritarianism are linked to a number of key-events: the breakdown of Ceausescu's dictatorship, the initial vacuum of power and the formation of the National Salvation Front (NSF) in December 1989; the growing polarization of the country's political life and the clashes between the newly formed democratic movements and parties and the NSF-controlled government (January and February 1990); the May 1990 elections and the conflict between the Ion Iliescu-Petre Roman group, on the one hand, and the democratic forces, on the other; the violent onslaught on the new parties and civic movements in June 1990 (the infamous miners' raids); the rupture of the Iliescu-Roman alliance and the fall of the moderately reformist Roman government in September 1991; the February 1992 local elections and the opposition's success in major cities; the 1992 parliamentary and presidential elections and the attempts to interrupt the economic and political reforms; stagnation and further polarization of the political spectrum (1992-95); the November 1996 watershed and the Democratic Convention's victory in both presidential and parliamentary elections.

To understand the 1996 **electoral revolution** one needs to keep in mind that a new generation has grown up in Romanian politics that cannot accept a return to the former status quo. This fact is valid not only for the former opposition, but also for members of the ruling party (Partidul

Democratiei Sociale din Romania- the Party of Social Democracy in Romania-PDSR). In June 1997, this party split between the Iliescu faction, attached to an unreconstructed authoritarian and ethnocentric populism, and a modernizing group headed by former Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu and former top Iliescu advisor Iosif Boda. The latter faction decided to break with Iliescu and formed its own party called the Alliance for Romania, indicating that they favor "social liberalism" and endorsing the economic reforms initiated by the Constantinescu-Ciorbea administration. As for Iliescu, he has moved toward an alliance with the xenophobic, rabidly anti-Semitic, anti-Hungarian and anti-Western "Great Romania Party."⁹

Invisible to many, deep changes have taken place in that country, and even those often designated as hard-liners within the PDSR do not champion the revival of a monist, ideologically-based system of command economy, cultural uniformity, and political repression. Even if a certain nostalgia for the Ceausescu times surfaces occasionally, this is a marginal and politically weak sentiment. In reality, no major actor in contemporary Romanian politics unabashedly claims direct affinities with the deposed dictator and his legacy. For Ion Iliescu (who was involved in Ceausescu's execution) such a position is quite logical, as it also is for the pro-Western, democratic forces (Petre Roman's Democratic Party included). But even the Socialist Party of Labor (PSM), an unabashedly neo-communist formation, has not dared to publicly affirm its commitment to a full-fledged restoration the old regime.¹⁰

This report addresses the main causes of communism's collapse in Romania and the stages of the country's democratic transition. It also identifies the main difficulties and the prospects for Romanian pluralism. In the first part I discuss the Leninist legacies by highlighting the institutional decline of the Romanian Communist Party during the last decade of Ceausescu's rule, the dismal state of the economy, and the psychological despair and social atomization. Second, the report explores the complexities of the transition, the ambiguities of the revolutionary breakthrough, the birthpangs of the opposition and the efforts to establish a presidential semi-authoritarian regime. The third part examines the causes of the enduring political polarization in the country's post-Leninist political culture. Finally, I focus attention on the post-1996 situation and the main threats to Romania's emerging pluralism. I argue that these threats are not unique Romanian features, but they rather exemplify trends that one can identify in other post-communist societies as well.

Leninist Legacies

The Unmastered Past or Facing the Illiberal Legacies

More than any other former Warsaw Pact country, the Romanian post-Ceausescu regime shunned the vital historical soul-searching needed for a real national therapy. The archives were jealously guarded and the Romanian political imagination continued to be haunted by the ambiguous narratives of unfulfilled desires and vengeful fantasies. Iliescu's unyielding refusal to allow for

genuine elite circulation had a deep cause: it was related to the official orthodoxy which claimed that once Ceausescu was ousted and liquidated, communism had ceased to exist and Romania became a democracy. In reality, only very little rigorous examination of the communist past did occur after the December 1989 uprising: neither Iliescu, nor his supporters were ready to engage in a soul-searching analysis of the Leninist experiment in that country.

Throughout all these years, no political formation has volunteered to assume responsibility for the Leninist heritage: even the Socialist Party of Labor prefers to distance itself from the dictatorial past and insists on its traditional socialist orientation.¹¹ Thus, the self-criticism professed by former communist parties in other East and Central European countries has been skillfully avoided in Romania. It is as if only a tiny Ceausescu clique managed to impose a despotism now lamented and abhorred by the overwhelming majority of the population. The unanimousness of Ceausescu's pageants has thus been replaced by a similar uncritical and unqualified monolith of perfunctory anti-Ceausescuism.

Coming to terms with the past in contemporary Romania has been hindered by a combination of convenient silence on the part of the new leaders and amateurish, impressionistic and often vindictive treatment of the communist period by exponents of the opposition. Few publications have engaged in releasing major archive documents and when they do it the critical-comparative analysis is still conspicuously absent.¹² Little has been done to distinguish between individuals and institutions in the approach to the Stalinist terror and post-Stalinist repression: a systematically maintained oblivion often favors opportunistic alibis and self-serving legends of heroism and resistance. In the same vein, new mythologies have emerged that tend to deny or diminish Romanian involvement in the Holocaust. References to the "communist genocide" and the "Red Holocaust" serve as excuses for systematic avoidance of a true coming to terms with the Fascist legacies.¹³

At the end of his rule, Ceausescu was universally seen as one of the world's last Stalinist dictators, totally obsessed with his grandiose industrial and architectural projects and viscerally hostile to Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms.¹⁴ The Romanians lived under immense hardships, the heat was cut down in apartments to freezing temperatures, and standing in endless lines was an everyday ordeal. Food was rationed as if the country were at war. A brazen propaganda was ceaselessly extolling the valiance of the fearless Great Leader and the scientific genius of his wife. Irritated by Gorbachev's reforms, Ceausescu stuck to his Stalinist tenets and intensified repression. Romania appeared as a self-enclosed, nightmarish universe fully controlled by the Securitate.

This picture, however justified in the light of the leader's terminal paranoid delusions, tended to obfuscate the existence of different stages in the evolution or devolution of the Ceausescu regime. My research, based on personal interviews with former Politburo members and readings of secret archives materials, has led me to identify the following moments in the dynamics of Ceausescu's regime. First, when he came to power in March 1965 as the youngest party leader within the

Warsaw Pact, Nicolae Ceausescu initiated a partial de-Stalinization by renouncing some of the most repressive features of his predecessor's (Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej) rule, by relaxing the party's ideological controls, exposing Dej's abuses, curtailing the secret police's influence through increased party surveillance of its operations, and opening Romania to the West. This period of "liberalization from above" lasted from 1965 to 1971. The next stage, regime radicalization (1972-1984), included a reassertion of ideological orthodoxy, cyclical anti-intellectual campaigns, dramatic elite transformation through the elimination of Dej's "barons" from all significant positions and the promotion of Ceausescu's loyalists, and a growing fascination with gigantic economic investments (e.g., the building of Danube-Black Sea Canal). The leader's cult became all-pervasive and traditional Stalinist mobilization techniques were restored. After 1974, Ceausescu engaged in a dynasticization of Romanian socialism through the advancement of close family members to high party and government positions. The most visible and influential was his wife Elena who, during the 1980s, became the second most important person in the party and state hierarchy.

Finally, the last stage, one of ineluctable regime decay, coincided with Gorbachev's reforms: an adamant, though primitive Leninist, Ceausescu resented perestroika and did not make any secret of his condemnation of the Soviet attempts at systemic renewal. During this period (1985-1989), Ceausescu's policies became blatantly erratic and self-defeating. Relying more and more on his wife's advice, he antagonized a party bureaucracy already deprived of authority and power. Although surrounded by cultic rituals of adoration, the general secretary was in fact ill-informed and prone to excesses of panic and hysteria. By the end of his life, Ceausescu was a sick and isolated dictator, completely dependent on his secret police and manipulated by an inept and extremely corrupt camarilla.¹⁵

The Romanian Communist Party, created in 1921, was ostensibly the ruling force in that country, but in fact Ceausescu and his clan annihilated the party's collective leadership (the Political Executive Committee) as a decision-making body.¹⁶ During the 1970's and 80's, the Central Committee and the party congresses were mere sounding boards whose mission was to slavishly applaud Ceausescu's initiatives. There was no trace of collegial behavior at the top of Romania's government. The political elite was demoralized and strictly subordinated to the Securitate, entirely dominated by Ceausescu's appointees.¹⁷ . The almost complete emasculation of the party apparatus and the rise of the secret police as the crucial repository of political power, a real "state within the state," was indeed a peculiar Romanian phenomenon that explains many post-revolutionary tribulations. The explanation for this devolution of the party's traditional functions in a Leninist regime was linked to Ceausescu's overblown suspiciousness as well as to the leader's awareness of mounting discontent even among his once loyal supporters within the nomenklatura. The case of Ion Iliescu was thus emblematic of this situation: a Ceausescu protege since the early 1960's, he became increasingly marginal as a result of his reservations about the post-1971 neo-Stalinist course.¹⁸

Using the pretext of his opposition to Soviet hegemony, Ceausescu constructed an original ideology of Romanian socialism, that mixed a Stalinist commitment to centrally planned economy and collective agriculture, with traditional themes of the extreme right (including the myth of the homogeneous nation, the exaltation of the feudal princes, the insistence on the Thracian-Dacian roots of the Romanian nation, the fixation on the alleged conspiracies fomented by foreigners and anti-intellectualism.)¹⁹ Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, had succeeded in shunning de-Stalinization and in keeping Romania a fortress of Communist orthodoxy.²⁰ Whereas Dej ruled as the chief officer of an oligarchy and ingratiated himself with the party bureaucracy, power under Ceausescu was exerted by a tiny coterie using the mechanisms of populist authoritarianism, symbolic manipulation, and, especially after 1980, psychological mass terror. Although Ceausescu refrained from organizing show-trials and bloody purges, he allowed the Securitate to establish a huge network of informers and "collaborators" whose task was to prevent the rise of any critical current.

