THE ROMANIAN REVOLUTION OF 1989:
MYTH AND REALITY — MYTH OR REALITY?

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Abstract

The Romanian Revolution of 1989: Myth and Reality — Myth or Reality?

This Ph.D is a detailed and critical examination of the events in Romania during December 1989 and January 1990 which have popularly come to be known as the Romanian Revolution. Almost since the last bullet was fired, the events have been surrounded by such confusion and controversy that the first task of this study has been to try to recover the history of the revolution in order to establish a more solid basis for further analysis. The first chapters, therefore, contain a detailed narrative, mostly drawn from Romanian sources, of the overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu and the installation of the Council of the National Salvation Front, with special attention being paid to elucidating some of the main strands within the chaotic and bloody period of conflict which ensued after the fall of the Romanian leader. The end of the fighting was to bring no end to confusion and strife in Romania, and the next chapters look, first, at the structures of the new regime and the cultural context in which it shaped its ideas, and, then, the events of January 1990, during which the Front, whilst attempting to consolidate its hold on power, came increasingly under challenge from more radical oppositional groups and was, eventually, forced to abandon its preferred institutional structures in favour of the more broadly based Provisional Council of National Unity. The thesis concludes with two chapters which attempt to place the Romanian Revolution in a more theoretical perspective, addressing the questions of whether the events can justifiably be described as a revolution, and why Romania experienced such a violent exit from communism. Throughout the study considerable stress is placed on the role of myth in determining the dynamic of the events, and the work closes with some observations about how it is these myths, rather than the reality, which will probably be the most potent legacy of the revolution.
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### Abbreviations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CNSF</td>
<td>Council of the National Salvation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAPR</td>
<td>Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCR</td>
<td>Democratic Convention of Romania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNSF</td>
<td>Democratic National Salvation Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GSD</td>
<td>Group for Social Dialogue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDUR</td>
<td>Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEFM</td>
<td>New Economic and Financial Mechanism</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLP</td>
<td>National Liberal Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>NPP</td>
<td>National Peasant Party–Christian Democratic</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSF</td>
<td>National Salvation Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCNU</td>
<td>Provisional Council for National Unity</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCP</td>
<td>Romanian Communist Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>RSDP</td>
<td>Romanian Social Democratic Party</td>
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| USLA         | *Unității speciale de luptă anti-teroistă*  
               [Special anti-terrorist combat units] |
Preface

The Romanian Revolution of December 1989 after the passage of more than five years still sits under a seemingly impenetrable fog of obfuscation beset by often unproven allegations and half-glimpsed truths, apparently destined to remain the hapless victim of those who would play upon it for political advantage. Consequently, the first and primary aim of this study has been to review all the available evidence in an effort to recover the history of the events of December 1989 and January 1990 so as to provide a clearer narrative on which to build further analysis. This priority has necessarily given this thesis a somewhat unusual shape and so, in order to avoid confusion and aid comprehension, some pointers will be given here as to the overall structure of the work. The first two chapters, in keeping with the aim outlined above, are essentially works of narrative, detailing the overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu and the installation of the National Salvation Front regime. The third chapter looks in detail at the structures erected by the NSF and the complex cultural matrix in which it shaped both its ideology and initial political project. The fourth chapter is again largely concerned with narrative, being an exposition of the events of January 1990, during which the Front increasingly came under challenge from more radical forces unleashed by the revolution. Having established the narrative of events, the two last chapters are concerned with analysis. Chapter five seeks to place the Romanian Revolution within a wider theoretical perspective by, first, addressing the question of whether the events can justifiably be described as a revolution and, then, considering why Romania experienced such a violent exit from communism in 1989. The search for an answer to the latter question, which hinges on the structure of the Ceaușescu regime, necessitates a consideration of the causes of the revolution which are, thus, addressed in this chapter and not at the beginning of the work as might be expected. The final chapter contains some observations on the overall morphology of the revolution
before concluding with a review of the importance of myth within the revolu­tion­ary process. In particular, attention is paid to how myths were instrumental in not only determining the dynamic of the events but also in forming a number of differing interpretations of the revolution which have come to act as foundation myths within post—Ceaușescu Romanian politics.