During the last years of Ceausescu's rule, Romanians experienced not only the agony of terrible economic hardships, but also a state of moral despondency and universal fear. Since the leader imagined himself as the guarantor of the country's independence, all forms of opposition and dissent were treated as criminal offenses. To question Ceausescu's infallibility was by definition an attempt to weaken the country's defense and sovereignty.

Dissent in Romania was therefore reduced to individual protests against the most outrageous decisions made by the supreme leader or the Conducator. Those who dared to criticize the increasingly irrational policies of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu were automatically branded traitors to the national interest. Some were expelled, others were kept under house arrest, imprisoned or simply disappeared.²¹

The counterpart to political repression was Ceausescu's domestic legitimation through nationalism combined with an autonomist course in foreign policy that ensured the regime a certain authority in international affairs. Unlike other Soviet-bloc leaders, Ceausescu was not perceived as the Kremlin's puppet, and his initiatives were often praised for their farsightedness. For many in the West, Ceausescu was a maverick communist interested in defending his country's original course against Soviet interference.²²

As the West indulged in this friendly relationship with Ceausescu, the Romanian critical intellectuals felt abandoned and powerless. According to Vaclav Havel, one of the premises for one's decision to engage in dissident activities is the sentiment that his or her acts would not pass unnoticed by democratic forces in the West.²³ Mental coercion, indoctrination and regimentation were the instruments for the perpetuation of the repressive system. No forms of organized working class activism could emerge and the few attempts to establish independent unions were nipped in the bud.²⁴

If in the first stage of Ceausescu's rule, he simulated tolerance for "creative" Marxism and permitted cultural experimentation, the situation changed dramatically after visits to China and North Korea in 1971. Following that trip, Ceausescu engaged in a mini-cultural revolution with disastrous consequences for Romania's spiritual life. Many of the country's brightest intellectuals emigrated or defected. Others withdrew in internal emigration, refusing to participate in the official pageants.

A vocal group of authors, however, endorsed the chauvinistic harangues of the official ideology and thrived as court writers for the Conducator and his wife. The most notorious were Adrian Paunescu, Eugen Barbu and Corneliu Vadim Tudor. These men did not simply vanish after the collapse of the Ceausescu regime. They have re-emerged as champions of a fundamentalist nationalism with racist overtones that simply jettisoned the perfunctory communist veneer of the previous times.²⁵ After 1989, they could publicly proclaim views they dared only to whisper before. They are now among the most active exponents of the radical ethnocentric constellation whose main targets are the democratic parties and all individuals who have a record of anti-Ceausescu opposition.²⁶ Following his 1996 electoral defeat and the mounting discontent within his own party, Ion Iliescu moved toward an alliance with the nationalist parties, including a reconciliation with Corneliu Vadim Tudor and his Great Romania Party.

Romanian dissent reflected the peculiarities the country's political culture under communism. First, with the exception of Albania, no other East European country experienced such an uninterrupted exercise of Stalinist repression. Second, the destruction of the national intelligentsia in the 1950's went perhaps further in intensity and cruelty than in other countries: the explanation lies in the excruciating inferiority complex of the Romanian communists who tried to outdo Stalin himself in their endeavor to impose the new order. Third, the national communist propaganda stirred responsive chords among many Romanian intellectuals who accepted or even volunteered to join the RCP in the 1960s and 70s.²⁷

Certain groups and associations, however, did challenge the party's ideological monopoly. One example was the Writers' Union, an institution traditionally described as a Stalinist instrument devised in order to establish full control over literature. After 1971, the Union remained one of the very few institutions that allowed for meaningful debates on issues pertaining to ideology. The conflict within the Union between the nationalist Stalinists and the liberal Westernizers was actually a political struggle.²⁸ The former faction enjoyed full party support. The latter had to pay lip service to the official dogmas, while repudiating their most grotesque and pernicious consequences. The last Writers' Union congress tolerated by Ceausescu took place in 1981 and resulted in an unviable compromise between the two groups: the liberals realized their impotence and retreated in what they called "resistance through culture." Later, when conditions became unbearable, some of them engaged in open dissident activities.

Ceausescu's December

The more personalist and authoritarian Ceausescu's leadership methods, the less inclined he was to accept any form of collective leadership. During the 1970s, he completely dislodged the political faction that had helped him to establish himself as the absolute leader of the party. All significant personnel appointments were decided by Elena Ceausescu and her most obedient servant, Central Committee Secretary Emil Bobu.²⁹ In the meantime, the couple's youngest son, Nicu, became a candidate member of the Political Executive Committee and head of the party organization in Sibiu County in Transylvania. Although notorious for his egregious life-style, Nicu was apparently groomed to succeed his father.

As the party became paralyzed, there was no support for the general secretary other than his seemingly faithful Securitate.³⁰ Headed by General Iulian Vlad, a professional policeman with no ideological convictions, this institution carried out Ceausescu's Draconian orders. At the same time, it appears now, the chiefs of the secret police were profoundly aware of the prospects for a popular explosion. The most clear indication that the proverbial patience of the Romanians had come to an end occurred in Brasov, the country's second largest city, in November 1987, when thousands of workers protested the plummeting living standards, ransacked the party headquarters and chanted anti-Ceausescu and anti-communist slogans.³¹

In 1989 Ceausescu realized that unless he intensified his repressive policy, the whole edifice of what he called the "multilaterally developed socialist society" would immediately and ingloriously crumble. Gorbachev's political reforms and their impact on the other bloc countries made the Romanian dictator and his clique increasingly nervous. On various occasions Ceausescu proffered undisguised criticism of perestroika, which he called "a right-wing deviation" within world communism.³² As a reformist trend was taking shape in Eastern Europe, Ceausescu allied himself with stalwarts of Brezhnevism like Erich Honecker, Todor Zhivkov, and Milos Jakes. An anti-reformist alliance was formed between these diehard neo-Stalinists who understood that the winds of change that Gorbachev had unleashed would force them out of power.

Emboldened by Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, some Romanians took the risk of criticizing Ceausescu publicly. In March 1989 six party veterans addressed Ceausescu in an open letter, denouncing his excesses, his erratic economic policies, and the general deterioration of Romania's international image. The authors were not partisans of Western-style pluralism. None of these figures enjoyed popular support, but they were well known within the party bureaucracy, and that was what mattered. Ceausescu reacted furiously to the letter and placed the authors under house arrest. Their refusal to recant showed the limits of Ceausescu's power.³³

Altogether, Ceausescu's power--impregnable at first glance--was falling apart. Detested by the population, isolated internationally, living in his own world of delusions and fantasies, the aging leader could not understand what was happening to communism. He considered Gorbachev the arch-

traitor to Leninist ideals and tried to mobilize an international neo-Stalinist coalition. In August 1989, he was so irritated with the formation of a Solidarity-run government in Poland that he proposed a Warsaw Pact intervention in that country. Every day the Romanian media highlighted the dangers of reformism and "de-ideologization." But breathtaking events were occurring in the other Warsaw Pact countries and Romanians were perfectly aware of them. Despite the regime's absolute control of the media, most Romanians were listening to Western broadcasts and watching Bulgarian, Hungarian, Yugoslav and Soviet TV. Videotapes were circulating underground with footage of the revolutionary changes in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. Young Romanians knew that even the armed-to-the-teeth East German police did not dare to fire against peaceful demonstrators.³⁴

An adamant Stalinist, Ceausescu returned to his first ideological love, his master's theory of socialism within one country, and readied to turn Romania into a perfectly closed fortress, immune to the corrupting revisionist ideas that had destroyed the Bolshevik legacy. In November 1989, the Fourteenth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party took place, and Ceausescu was enthusiastically, i. e., mechanically, reelected general secretary.