The stress on chronological narrative means that, although frequent recourse has been made to the works of other disciplines, by the methodology employed this study is largely a work of contemporary history. However, it must be stressed as well, that it is also a work of history as far as Romania is concerned. It is not a polemic on current politics but a study of a short period of time (December 1989 — February 1990) which should be firmly placed in the context of the events and aspirations of five years ago, not of today. Since that time Romania has changed greatly and, although many of the chief actors in this study remain prominent in the country’s political life, bowing to changing circumstances and through many trials and tribulations they have, nonetheless, managed to successfully steer their country on a new orientation. Since February 1990 Romania has, more or less, successfully navigated general and local elections, started on the difficult task of economic reform and forged noticeably closer links with the institutions of Western Europe, including NATO and the EU.

As is often the case, this work commenced with greater ambitions than were eventually fulfilled, and many of those interviewed during the course of the research were under the impression, as indeed was I at the time, that it would eventually form the basis of a study of the broader post—Ceaușescu transition as a whole. That this has not come to pass I hope will cause no misunderstandings amongst those concerned but it has proved necessary in the meantime to scale back the project to more manageable proportions. However, given the nature of the subject I would like to especially stress that all opinions voiced in this work are my own and I take full responsibility for all errors and omissions. The research involved a number of interviews with leading Romanian political figures and, in keeping with the sensibilities surrounding any project dealing with current Romanian politics, a decision was taken from the onset to free these interviewees from the threat of the ‘direct quote’ by eschewing the use of a tape—recorder and keeping the discussions informal. In consequence, although their words were often important in shaping my own interpretation of the events, I have decided to further preserve the anonymity of those to whom I spoke by not referring to them directly within the text of this work. Instead, I would like to record here that the following were kind enough to spare the time to talk to me, and to express my gratitude
for their efforts which greatly improved the quality of this work and enriched my
own understanding of Romania: Călin Anastasiu, Victor Babiuc, Ioana Brătianu,
Silviu Brucan, Pavel Câmpeanu, Corneliu Coposu, Petre Datculescu, Caius Traian
Dragomir, Dinu Giurescu, Andrei Muștescu, Dragoș Negrescu, Bogdan Niculescu-
Duvăz, Teodor Nicolaescu, Vladimir Paști, Dorel Șandor, Vasile Secăreș, Adrian
Severin, Ovidiu Șincăi, Ștefana Steriade and Stelian Tănase.

Since becoming interested in Romania I have made four visits to the country,
the first prior to the revolution in 1988, the most extensive in 1993 for six months
of fieldwork. During this time I have been fortunate to make the acquaintance of a
large number of Romanians, many of whom have contributed, often inadvertently,
to this research. Any list of acknowledgments is bound to be incomplete, and
I here apologise for any unintentionally forgotten, but I would like to especially
thank the staff of the Embassy of Romania in London, particularly Gheorghe
Duță, Simone Micălescu of the Romanian Foreign Ministry, and Vlad Moga and
Adrian Pop of ADIRI, who were all helpful in arranging interviews in Romania.
During my period of fieldwork I was the guest of the Nicolae Iorga Institute of
History of the Academy of Romania and I would like to thank the staff of that
institute for making me welcome and especially Professor Șerban Papacostea, Dr
Paul Cernovodeanu and Dr Florin Constantinescu. The Economic and Social
Research Council generously funded me, first, through a year of MA study, which
sharpened my interest in Eastern Europe, and, then, for three further years of Ph.D
research. The British Council and the University of Bucharest also sponsored my
attendance on a Romanian language summer course at Sinaia in 1991.

I have been guided in my work by two supervisors who have a deep under­
standing of their fields. Dr. Dennis Deletant, the holder of the only specialist post
in Romanian studies in the United Kingdom, has an unrivaled knowledge and un­
derstanding of Romania and things Romanian, whilst Mr George Schöpflin, whose
undergraduate course first awakened my interest in Eastern Europe, has over many
years been a constant source of comments and ideas. Many others have also played
a part in furthering my research, and I would particularly like to mention Yvonne
Alexandrescu, Dr Gheorghe Brătescu and Jonathan Sunley of the East European
Reporter. Within Romania I would like to pay special thanks to a few people who
have been particularly supportive over the years, helping through their friendship
to shape my appreciation of the country. During my stay in Bucharest in 1993, I
was fortunate to meet two talented young Romanians who did much to aid my un­
derstanding of the more subtle nuances of Romanian life: Dan Niculescu-Duvăz,
an always unbiased and thoughtful observer, and Vlad Nicolescu, whose boundless
enthusiasm for Romanian culture was truly infectious. Professor Nicolae Tanaşoca throughout proved to be a fount of wisdom on all things Romanian, who with his encyclopedic knowledge patiently guided me through the mazes of Romanian history and with his wife Anca was ever hospitable. However, my deepest gratitude is to Familia Nedelcu, Catrinel, Tudor, Ioana and Ileana Băracu for their kindness and hospitality over the years, because without their generosity of spirit Romania for me would have forever remained an alien land, instead theirs was always a welcoming portal and for this I shall be forever grateful.