Conceived as a demonstration of force and a gesture of defiance to Gorbachev and his followers, the congress showed only Ceausescu's fatal alienation from the Romanian nation he claimed to represent. It became clear that far from accepting any limitation of his power, the leader was determined to fight with infinite obstinacy to carry out what he thought to be his mission in Romanian history.³⁵

During his last month of life Ceausescu's psychological features--an all-consuming sense of predestination, a failure to listen to other viewpoints, an immense vanity that made him blind to otherwise unmistakable signals of social unrest, but also an extreme perseverance, steadfastness and self-confidence--reached their climax. He desperately believed in his own star and refused to admit that a reenactment of his most brilliant performance as a statesman--the August 1968 denunciation of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia--had become impossible. No foreign power was interested in occupying Romania.³⁶ Deprived of either internationalist or nationalist demagogic alibis, Ceausescu had no cards to play but violent repression against all protest.

The writing, however, was on the wall for Nicolae Ceausescu and his regime. On 16 December 1989 a demonstration took place in Timisoara when the police tried to evict Laszlo Tokes, a Hungarian Protestant pastor, from his parish house. When the protesters refused to disperse, the police and the army opened fire. The next day thousands took to the streets with anti-dictatorial slogans, and a carnage followed. Western radio stations were informed about the massacre in Timisoara, and all Romanians realized that Ceausescu was ready to engage in total warfare against non-violent and unarmed demonstrators. At that moment there was no return for Ceausescu: to accept the demands of the Timisoara protesters would have only shown how fragile his power was.

Instead, he preferred to do what other Soviet-bloc leaders had avoided: he used force in an attempt to quell the unrest.

Ceausescu underestimated the danger and left the country on 18 December for a state visit to Iran. On 20 December, when he returned, he delivered an extremely provocative televised speech, and the next day he ordered a mass rally to endorse his intransigent opposition to reforms. On that occasion, however, Romanians refused to follow their leader's behest. Tens of thousands booed Ceausescu in the Palace Square in front of the Central Committee building. For once, they abandoned their fear and interrupted the dictator's oratorical performance. Although Ceausescu tried to accommodate the crowd, it was too late. Television had revealed his stupefaction and confusion. People saw that he was losing control. That same night, protesting students were massacred in the University Square, and the next morning a huge gathering took place in the Palace Square. The crowd stormed the Central Committee building, and Ceausescu and his wife fled from its roof by helicopter.

The story of Ceausescu's flight and his subsequent capture, secret trial, and execution on Christmas day remains to be clarified.³⁷ There are enough puzzling elements in it to make the official explanations provided by Ceausescu's successors more than suspicious. For instance, who selected the judges and who wrote the indictment against the Ceausescus? Why was it necessary to have the leader and his wife executed when it was obvious that no serious threat coming from their loyalists was jeopardizing the new power?³⁸ One thing is now clear: once Ceausescu left the Central Committee building, a vacuum of power was created that was swiftly filled in by representatives of the disaffected party apparatus, representatives of the army, and a few exponents of the rebellious masses.³⁹ As no organized unofficial opposition to Ceausescu had been allowed to exist, this was not surprising. The post-revolutionary crisis, however, was determined by the growing chasm between the pluralist demands of the rapidly growing civil and political society, on the one hand, and the reluctance of the new leaders to accept them on the other. For Iliescu and his associates, the creation of political parties fully committed to the establishment of a liberal democracy and the elimination of the former apparatchiks from key control positions appeared as a personal threat. During the first year in power, they defended their hegemonic positions by resorting to manipulation, corruption and coercion.

A Capricious Transition

The Resurgence of Politics

After the revolutionary upheaval that swept away the Ceausescu dictatorship in December 1989, Romanians rapidly discovered the flavor of politics. For the first time in forty-five years the people could enjoy unfettered freedom of expression, criticize the new leaders, and organize independent associations and parties. But the bureaucracy was not ready to capitulate and engineered

an astute survival strategy. Thus, immediately after the revolution the National Salvation Front was formed.

The Front's first statement announced its commitment to democratic principles, including the multiparty system and the need to organize free elections as soon as possible. The Front claimed to represent a decisive break with the detested Communist regime.⁴⁰ The RCP disappeared without a trace from the country's political life. Most of the 3.8 million party members lacked any emotional or ideological identification with the leadership. The NSF's announcement of the transition to a pluralist system was therefore welcomed and trusted. This was precisely one of the sources of the political tensions that followed: the contrast between the NSF's official pluralist pledges and its practical authoritarian actions. Allegedly trans-ideological, the Front was in reality a movement of bureaucratic retrenchment whose initial main ideologue, Silviu Brucan, insisted on its integrative function. For Brucan, as long as the NSF allowed internal factionalism, there was no need for a competition of political parties.

The legitimacy crisis of the new regime was linked to the troubled circumstances of its birth. During their trial, the Ceausescus challenged their judges and accused Romania's new leaders of treason and an anti-constitutional putsch. The NSF Council justified the summary execution by invoking reasons of revolutionary expediency. But many Romanians doubted this explanation and suspected that the purpose of this frame-up, with defense lawyers being more vituperative of their clients than the prosecutor, was to eliminate the dictator and his wife as potentially embarrassing witnesses in an inevitable trial of the RCP.

Pseudo-justice was summarily carried out in order to prevent true political justice.⁴¹ Since such an occurrence would have involved an indictment of the very system that made possible the Ceausescu phenomenon, the organizers of the secret trial preferred to transfer all the guilt to the two defendants and to silence them as soon as possible. In this sense, Romania's new leaders chose the worst of all alternatives; tyrannicide pretending to be law. By attempting to keep the revolution pure, they sullied it.⁴² With the benefit of hindsight, one can say that the summary execution of Ceausescu was a sacrificial ritual that allowed the bureaucratic apparatus to maintain its position.

As for the composition of the new leadership, informed analysts were immediately struck by the emergence of Communist veterans and apparatchiks to prominent positions.⁴³ Because of Iliescu's past, it was difficult to see him as the symbol of the anti-totalitarian revolutionary fervor of the youth. Somebody else had to be handpicked to play this role. Born in 1946, the new prime minister, Petre Roman, had no revolutionary credentials except that together with thousands of other Romanians he had participated in the December 22, 1989 seizure of the Central Committee building.⁴⁴ The young Roman could not invoke a single moment of his past when he had raised his voice in solidarity with the harassed dissidents. Fluent in French and Spanish, holding a doctoral degree from the Polytechnical School in Toulouse, Roman was supposed to provide the new

leadership with a badly needed European veneer. Unlike Iliescu and Roman, Silviu Brucan (who was born in 1916) could invoke a dissident past. The same was true for Dumitru Mazilu, the fourth most visible member of the NSF leadership. A former international-law professor, he had criticized the abysmal human-rights record of Ceausescu's government in a special report prepared in 1988 for the United Nations Human Rights Commission.⁴⁵

To placate charges of a Communist plot to seize the still inchoate power, the NSF leaders decided to co-opt in the larger Council a number of well-known oppositional figures. On 12 January 1990, a demonstration took place in Bucharest, where Iliescu, Roman, and Mazilu were accused of trying to preserve the Communist system. Under the pressure of the crowd, the three announced the decision to ban the RCP. Mazilu engaged in a dialogue with the demonstrators that seemed to be an attempt to undermine Iliescu's authority. One day later, Romania Libera, the country's most outspoken daily newspaper, published unknown data about Mazilu's political biography.⁴⁶ Upset by these revelations, Mazilu resigned and the NSF leadership remained in the hands of the Iliescu-Roman-Brucan troika.

Several other elements contributed to the political radicalization of the Romanians. One was the rapid constitution of political parties. During the first days after Ceausescu's overthrow, the National Peasant and the National Liberal parties were formed. The National Peasant Party merged with a recently created Christian Democratic formation and became the National Peasant Christian and Democratic Party (PNTCD), headed by Corneliu Coposu, a survivor of Romania's Stalinist jails and one of the closest associates of Iuliu Maniu, the historical leader of the National Peasant Party who had died in the Sighet prison in the early 1950's.⁴⁷ The Social Democratic Party, the third of the traditional democratic parties in Romania, re-emerged under the leadership of engineer Sergiu Cunescu.

It seemed that in several weeks, Romania had experienced an extraordinary leap from the political numbness of Ceausescu's years to the frenzy of a vivid and dramatic public life. Also in 1990, the nationalist forces formed their own movement, called Vatra Romaneasca (Romanian Hearth), whose political arm, the PUNR, was created in 1991. Benefitting from Iliescu's and Roman's tolerance, Vadim Tudor started to publish his weekly Romania mare in 1990 and formed a namesake party in 1991. As for the opposition, in 1992, it formed its own bloc, the Democratic Convention, whose backbone was the PNTCD. Endless strife among oppositional figures led to the fragmentation of the Liberal Party into several groups with little electoral support. In 1991, the Civic Alliance Party (PAC) was formed under the leadership of prominent intellectual Nicolae Manolescu. Its political platform was inspired by civic and liberal values. A part of the Democratic Convention during the 1992 elections, PAC broke with the oppositional bloc in 1994.

Political Polarization

Problematic Pluralism

The hallmark of Romania's first stage of the transition was a blend of authoritarianism, paternalism, and embryonic political processes that kept the bureaucracy in positions of economic and institutional power and diminished the political influence of the opposition. The chief instruments for the conservation of this state of affairs were: (a) the political apparatus grouped around Ion Iliescu within first the National Salvation Front (NSF) and then, after the split with Petre Roman's group, the Democratic National Salvation Front (DNSF), currently the PDSR; (b) the alliance between the state economic bureaucracy and parts of the new business elite; (c) the government-controlled national television; (d) the Romanian Service of Information (Serviciul Roman de Informatii - SRI), the Presidential Protection Service, and other secret police branches; and (e) several nationalist-populist movements and parties, whose extremism helped create the image of Iliescu's "centrist" position. Instead of a well-constituted and properly functioning system of political parties, Romania's public space was dominated by a self-styled version of majoritarianism favorable to the sweeping embourgeoisment of the nomenklatura (the formation of a financially omnipotent class of business mafiosi) and the predictable conversion of its political domination into economic supremacy.⁴⁸

The peculiarities of Romania's exit from communism were thus caused by enduring authoritarianism, a profound moral crisis that affected negatively the development of civil society, reluctant privatization, and the beleaguered and factionalized status of the democratic forces.⁴⁹ Only by connecting these elements in a comprehensive analytic framework can sense be made of the results of the September-October 1992 parliamentary and presidential elections. Ion Iliescu was re-affirmed by over 60 per cent of the Romanians voters as their president, and his political formation, the Democratic National Salvation Front (DNSF), with only 40,000 members, received 28 percent of the vote, constituting the parliament's largest faction. The Election Law, under which the 1990 and 1992 elections were conducted, was adopted in 1990. Elections in May 1990 led to the formation of a bicameral parliament, comprised of an Assembly of Deputies and a Senate. The parliament also functioned as the Constituent Assembly until a new Constitution was adopted in 1991. In 1992, a new parliament was elected, with the Assembly of Deputies renamed the Chamber of Deputies. By that time, the NSF had split in two. One faction calling itself the DNSF was directly associated with President Iliescu and advocated leftist values. Later renamed the Party of Social Democracy in Romania, it won a plurality of votes and formed a coalition government with two nationalist parties, a neo-communist group and its own satellite called the Democratic Agrarian Party. Roman's National Salvation Front, later renamed the Democratic Party fared poorly, receiving only 10.39 percent of the vote. Most of the votes for the Democratic Convention went to the PNTCD and to the Hungarian Democratic Union.

Together with the nationalist parties, the DNSF (now PDSR) represented almost half of Romania's voting population: in other words, almost half of the Romanians perceived sweeping reforms as more threatening than a continuation of the inefficient Iliescu regime. This hostility to radical privatization of the economy and flirtation with the chauvinistic parties was the main strategy pursued by the Iliescu regime prior to 1995. In 1995, the private sector share of industrial production was only about 12 percent. It was only as a result of the 1996 elections that Romania eventually engaged in a full-fledged process of privatizing its economy.⁵⁰

During the 1992 election, an improvised, under-staffed and predominantly urban-oriented campaign failed to generate the long-expected electoral landslide on the Democratic Convention's behalf. Disarticulated and plagued by inner factionalism, with personal interests and vanities often prevailing over long-term goals and preventing a dynamic convergence of efforts, the opposition did not make the breakthrough meant to completely alter the existing "rules of the game." With about 20 percent support in the parliamentary elections, and with Emil Constantinescu, its presidential candidate, receiving less than 40 percent, the Convention did not succeed in articulating a forceful alternative strategy. The main reason for the Convention's partial defeat in 1992 was linked to its exaggerated emphasis on ideological themes, primarily anti-communism and the restoration of monarchy, in a country where all ideologies have lost their galvanizing power.⁵¹

Until 1996, Iliescu's was able to cater precisely to the fears, neuroses and phobias among Romania's industrial workers, peasants in the less developed regions, and retired population. He persuaded them that the transition would be less painful if effected gradually by "true patriots" like him, rather than the oppositional Westernizers, allegedly intent upon restoring big land estates and "selling the country out" to multinational corporations. The DNSF (PDSR) and the fundamentalist parties used all the populist stereotypes to instill among Romanians a sense of panic about the Democratic Convention's possible victory. Anti-intellectualism, anti-Westernism, anti-capitalism and flaming nationalism were used to ensure Iliescu's electoral triumph and preserve a structure of power still intimately linked to the authoritarian legacy of Ceausescuism.

Under Ion Iliescu, the real center of power was located in the presidential Cotroceni palace rather than in the government or in the two parliamentary chambers. But the political struggle went on and the role of the democratic parties and civic movements continued to grow.

The Rise of Civil Society

No less important an element for the opening of the public space had been the swift reconstitution of the Romanian civil society.⁵² For those accustomed to seeing Romania as a country without any opposition, this may have come as a surprise. But the truth of the matter was that even under the utterly unfavorable circumstances of the Ceausescu regime, the germs of the civil society managed to survive. By the end of December 1989, these informal nuclei of independent thinking

coalesced to form the "Group for Social Dialogue," an independent association dedicated to monitoring the government's observance of the democratic process and developing civil society in Romania.

During the first months after the revolution, the "Group"--as it was usually referred to--became the center of a hectic search for alternatives to the official slide into a Romanian version of "neo-Bolshevism."⁵³ Its weekly publication, 22, printed exciting reports of the Group's meetings with prominent NSF figures.⁵⁴ The major tension within the Group--a tension that would intensify in further months and would lead to its gradual loss of influence--was between those who saw its role as the backbone of an emerging political party (similar to the Network of Free Initiatives in Hungary that led to the forming of the Alliance of Free Democrats in 1989) and those who believed that such a community should situate itself au dessus de la melee (above the whirlwind) and preserve a suprapartisan, neutral status for itself. Initially, the Group played an important role in the crystallization of a critical discourse, the integration of Romania's opposition within East European transnational dissident contacts and the restoration of communicative reason as a foundation for an open society. Later, however, the Group seemed to be increasingly self-enclosed, a sectarian community of self-appointed custodians of the country's spiritual values. This shift was linked to the demoralization of Romania's intelligentsia following the successive electoral defeats of the opposition and the widespread disgust with the restoration trends in Romanian politics.

The difficulties encountered by Romania's emerging civil society during the first stage of the transition (1990-91) were linked to the NSF's hegemonic ambitions and its refusal to radically dismantle the Securitate. The much-decried "neo-Bolshevism" of the NSF's ruling team was less an ideological preference than a matter of authoritarian political style. On the one hand, there was the Front, whose political options were often described as "neo-Communist." On the other hand, there were the opposition parties and nascent civic initiatives from below. Among the latter, most active was the Students' League, the Romanian Helsinki Citizens' Initiative, several human rights groups, and the Timisoara Society.

The Hungarian minority formed its own political parties grouped within an alliance called the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (Uniunea Democrata Maghiara din Romania--UDMR). The honorary chairman of the UDMR has been, from the beginning, Bishop Laszlo Tokes. In agreement with the other democratic forces, the UDMR advocated the rapid dismantling of the repressive structures and the establishment of a state of law that would guarantee and protect equal rights to all citizens. They also called for the restoration of Hungarian educational and cultural facilities suppressed by the Ceausescu regime.⁵⁵

The first stage of the transition was predominately confrontational. The opposition could barely organize, because of logistical debility and general lack of experience. Its political discourse was not accessible to the population because of the obstacles created by the Front-run government to

television appearances by Iliescu's critics. But discontent in Romania had deep social roots and could not be mitigated easily. The Front's aggressive warnings and monopolistic conduct could not but further irritate the revolutionary forces. It was perhaps Iliescu's major illusion that a Romanian version of perestroika would pacify even the most critical groups. To his dismay, instead of decreasing, the democratic ferment continued to gather momentum. The students and the intelligentsia spearheaded this struggle for the fulfillment of the revolution.

The widespread sentiment that the NSF's hidden agenda consisted of the restoration of the old regime without the grotesque outgrowths of Ceausescu's tyranny was not groundless. After all, Romanians knew that the abhorred Securitate had not been truly disbanded.⁵⁶ A few of Ceausescu's henchmen were brought to trial only for their participation in the 16-22 December slaughter, not for the role they played in the functioning of one of Europe's most vicious despotic systems since Stalin's death. Instead of purging the administrative apparatus of the servants of the old regime, the NSF had appointed them to key positions. This situation was well known to the Romanians, and it accounted for the growing tensions that were soon to reach an explosive point in the spring of 1990.