Finally, I am happy to acknowledge many years of support and encouragement from both my Father and Mother and most of all my wife, Mary, who was a constant companion during the writing of this work both in London and Romania, bearing much with fortitude and understanding. As an always critical intellectual sparing partner she has done much to help make sense of what at times seemed a shapeless mass of ideas and as a wife she was always ready to give hope at times of doubt, and it is to her I owe the greatest debt of gratitude.
The overthrow of Nicolae Ceaușescu

As December 1989 dawned, despite the momentous upheavals that had swept Eastern Europe throughout the year culminating in November with the breaching of the Berlin Wall and the 'Velvet Revolution' in Prague, many observers still remained deeply pessimistic about the prospects for such joyful scenes being repeated in Romania. Amidst this sea of change the Romanian leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu, effectively isolated from the outside world within the trappings of his bizarre Stalinist personality cult, remained an unyielding monolith rejecting all calls for deviation from his own interpretation of the tenets of Marxism–Leninism. Marooned in this fast changing world and constantly fearful that he might succumb to the same fate as the recently deposed Erich Honecker and Todor Zhikov, Ceaușescu, nevertheless, appeared at face value to be in a far stronger position than his geriatric confrères to maintain his hold on power. Never having baulked at employing the formidable security apparatus under his personal control to suppress all challenges to his authority, he faced little obvious opposition from within the higher echelons of the RCP and ruled over a country which by all appearances had been battered by years of suffering into an atomised passivity.

Yet, from the late 1970s, as conditions inside Romania had started to deteriorate sharply, with food shortages coinciding with attempts by the regime to increase working hours and tie wages to wildly optimistic plan targets, a number of worker protests had flickered to life suggesting that under the surface violent tensions were simmering. The first incident of any consequence had been the 1977 strike in the Jiu Valley during which miners had peacefully occupied their pits to protest at moves by the regime to curtail social benefits and increase working hours. The authorities had responded to the challenge by opening negotiations, first dispatching a delegation headed by PEC member Ilie Verdeț, and, then, when they had been taken captive by the strikers, Ceaușescu had arrived in person to, eventually, promise amidst chaotic scenes that the bulk of the workers' demands
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would be conceded. The 1977 strike set the pattern for the regime's response to all future outbreaks of industrial unrest, as after first acquiescing to the workers' demands to satisfy local grievances and persuade the strikers to return to work, the authorities, then, moved to isolate the ringleaders through imprisonment or distant internal exile whilst gradually clawing back the initial concessions. The Jiu Valley strikes were followed by other disturbances, but due to the rigid news blackout imposed by the authorities the true extent of industrial unrest over the next decade remains unclear although reports reached the West of factory disturbances in a number of cities including, in the years prior to 1989, Cluj, Turda and Iași where students and workers in two separate protests were said to have marched through the streets of the city to the Party headquarters demanding rectification of their grievances. All these strikes appear to have passed peacefully and, as the demands in most cases seem to have focused on local problems within the factory or, in the case of the students, with living conditions in their dormitories, they were relatively easily defused by timely concessions from the regime. However, there also seem to have been exceptions to this general rule, with two incidents involving miners from the early 1980s bringing reports of some violence and, most significantly, on 15 November 1987 workers from the Red Flag lorry factory in Brașov proceeding en masse to vote in local elections went on the rampage shouting 'Down with the dictator!' and singing the old patriotic anthem Deșteaptă-te Române!. This explosive event featured many of the patterns later seen in the revolution as joined by other townspeople the workers ransacked the local Party headquarters and tore down and burnt in a huge bonfire much of the panoply of communist symbolism which festooned the town. When the militia failed to restore order the army with armoured personnel carriers was dispatched onto the streets to clear the crowd and a full return to work only seems to have eventually been negotiated following the arrival of the Prime Minister, Constantin Dăscălescu. Aside from general grievances over food shortages and rationing the disturbances seem to have been primarily triggered by an effective cut in wages at the factory due to a failure to fulfill plan requirements and fears amongst the workforce of mass redundancies. The disturbances in Brașov were followed by reports from all over Romania of other sporadic protests against the regime, but, generally, these seem to have amounted only to the shouting of some anti-Ceaușescu slogans, the scattering of opposition leaflets and occasional abortive attempts to organise demonstrations, including one in Iași the day before the revolution broke out in Timișoara. In truth, all these incidents amounted to little more than isolated, uncoordinated pinpricks; there was no organised opposition in Romania, and an earlier attempt to create a 'Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania'
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in 1979 centered on workers and intellectuals in Bucharest and Drobota-Turnu Severin had been swiftly crushed. Nevertheless, the intermittent disturbances over this period are indicative of the growing sense of grievance harboured by the workforce and provide an important pointer to the patterns later seen in the revolution.