Conceived by more or less reconstructed Leninists, the NSF's strategy failed to excite the youth and intelligentsia. It neglected the dynamism of society's self-organization, the force of the collective passions for justice, and the contagious effect of the democratic movements in other Eastern European countries. The Front was living with the illusion that Romanians would accept a simple revamping of the Communist system. On March 11, 1990, the "Proclamation of Timisoara" articulated the political expectations and the values of those who had started the revolution. In effect the real charter of the Romanian revolution, the document emphasized the unequivocally anti-Communist nature of the uprising in December 1989.

Article 7 of the "Proclamation" questioned the revolutionary bona fides of those who had emerged as the beneficiaries of the upheaval: "Timisoara started the revolution against the entire Communist regime and its entire nomenklatura, and certainly not in order to give an opportunity to a group of anti-Ceausescu dissidents within the RCP to take over the reigns of political power. Their presence at the head of the country makes the death of our heroes senseless." This was political dynamite in a country still run by former luminaries of the Communist nomenklatura.

To give this view even more poignancy, Article 8 of the "Proclamation" proposed to set guidelines for the elimination of former Communist officials and security police officers from public life for a certain period of time:

We want to propose that the electoral law, for the first three consecutive legislatures ban from every list all former Communist activists and Securitate officers. Their presence in the political life of the country is the major source of the tensions and suspicions that currently torment Romanian society. Until the situation has stabilized and national reconciliation has been achieved it is absolutely necessary that they remain absent from public life.⁵⁷

Soon thereafter, the "Proclamation" became the rallying point of all democratic forces in Romania.

By the end of April 1990, thousands of students, workers, and intellectuals seized the University Square in Bucharest, where they organized a sit-in to protest the government's refusal to consider the public demands formulated in the "Proclamation." Although the government sent police troops to disband the demonstrators, who had camped in the Square, the around-the-clock demonstration continued until the May 1990 elections.

Another source of tension in the aftermath of Ceausescu's downfall was the growing ethnic conflict in Transylvania regarding the grievances of the Hungarian minority. In March 1990 bloody clashes took place in Tirgu-Mures, and each side blamed the other one for these incidents. Romanian spokesmen deplored the radicalization of the Hungarian political demands, whereas Hungarian activists accused Vatra Romaneasca, allegedly a Romanian cultural initiative, in fact a political movement with nationalist undertones, of having engineered the bloodshed. The government behaved in an erratic way, first playing neutral and then unqualifiedly embracing the Vatra approach. This in turn antagonized the Hungarians who spoke of the continuity of Ceausescu's chauvinistic policy and accused the NSF of using nationalism for electoral purposes. Ominously, the Tirgu-Mures incident became the pretext for the reconstitution of a secret police under the name of Romanian Service of Information.⁵⁸

Following the 1992 elections, Romania's civil society continued to grow, if in a less spectacular way than before. Ecological, women's rights, and gay groups were formed who opposed the intolerant views championed by the nationalist and other parties. Hundreds of NGOs have emerged in Romania's cities, advocating human rights, transparency of legal and government procedures, and ethnic tolerance. One of the most influential among these organizations is the Pro-Democratia movement that has established a dynamic network of seminars and cooperative actions between its branches throughout the country. Other groups have been engaged in watching and reporting persecution of the Roma population as well as police abuses. Contacts with similar groups in East-Central Europe, participation in international initiatives and assistance from Western foundations have helped the new Romanian NGOs become part and parcel of the country's new civic culture.

Several of the civil society initiatives are part of the Democratic Convention, including the Association of the Former Political Prisoners, the Civic Alliance, the monarchist "Romania Viitoare" Movement and the Ecological Party. As the archives remain strictly controlled by the government, civic initiatives have been launched to preserve the memory of the victims of the communist regime.

The Revolution Completed?

Romania's Post-Communist Dilemmas; An Overview

The often convulsive and paradoxical regime transformation in post-1989 Romania cannot be thoroughly grasped and analyzed unless understood in the context of the communist political culture

in that country. Although subsiding, the lingering climate of distrust, deception and fear can be seen as a prolongation of the authoritarian patterns of leadership and domination exerted by the ruling elite in previous decades.⁵⁹ Indeed, the nature of Romania's post-1989 regime cannot be fully understood without reference to the cultural and political legacies of the past (both communist and precommunist).

At least initially, a "third way" approach was dominant among the ruling party's strategists.⁶⁰ Many of the opportunities created by the legal framework fashioned between 1990 and 1992 were missed. Confrontational, rather than consensual strategies represented the dominant note of Romanian politics: thus, the ruling party (the PDSR) governed for a couple of years in alliance with radical nationalist and leftist-populist formations.⁶¹ The oppositional main force, the Democratic Convention, dominated by the National Peasant Christian and Democratic Party (PNTCD), denounced president Iliescu as a "crypto-communist." This diagnosis has been endorsed by other oppositional formations, situated outside the Convention (Roman's Democratic Party, the Civic Alliance Party, the Hungarian Democratic Union). The accuracy of "neo" or "crypto" communist designations is doubtful, however. Ion Iliescu, like Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, Algirdas Brazauskas in Lithuania, or Kiro Gligorov in Macedonia, is a populist leader whose ideological commitment to Leninism has long since disappeared. As president, Iliescu exhibited residual forms of authoritarian behavior, resistance to full marketization, and attachment to the professed egalitarian values of state socialism.⁶²

Until the November 1996 elections, Romania's transition was beset by the absence of a resolute break with the bureaucratic-centralistic and strongly etatistic traditions inherited from Leninism. The dismantlement of the old bureaucratic structures had been wavering and often inconclusive. One of Iliescu's former advisors described the process as "spontaneous transition" and suggested that it responded to the political interests of the industrial managerial class.⁶³ No less symptomatic for the "Bucharest syndrome" of transition was the resurgence of "traditional," pre-World War II political parties, and the revival of a weak, but persistent monarchist trend. Significantly, the most important oppositional party, the PNTCD, headed by veteran politician Corneliu Coposu until his death in November 1995, favored a return to the 1923 Constitution, including the reestablishment of constitutional monarchy (abolished by the Communist diktat in December 1947).⁶⁴ In other words, the strongest democratic force in Romania saw the fulfillment of the December 1989 revolution in the complete restoration of the pre-communist political structures. To use Ralf Dahrendorf's concepts, the clash between the Romanian political forces was bearing upon constitutional as well as normal politics.⁶⁵ This tension has subsided, however, since the November 1996 elections. Indeed, President Constantinescu has toned down the monarchist rhetoric of the Convention and insists on the need to consolidate existing democratic institutions.

The social base of the Iliescu regime was the part of the population emotionally and professionally linked to the economic and social structures inherited from the old regime: primarily the large industrial and ministerial bureaucracies, the former apparatchiks converted into entrepreneurs, and a group of new barons of Romania's emerging private sector, often recruited from the former Communist Youth Union nomenklatura.⁶⁶ Given the ubiquitous presence of the Securitate in Ceausescu's Romania and its control over foreign trade companies, it is no surprise to see so many former secret police hacks now thriving as financial and industrial magnates. Under Iliescu, the post-communist secret services continued to directly influence the political process: they organized leaks of information about political personalities, publication of secret police files and surveillance of journalists and other critics of the Iliescu regime.⁶⁷ The establishment of public control over the secret services and the ouster of the compromised former Securitate cadres from top positions in these institutions has remained a major topic in the post-Iliescu political debates.

During the first post-communist years, a major problem was the absence of genuine and credible alternatives to Iliescu: there was a "critical opposition," but there was little alternative opposition.⁶⁸ While the former president's achievement was "democracy by default,"⁶⁹ the opposition excelled in hard-line anti-communist rhetoric, ceaseless calls for decommunization ("a trial of communism"--proceşul comunismului), frequent espousal of nationalist themes (especially in its rejection of the Hungarian minority's demands), and lack of genuinely different economic solutions for the country's crisis.

In brief, the climate in Iliescu's Romania was dominated by disenchantment, frustration, malaise, anxiety, and insecurity.⁷⁰ Banking on these sentiments, radical nationalist movements emerged, including attempts to reconstruct the Iron Guard, Romania's interwar fascist movement. There have been official attempts to rehabilitate fascist Marshal Ion Antonescu. Members of the government participated in the consecration of monuments to this former pro-Nazi dictator executed in 1946 for crimes against humanity.⁷¹ Leading PDSR politicians have often championed strong nationalist positions, especially regarding rights to native language education for the members of the Hungarian minority.