The excessive violence used by the authorities to suppress the disturbances in Brașov brought a sharply worded protest from Silviu Brucan, a former high Party official, who at one time had been Romanian Ambassador to the United States, and in February 1989 he was also to be one of the six co-signatories alongside five other senior Party colleagues, Gheorghe Apostol, Alexandru Birlădeanu, Constantin Pârvulescu, Corneliu Mănescu and Grigore Răceanu, of a further stinging indictment of Ceaușescu’s years of misrule. Beginning ‘At a time when the very idea of socialism, for which we have fought, is discredited by your policy,...’ this ‘Letter of the Six’ took Ceaușescu to task on a number of counts: for failing to observe the stipulations of the Romanian constitution safeguarding civic freedoms, for proposing to raze thousands of villages and destroying part of the centre of Bucharest, for economic mismanagement which through food exports — they charged — threatened the very ‘biological existence of the nation’ and, finally, for damaging Romania’s international standing. This stinging rebuke from senior RCP members shattered Ceaușescu’s carefully cultivated image of ideological conformity and by cracking the façade of unanimity, that had previously marked the Romanian leader’s near absolute control of the public sphere, it fertilised seeds of doubt already sprouting as to his ultimate ability to hold on to power. Previously, Romanian dissent, after a brief flowering in the late 1970s centred on the writer Paul Goma, under constant pressure from the authorities had largely become the preserve of a few courageous individuals such as Doina Cornea, a University Professor from Cluj, with occasional stirrings from shadowy groups such as the anonymous ‘Romanian Democratic Action’ and from a former giant of Romania’s pre-communist political past, the National Peasant Party. However, whilst these isolated cases of protest often received widespread publicity on Western short wave broadcasts to Romania, they still remained uncoordinated, and subjected to constant intimidation and periods of house arrest or imprisonment the dissidents seemed to pose no great challenge to a regime which could call upon what many considered to be the most feared and extensive security services in Eastern Europe, with the myth of the omnipresent and omnipotent Securitate gripping the popular imagination both at home and abroad.

However, these growing voices of dissent did represent an important crack in the monolithic façade presented by the Ceaușescu regime to the outside world.
and increasingly, as the 1980s progressed, their message of material suffering and human rights abuses found a more receptive audience in the West, which with the onset of Mikhail Gorbachev's reform programme in the Soviet Union, had ceased to see Ceaușescu as a valuable agent of influence within Eastern Europe. Ceaușescu's destruction of a large part of the heart of old Bucharest to make way for a grandiose new civic centre and triumphal boulevards had already drawn sharp protests from a number of Romanian historians and received a great deal of adverse comment in the West, but when, in 1988, he revived a scheme for 'systematization' by which several thousand villages were to disappear by the year 2000, ostensibly in the name of a more rational use of geographical space, it brought a torrent of international condemnation and Ceaușescu from being feted in Western capitals as a statesman of renown became transfigured in popular imagination to the incarnation of evil with his wife, Elena, cast in a shadowy Svengali-like role.\textsuperscript{15} The response of the Romanian regime was to turn its back on the outside world, prohibiting its citizens contact with foreigners, unilaterally renouncing its 'Most Favoured Nation' trading status with the USA to forestall Congress from scrutinising its human rights record, and, pointedly, refusing to be bound by the provisions relating to human rights and freedom of worship in the final document of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.\textsuperscript{16} However, as well as loosing favour in the West Ceaușescu, by the late 1980s, had also become increasingly isolated in the East, his descent into neo-Stalinist reaction being accompanied by a vitriolic and acrimonious high-profile confrontation with Hungary over the assimilatory pressures being applied on the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. A dispute which also cast the regime in an unfavourable light on the world stage, an impression further underlined by reports that by 1989 over 24,000 Romanian refugees had fled across the border to their northern neighbour.\textsuperscript{17}