What anthropologist Robert Hayden has aptly called constitutional nationalism best describes the ideological surrogate prevalent in Ion Iliescu's Romania.⁷² In brief, Ion Iliescu's regime symbolized Romanian communism's afterlife: a syncretic combination of simulated pluralism and residual Leninism, lip service to democratic values and nostalgia for bureaucratic authoritarianism. Iliescu's statements notwithstanding, he held deep and never abjured attachments to social egalitarianism, national(ist) collectivism, and statist centralism. Add to this the tentacular growth of economic mafias protected by government institutions and the plundering of national resources by individuals directly connected to the PDSR's top echelons. Instead of a market democracy, post-Ceausescu Romania was a kleptocratic regime with a pluralist facade.⁷³

The changes inaugurated by the November 1996 elections are therefore revolutionary: they affect all layers of the body politic, as well as the economic infrastructure. One may say that the slogan of the anti-Iliescu demonstrators in the University Square in Bucharest in the Spring of 1990 has finally come true: "The only solution/Another revolution." This second revolution, one should add, has avoided neo-Jacobin, fundamentalist, and vindictive temptations. It is peaceful, procedural, and gradual.

Political Polarization or National Reconciliation?

So far, democracy in Romania has achieved a number of undeniable steps. We should therefore examine the half-full part of the proverbial bottle. First, there are competing political parties that articulate their views and address relatively predictable political constituencies. Romania now has a number of non-governmental TV stations, including many local ones and efforts have been made after November 1996 to modernize national television. The independent printed media, among the most vivid in East-Central Europe, can barely reach the countryside or even remote urban areas, primarily because of government control over distribution networks. The economy seems to be recovering and there is a strong commitment of Victor Ciorbea's government to engage in mass-scale privatization.⁷⁴ Demagogic chauvinism and even nostalgia for Ceausescu's times is rampant in the pages of the extremist media, but these publications represent a marginal portion of the press. Romania Mare has lost most of its initial appeal and it has become a simple vehicle for venting Vadim Tudor's hatred of liberal values and personalities. The weekly edited by the neo-Iron Guard "Movement for Romania" (Miscarea) is printed for a small coterie of "true believers" and can barely be found in news kiosks.⁷⁵

On the other hand, there are several problems with Romanian-style democracy which one could see as the darker side of the story and which the Constantinescu-Ciorbea administration will have to deal with. These include: (1) a deeply engrained authoritarian leadership style and a distrust of dialogue; (2) excessive personalization of politics; (3) demagogic uses by the neo-authoritarian, populist parties of economic grievances related to the hardships of privatization; (4) lack of a common vision of the public good; and (5) factionalism and tensions within the governing coalition. The main threats to Romania's democracy are therefore linked to the still low level of civic culture, the fragility of the democratic institutions, the inchoate and provisional nature of the political parties and their ideological preferences, the persistence of a mass psychology of nostalgia for collectivistic forms of social protection and the delays in launching a serious discussion of the country's pre-communist and communist experiences. These elements can lead to the rise of Peron-style social demagogues who claim to offer immediate and simple solutions to complex and intricate issues.⁷⁶

The rhetoric of bellicose ethnic fundamentalism, including a religious Christian Orthodox dimension, could appeal to many dismayed, frustrated and anguished individuals. To prevent the

fulfillment of such an ethnocratic scenario, democratic forces have to close ranks, establish forms of cooperation and mutual support, overcome distrust and provide the citizens with a sense of their future.

The good news from Romania is that the age of monolithic authoritarian rule is over. Democratic political parties have emerged, although their identities are still quite elusive. Instead of being past-oriented, most of these formations try to articulate the political and social interests and aspirations of various categories of Romanian citizens. It is their task to familiarize Romanians with democracy and to make them understand the virtues of freedom.

In short, by 1996, most of Romania's political actors were aware that the country could not afford to become the pariah of the international community. So, the most likely development was a continuous rapprochement between the two major oppositional forces (CD and PD), an overcoming of their mutual distrust, and the achievement of a governing pact. For this to happen, political forces in Romania needed to go beyond personal animosities and petty allergies and discover the structures of interests and shared values that define genuine party politics. The "national reconciliation" frequently proposed by Iliescu was not possible as long as leaders procrastinated on implementing reforms, the secret police organized provocations, and the Romanian political memory remained hostage to manipulation. In Romania, as in the other post-communist countries, the outcome of the transition depends on the ability of the political elites to realize that trust, truth and tolerance are indispensable ingredients of an open society. In this respect, Romania is not exceptional at all. It simply typifies political, moral and psychological features one could notice in all the other societies long subjected to Leninist experiments in compulsory happiness.

Bedrock or Sand?

Nationalism, an affliction that Adam Michnik aptly called the terminal disease of communism, already has been played ad nauseam in Romania. While it is true that national sentiment is strong, there is little reason to believe that it will take aggressive, violent forms. Emil Constantinescu's stand on this issue is rather liberal, and many among his close associates are individuals who have been the targets of the extremist parties' attacks in the past. Romania's democratic engagement as 1996 closed was firm. The latent nature of this democracy, however, remains mysterious: is it a civic-oriented community, based on liberal individualism, or is it rooted in nostalgia for archaic bonds of solidarity and group-defined loyalties? Will Romania accept the major trends of globalization, or will it try to oppose them in the name of vaguely conceived values of "one nation under God"?

After seven years of missed opportunities, institutionalized cynicism, and disgraceful plundering of national resources by those who were supposed to administer them, Romanians voted for renewal. Therefore, this is the country's second chance in one decade to regenerate itself, and

while it is by no means certain, it is reasonable to expect that those individuals and parties called to lead will make the best of it and, in fact, succeed. Romania's integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures (e.g. NATO) and its prospects for democratic development depend foremost on the political imagination and moral verticality of its new leaders. Strong tendencies among the educated groups, especially the youth, suggest that Romania has passed a critical threshold. "Balkan-ghosts" stereotypes notwithstanding, no country is forever condemned to repeat its past. And, in the case of Romania, there is something that may constitute a usable past: a collective memory of a fragile but real constitutionalism during the inter-war period; a tradition of anti-totalitarian resistance in the 1940s and 50s; and the recollection of the December 1989 revolution. This is the foundation on which a modern pluralist polity can be constructed provided that Romania's new ruling coalition, which long resembled grains of sand trapped in an ever-turning hour glass, has finally recognized that in politics continuous dialogue and compromise are the cement of democratic power.

August 1997

Endnotes

1 See Vladimir Tismaneanu and Dorin Tudoran, "The Bucharest Syndrome," Journal of Democracy, Vol. 4, No. 1, January 1993, pp. 41-52; H.-R. Patapievici, "Regimul Iliescu: un portret," in his book Politice (Bucharest; Humanitas, 1996), pp. 141-53.

2 A point emphasized in the New York Times editorial "NATO Plus Three," July 9, 1997. For the results of the 1996 elections, see Carl Ek, "Romania's New Government: Politics, Policies, and Relations with the United States," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, April 10, 1997 and Michael Shafir, "Opting for Political Change," Transition, Vol. 2, No. 26, December 27, 1996, pp. 12-16.

3 See Stelian Tanase, Revolutia ca esec: Elite si societate (Iasi: Editura Polirom, 1996).

4 See Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Romanian exceptionalism? Democracy, ethnocracy, and uncertain pluralism in post-Ceausescu Romania," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, eds., Politics, Power, and the Struggle for Democracy in South-Eastern Europe (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 403-51.

5 Magureanu resigned in May 1997 and is currently engaged in political consulting. His successor is one of President Constantinescu's close associates, Calin Georgescu, a member of the Liberal Party. At the same time, Constantinescu has kept general Ioan Talpes, a former Iliescu advisor, as head of the Service of Foreign Intelligence (Serviciul de Informatii Externe- SIE). The restructuring of the intelligence agencies remains one of the most urgent and difficult tasks of the new administration. During my interview with Magureanu in January 1997 he insisted on his loyalty to the new government and denied having been Iliescu's supporter for the last part of the Iliescu presidency.

6 This enduring feature of Romania's political culture was examined by Michael Shafir in his important book Romania: Politics, Economics and Society (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1985).

7 The hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church has consistently claimed the privileged status of "national church" and opposed ideas and practices of democracy and tolerance. See Gabriel Andreescu, "Principala amenintare la adresa democratiei: Ierarhia Bisericii Ortodoxe Romane," 22, No. 26, July 1-7, 1997, p. 5.

8 See Jacques Rupnik, "The Politics of Transition," in International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Democracy in Romania: Assessment Mission Report, Stockholm, Sweden, Capacity Building Series, 1/97, p. 25.

9 I could anticipate this split during my conversations with Iosif Boda in Bucharest, January 1997.

10 See Michael Turner, "The Political Inclusion of Romanian Illiberal Parties," paper presented at the AAASS Convention, Washington, DC, October 26-28, 1995. Excellent profiles of the Romanian political parties appeared during 1994-95 in Sfera politicii, a monthly journal of political analysis published in Bucharest.

11 See the interview with Tudor Mohora, the PSM's secretary in charge of propaganda, Flacara, No. 91, September 1-7, 1992. In the early 1980's, Mohora served as President of the Union of Communist Students' Associations.

12 This is the case with one of Romania's boldest weeklies, Cuvintul, that has serialized a secret party report prepared in 1967-68 for the rehabilitation of former Politburo member and Justice Minister Lucretiu Patrascanu, executed after a pseudo-trial in April 1954. The lay reader is simply lost in the abundance of names and data, and the editors have not provided the needed background information to assess their meaning. The same can be said about the independent daily's Romania libera series of articles on "procesul comunismului" (the trial of communism), where testimonies of victims were published without any attempt to document the institutional and sociological foundations of political repression. One should praise therefore the new monthly Dosarele istoriei which, in addition to Sfera politicii, has tried to provide readers with first-hand documents and unbiased political and historical analysis.

13 For an outstanding analysis of this refusal to examine objectively the role of the extreme right in Romania's history, see Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, "Historiographies paralleles en Roumanie: Nazisme et stalinisme a l'epreuve des archives-Remarques sur les enjeux d'une comparaison," unpublished ms.

14 That Ceausescu was personally an admirer of Stalin's model of socialism appeared clearly in his off-the-record statements to Ken Auchincloss of Newsweek in 1988. See Gail Kligman, "When Abortion is Banned: The Politics of Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania," a report for the National Council for Soviet and East European Research, 1992, p. 51.

15 Personal interviews with former Political Executive Committee members Stefan Andrei and Dumitru Popescu (Bucharest, June 1994); also Stelian Tanase's interviews with other top Nomenklatura figures (1995-96). It came as a surprise to me when Stefan Andrei confessed that he and other more "enlightened" members of the top party echelons were banking on Ceausescu's youngest son Nicu to succeed the ailing dictator. For them, Nicu represented the lesser evil, compared to the much-feared and detested Elena. Ironically, by the end of his presidential mandate Ion Iliescu appeared

to many Romanians alienated from the population and unable to accept the pressing need for political and economic reforms. Personal interviews in Bucharest, January 1997.

16 A fact often deplored by Iliescu and other Gorbachevites.

17 See my book Fantoma lui Gheorghiu-Dej (Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1995).

18 After 1971, Iliescu served as Timis county secretary for propaganda and culture, first secretary of the Iasi RCP committee, chairman of the State Committee for Water resources (with ministerial rank), and, between 1984-89, director of the Technical Publishing House in Bucharest. Between 1971-79 he continued to serve as candidate member of the Political Executive Committee and remained a Central Committee member until 1984. Never fully involved in the various anti-Ceausescu "Old Guard" conversation groups, Iliescu maintained contacts with disgruntled apparatchiks and ideologues. It was during the 1980s that he established a relationship with Virgil Magureanu: Iliescu wrote an essay for a volume edited by Magureanu which came out from the Political Publishing House in 1985. See Virgil Magureanu, ed., Puterea politica si sistemul social (Bucharest; Editura politica, 1985), pp. 175-210.

19 An outstanding exploration of the cultural reverberations of Ceausescuism is Catherine Verdery's National Ideology Under State Socialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). For analyses of Romania's political system under Ceausescu, see Mary Ellen Fischer, Nicolae Ceausescu: A Study in Political Leadership (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1989); Michael Shafir, Romania: Politics, Economics, and Society (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1985); and Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Personal Power and Political Crisis in Romania," Government and Opposition (London), Vol. 24, Spring 1989, pp. 177-198.

20 For analyses of the Dej period, see Kenneth Jowitt, Revolutionary Breakthroughs and National Development: The Case of Romania (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971) and Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The Tragicomedy of Romanian Communism," in Ferenc Feher and Andrew Arato, eds., Crisis and Reform in Eastern Europe (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), pp. 121-174.

21 The case of writer Paul Goma, who in 1977 organized a human rights movement is more than telling with regard to the fate of Romania's dissidents. After countless harassments and attempted bribes, Goma was forced to exile in France. Significantly, Goma still lives in French exile, although most of his books were published in Romania after December 1989. The publication in 1997 of Goma's three volumes of diaries generated strong polemics among Romanian intellectuals: on the one hand, there were those who praised Goma for his moral intransigence, on the other there were many who justified their past compromises in the name of the need to preserve cultural values.

22 See Harry G. Barnes, Jr., "Impressions on Romania," David Funderburk, "Relations Between the United States and Romania during the First Half of the 1980's," and Nastor Ratesh, "The Rise and Fall of a Special Relationship," in Paul D. Quinlan, ed., The United States and Romania: American-Romanian Relations during the Twentieth Century (Woodland Hills, CA.: American-Romanian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1988).

23 See Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in Vaclav Havel et al., The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), pp. 23-96.

24 The officially proclaimed ideals of equality and the myth of the leading role of the working class were contradicted by the egregious lifestyle of the presidential family. These values retained however a following among industrial workers such as coal miners which explains both the 1977 working class radicalism in the Jiu Valley and the manipulation of the miners' anger by the Iliescu regime in its attempts to topple the democratic opposition (June 1990) and the market-oriented reforms initiated by the Roman government (September 1991).

25 Eugen Barbu died in 1992.

26 The most active publications of the "green left" (or "red right" as this trend is often described, are the weeklies Romania Mare (run by Corneliu Vadim Tudor), Europa, and Totusi iubirea (directed by Adrian Paunescu). For an examination of the extreme nationalist ideology of these publications, see Vladimir Tismaneanu and Mircea Mihaies, "Infamy Restored," East European Reporter, Vol. 5, No. 1, January-February 1992, pp. 25-27.

27 For a remarkable collection of the Romanian dissident texts and testimonials, see the special issue of the monthly Transilvania, No.1-2, 1992.

28 The struggle was in many points similar to the conflict between the journals Novy Mir and Oktiabr. A point made clear by Verdery and implicitly denied by the "White Book of the Securitate."

29 After the 1989 revolution, Bobu was tried and received a life sentence for his "participation in the genocide of the Romanian nation."

30 I say seemingly because many documents released after December 1989 suggest that the Securitate was fully aware of the all-pervasive discontent and prepared itself for a post-Ceausescu era. Thus, it is not insignificant that Virgil Magureanu, whose anti-Ceausescu views were known to the Securitate, was not arrested but simply assigned to a new job in the province, and could travel frequently to Bucharest where he maintained relations with Iliescu.

31 See Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Tremors in Romania," The New York Times, December 30, 1987 and Mark Almond, Decline Without Fall: Romania under Ceausescu (London: Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, 1988).

32 See Michael Shafir, "Eastern Europe's 'Rejectionists'," Radio Free Europe Research, RAD Background Report/121, July 3, 1989, pp. 1-6. During my research in Bucharest I could see the reports prepared for Ceausescu by the RCP International Department regarding the changes in the other East European countries. It results that he was relatively well-informed and his rejection of perestroika was an expression of his lifelong hostility to any form of relaxation and liberalization of the one-party system.

33 See Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The Rebellion of the Old Guard" and the full text of the "Letter of the Six" in East European Reporter, Vol. 3, No. 4, Spring/Summer 1989, pp. 23-25.

34 Personal interviews with participants in the revolutionary uprising conducted by the author during his visits to Romania in February-March and June 1990.

35 See Nicolae Ceausescu's report presented at the Fourteenth RCP Congress, Scinteia, November 21, 1989 (English translation in FBIS-Eastern Europe, November 22 1989, pp. 59-84). For the antireformist direction of the Congress, see Alan Riding, "Romanian Leader Refuses Change," The New York Times, November 21, 1989, and "In Romania, Fear Still Outweighs Hope," *ibid.*, November 24, 1989.

36 Symptomatically, Ceausescu's conspiratorial delusions about the Malta pact between the two super-powers to get rid of him have become the leitmotif of the nationalist revision of Romania's recent history. According to magazines like Romania Mare and Europa, the Timisoara uprising was the outcome of a well-prepared plan to destabilize Romania.

37 See Matei Calinescu and Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The 1989 Revolution and Romania's Future," Problems of Communism, January-April 1991, pp. 42-59. Theories abound about the various conspiracies that, in one way or another, prompted the end of Ceausescu's dictatorship. So far, however, the only certain elements are that the Securitate and the army switched sides and abandoned Ceausescu during the early hours of December 22, 1989.

38 On various occasions, Iliescu expressed regrets for the execution of the ex-dictator, but claimed that it was indispensable in order to avoid a civil war.

39 For a sober assessment of the events in December 1989 and their aftermath, see Nestor Ratesh, Romania: The Entangled Revolution (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1991).

40 See Olivier Weber, "La revolution confisque," Le Point (Paris), April 30, 1990, pp. 46-47.

41 For the moral and philosophical aspects of political justice in post-totalitarian societies, see Gyorgy Bence, Political Justice in Post-communist Societies: The Case of Hungary (Washington: Wilson Center, Occasional Paper no. 27, April 1991), with comments by Jeri Laber and Vladimir Tismaneanu.