With Romania increasingly isolated and beset on all sides, amidst the turbulent scenes of hope shining brightly elsewhere in Eastern Europe, on 22 November 1989 the 14\textsuperscript{th} Congress of the Romanian Communist Party opened in Bucharest. It seems that all Romania waited with bated breath for the opening speech from their leader hoping against hope for either news of a last minute conversion to Gorbachev-style reforms or, perhaps, a challenge from the audience, like that at the 12\textsuperscript{th} Congress of the RCP when Constantin Pârvulescu had risen to denounce Ceaușescu's abuse of power. Instead, in a familiar declamatory drone punctuated by frequent bursts of carefully orchestrated applause they heard Ceausescu launch into a monologue in which he promised only to maintain the leading role of the Party and offered no prospect of respite on the painful road of socialist construction. Many remember turning off the radio or television with heavy hearts, and,
following Ceaușescu’s ‘unaminious’ re-election as Party leader, when, less than a
month later, the protesters spilled onto the streets one of the slogans they were
to chant was ‘Down with the re-election!’ The loss of hope seems to have been
tangible and, as the last prospects for peaceful change evaporated, the only option
left was to be a violent overthrow.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{The contexts of revolution}

As an event, the Romanian Revolution passed extremely rapidly with little more
than one week elapsing between the first demonstrations in Timișoara, outside the
house of the Hungarian Pastor, László Tôkés, and the final flight of Ceaușescu
from the Central Committee building in Bucharest. This brief period can broadly
be divided into three phases: the first of these began in Timișoara on 15 Decem­
ber and was characterised by escalating street protests, frequently violent, by a
disorganised crowd. These were brought to an abrupt halt on 17 December when
a brutal repression by the authorities drove the crowd from the streets of the city.
Tentative signs of the second phase of protest began to emerge on the next day.
More organised and largely peaceful in form and centred on the industrial work­
force these occurred initially within the factories, but on 20 December they spilled
out into a huge demonstration in the centre of the city, which directly led to the
collapse of official rule in Timișoara. The third phase was to see the unrest spread
out from beyond Timișoara, first to surrounding towns in the Banat and, then,
to other major cities and many smaller towns, largely in Transylvania but also
including some centres such as Orșova and Ploiești, that lay outside its bounds.
Most significantly unrest also spread to Bucharest. In many of the smaller towns
the overthrow of Ceaușescu was to pass peacefully, but in several of the larger
cities and, especially, Bucharest, Cluj and Sibiu, a pattern of events was to unfold
remarkably similar to those in Timișoara, as violent street demonstrations were
followed by repression which in turn led to mass protests. These rapidly, under­
cut the last shreds of legitimacy held by the regime leading the security forces to
withdraw their support and making the position of Ceaușescu untenable.

The revolution broke out in December, normally the heart of the harsh Roma­
nian winter, but in 1989 the country was blessed by an interlude of unseasonably
mild weather, which encouraged the crowds to stay on the streets and to a certain
extent rendered the tactics of the authorities inefficacious, especially, in the case
of the water cannon employed against the protesters, as in all probability their
blasts of cold water would have had far greater impact if they had been delivered
in more wintry conditions.\textsuperscript{19} Strangely, on either side of the revolution, Romania
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experienced a cold snap and, in Ceaușescu's bleak world, the first arrival of winter cold with its attendant power and food shortages may have added to the sense of desperation felt by the demonstrators, with the chill weather perhaps quenching their ardour when it returned in early January.

December in Romania sees dusk falling quickly followed by long dark nights which in the low wattage twilight of communism were frequently pitch black. Much of the revolution was played out against a backcloth of darkness and this had a profound influence on the events as it remains a salient fact that much of the violence and practically all the shooting of the Romanian Revolution occurred during the hours of night. At first, the darkness aided the demonstrators giving them a cloak of anonymity in which to hurl stones and petrol bombs at the security forces, but nightfall also these gatherings served to conceal the face of repression making it perhaps less difficult to order scared and ill-trained conscripts to fire on their fellow citizens glimpsed as fleeting nocturnal half-images rather than in the full light of day. The prevailing darkness has also compounded the problem of identifying both those who were guilty of shooting at the crowd before 22 December and, more lastingly and bafflingly, the targets of the army's gunfire in the nights following that date, when the distinction between friend and foe often blurred to the point that they became indistinguishable as infected by wildfire rumours and exaggerated fears and sure only that they were threatened by an enemy of some description, the young conscripts frequently fired wildly in the dark often, it seems, at targets more conjured in the mind than rooted in reality.