42 See Alexandre Paleologue avec M. Semo and C. Trean, Souvenirs merveilleux d'un ambassadeur des golans (Paris: Balland, 1990), especially pp. 219-228 and Edward Behr, Kiss the Hand You Cannot Bite: The Rise and Fall of the Ceausescus (New York: Willard Books, 1991).

43 See Jean-Francois Revel, "Roumanie: flagrant delit," Le Point (Paris), March 12, 1990, p. 87.

44 See David Binder, "An Aristocrat Among the Revolutionaries," The New York Times, December 27, 1989.

45 The principal author of the NSF first proclamation to the country, Mazilu broke with the NSF in January 1990 and wrote an interesting memoir serialized throughout 1991 in the Romanian emigre weekly Lumea libera (New York). According to him, it appeared very clear that Ion Iliescu and Petre Roman had a common agenda of stifling the spontaneous revolutionary ardor of the masses. Mazilu's criticism of the NSF resulted in a systematic besmirching campaign waged against him by the pro-government media. One element used by this campaign was Mazilu's past, including a short-lived tenure in the late 1960's as director of the Securitate school in Baneasa. It seems that Mazilu's former colleagues could not accept his genuine conversion to anti-communism and went out of their way to compromise him.

46 Later, Romania libera would withdraw its charges against Mazilu.

47 For the destruction of the Romanian democratic parties during the years of unbound Stalinism, see Gheorghe Boldur-Latescu, Genocidul comunist in Romania (Bucuresti: Editura Albatros, 1992).

48 The bureaucracy's status metamorphosis is characteristic of the post-communist transition in other countries as well. See Lev Timofeyev, Russia's Secret Rulers: How the Government and Criminal Mafia Exercise Their Power (New York: Knopf, 1992).

49 For a brief, but convincing analysis of the post-1989 developments in Romania, see Richard Wagner, Sonderweg Rumanien: Bericht aus einem Entwicklungsland (Berlin: Rotbuch Verlag, 1991).

50 See "Romania- Country Survey," East European Newsletter (London), December 15, 1995, pp. 1-8. For the ongoing efforts to privatize the Romanian industry, see the interview with Sorin Dimitriu, chairman of the State Property Fund, 22 (Bucharest) No. 24, June 17-23, 1997, pp. 6-8.

51 See Andrei Cornea, "Mizeria ideologiilor," 22, No. 42, October 22-28, 1992, p. 4.

52 See Gail Kligman, "Reclaiming the Public: A Reflection on Creating Civil Society in Romania," East European Politics and Societies, Vol. 4, No. 3, 1990, pp. 393-439.

53 Personal interviews with members of the Group.

54 22 is still the most important tribune for Romania's independent thinking.

55 For the evolution of UDMR views and its main political and social goals, see Aurelian Craiutu, "A Dilemma of Dual Identity: the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania," East European Constitutional Review, Vol. 4, No. 2, Spring 1995, pp. 43-49.

56 As a matter of fact, a whole "revisionist" literature has emerged that presents the Securitate as a professional and truly patriotic organization. See William Totok, "Sindromul maltez: Falsificari istorice nationaliste in scrierile unor fosti securisti," German translation in Halbjahreschrift fur sudosteuropaische Geschichte, Literatur und Politik, Fall 1995. One of the most egregious illustrations of this trend is Pavel Corut, Fiul Geto-Daciei (Bucuresti: Editura Gemenii, 1995).

57 See "Proclamatia de la Timisoara," Romania Libera, March 20, 1990 (English translation, FBIS--Eastern Europe, April 4, 1990, 60-63).

58 Virgil Magureanu graduated from the University of Bucharest with a degree in philosophy in the late 1960's and received his Ph. D. from the same institution in 1978 with a thesis on political power. See Virgil Magureanu, Puterea politica (Bucuresti: Editura politica, 1979).

59 For a thoughtful analysis of Romania's post-Communist political tremors, see Katherine Verdery and Gail Kligman, "Romania after Ceausescu: Post-Communist Communism?", in Ivo Banac, ed., Eastern Europe in Revolution (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 117-147. For the climate of anguish and deception under the Iliescu regime, see William McPherson, "Intrigue, Illusion And Iliescu: Reaching for Reality in Romania," The Washington Post, September 13, 1992. For a general assessment of political developments in Romania, especially during 1994-95, see my article "Democracy, Romanian-style," Dissent, Summer 1995, pp.

60 The PDSR platform for the 1996 elections insists on the need to avoid both "capitalism" and "totalitarianism." Personal interview with Martian Dan, vice-chairman of the PDSR, Washington, DC, December 1995.

61 In the September 1992 elections, the PDSR, then still called the Democratic National Salvation Front got 27.72 percent of the vote for the Chamber of Deputies and 28.29 percent for the Senate. In the second run for of the presidential elections in October 1992, the incumbent Ion Iliescu received 47.43 percent of the vote, while the candidate of the Democratic Convention Emil Constantinescu received 31.24 per cent. For excellent data regarding Romania's post-communist politics, see Domnita Stefanescu, Cinci ani din istoria Romaniei: O cronologie a evenimentelor. Decembrie 1989-December 1994 (Bucuresti: Editura Masina de Scris, 1995).

62 For Iliescu's political views, see his book Reforma si revolutie (Bucuresti: Editura Enciclopedica, 1994)

63 See Vladimir Pasti, Romania in tranzitie: Caderea in viitor (Bucuresti: Editura Nemira, 1995).

64 Personal interviews with Corneliu Coposu, June 1994 (Bucharest); February 1995 (Washington, DC). In the September 1992 elections, the Convention received 20.01 percent for the Chamber, and 20.16 percent for the Senate. The Convention president and presidential candidate in both the 1992 and 1996 elections, Emil Constantinescu announced in 1995 that he had joined the PNT-CD.

65 See Ralf Dahrendorf, Reflections on the Revolution in Europe (New York: Random House, 1991). After the 1996 elections, both Constantinescu and the PNT-CD leader Ion Diaconescu avoided the topic of a monarchic restoration. Former King Michael visited Romania in the spring of 1997 and was received by President Constantinescu who appointed him ambassador-at-large in the effort to have Romania invited into the first wave of NATO enlargement.

66 The business elite in Romania is deeply divided: on the one hand, there are those linked to Petre Roman's democratic party and his pro-Western strategy of opening the country to foreign investment; on the other, there are the exponents of secret police-linked new corporations and companies, enjoying government support for shabby financial operations. Romanian political analyst Andrei Cornea's proposed the concept of "directocracy" to describe the ruling social group in Iliescu's Romania. See Andrei Cornea, Masina de fabricat fantasme (Bucuresti: Editura Clavis, 1995).

67 A massive exercise in this direction, Cartea Alba a Securitatii (five huge volumes) published in 1995 by the SRI (Romanian Service of Information).

68 I owe this distinction to Dorel Sandor, personal interview, Washington DC, October 14, 1995. Sandor served as secretary of state in the Stolojan government (1991-92), and is currently running the Center for Political Studies and Comparative Analysis, an independent think tank, in Bucharest.

69 A concept proposed by M. Steven Fish regarding Yeltsin's Russia). See his book Democracy From Scratch: Opposition and Regime in the New Russian Revolution (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

70 For instance, the extremely popular satirical weekly Academica Catavencu published its 1996 Yearbook with the title Cartea neagra a insecuritatii (The Black Book of Insecurity) a pun on the title of the five volumes released by Magureanu's service.

71 See Andrei Codrescu, "Fascism on a Pedestal," New York Times, December 7, 1993.

72 See Robert Hayden, "Constitutional Nationalism and the Wars in Yugoslavia," paper prepared for the conference on "Post-Communism and Ethnic Mobilization," Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, April 21-23, 1995. Leaders of the Democratic Convention may disagree with the republican form of state, but they have not criticized the definition of Romania as a national unitary state as formulated by the 1990 Constitution. The same nervousness about the Hungarian demands for cultural autonomy can be noticed among other non-governmental forces (Roman's PD, PAC).

73 For my own contributions to Romanian political and cultural debates regarding the country's transition, see Michael Shafir, "Vladimir Tismaneanu - The Open (-Minded) Politologist and His Enemies," Transition, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 10, 1997, pp. 22-24

74 See Eastern Europe Newsletter (London), December 15, 1995, pp. 2-6.

75 This is not the case with the books about the Guard or even pro-Guardist literature that are abundant, indicating a certain fascination with this element of Romania's past.

76 Gheorghe Funar is one example, but there are other demagogues, including nationalist generals, like the notorious Paul Cheler, the former commander of the Transylvanian Army, whom Iliescu forced to retire in 1995. For the threats to liberal values and institutions in post-communist Romania, see Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Tenuous Pluralism in the Post-Ceausescu Era," Transition, Vol. 2, No. 26, December 27, 1996, pp. 6-11.