Throughout the revolution a strange half-reality prevailed in the cities of Romania as everyday life continued cheek by jowl with rampaging demonstrations. At all times during this period, although the authorities tried to impose a news blackout on the events, information continued to flow informally not only via the gossip of the stairwell and the rumours whispered in the long queues for food but also through the telephone system. Local calls within Timișoara seem to have been possible for much of the time as were connections with other localities in Romania, although these were more disrupted. Only foreign calls were almost impossible to make. Information also flowed into the country via foreign short wave radio broadcasts, which were additionally supplemented in certain areas, such as Timișoara close to the western border, by television signals from more open neighbours. All these sources of information offered a less blinkered vision of the world than that purveyed by the Romanian state media and throughout 1989 most Romanians seem to have been well aware of developments elsewhere in Eastern Europe. During the early days of the revolution, the proximity of the border to Timișoara also provided a conduit for information to pass from Romania
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to waiting Western journalists just over the border, allowing the events to unfold under the full glare of the international media spotlight, and, most importantly, permitting news of the events to be speedily broadcast via Western radio stations to other parts of Romania.

The attempts that have been made to identify why Timişoara was the cradle of the Romanian Revolution usually stress the distinct historical development of the Banat which was long part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and, indeed, had been for much of the time under direct Austrian rule as part of the Military Border. The Austrians had encouraged large scale immigration into the area from the mid-eighteenth century onwards and this had helped historically make the region one of great ethnic diversity. However, like so many other cities in Romania, Timişoara had experienced a massive increase in population during the Ceauşescu era, virtually doubling in size from 174,243 in 1966 to 334,278 by 1989, and, as most of the newcomers were drawn from outside the region, when taken in conjunction with the slow exodus of the German population, this meant that by 1989 the vast majority of the population was Romanian in ethnic origin. Thus, although Ceauşescu railed against agents of foreign irredentism and certain subsequent nationalist readings of the events have continued to build on this dimension, in reality, aside from the undeniable facts that László Tőkés was a Hungarian and that the bulk of the initial protesters were drawn from the ranks of the congregation of his Hungarian Reform Church, this history of ethnic diversity in the Banat cannot be said to have had any direct bearing on the outbreak of events. Although it could be that the proximity of the city to the Hungarian border and the remnants of this multi-ethnic tradition may have helped confirm Ceauşescu in his belief that the uprising was the work of foreign provocateurs.

Many of the settlers, especially the Germans, had introduced advanced agricultural techniques into the area and this coupled to a tradition of good schooling for the members of all ethnic groups meant that the Banat and, especially, Timiş and Timişoara, had enjoyed a level of economic and social development above that of most of the rest of Romania. This situation even seems to have held true for the majority of the Ceauşescu era because although, like elsewhere in Romania, Timişoara did suffer considerable privations, it still seems to have enjoyed a slightly higher standard of living than the rest of the country, and reportedly it was only in October 1989 that extensive food rationing was introduced into the Banat. It seems quite possible that the late timing of this further material decline in the quality of life may have played a significant role in the triggering of the revolution,
especially, as the Banat was a noted food producing region. These historic levels of development also imparted a distinct value system onto the region stressing such virtues as civic awareness, ethnic harmony and an orientation towards the West, all of which stood in direct antithesis to Ceauşescu’s isolationist neo-Stalinism; and the strains imparted by this local political culture coming to terms with the Romanian leader’s vision of the world appear to have played an important role in the aetiology of the revolution. However, this still provides no direct rationale for Timişoara being the seat of the unrest rather than Bucharest, Braşov, Cluj or any of the other major cities which were to see violence in the coming weeks, but, unlike Timişoara, none of these contained the trigger for the events: László Tőkés.

László Tőkés and the outbreak of revolution

László Tőkés had arrived in Timişoara in June 1986 as assistant Pastor of the Hungarian Reformed Church and following the death of the incumbent in January 1987 he was appointed Probationary Pastor, an intermediary status which left him directly under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Oradea, László Papp. Tőkés had a long history as a turbulent priest, often at loggerheads with his church authorities, and he considers that he was primarily dispatched to Timişoara in the hope of isolating him from his home territory of Transylvania and silencing his protests. In the 1970s and early 1980s dissent in the Banat had been centred on a loose grouping of ethnic German writers, but, by 1989, most of these had already emigrated to Germany and the region seems to have been judged quiet by the authorities, particularly as there were no well-known Romanian dissidents in the county and the Hungarian population was not great. Under the pastoral care of the previous incumbent, Leo Peuker, a noted ‘Red Priest’ and collaborator with the authorities, the congregation of the church had dwindled to a mere shadow of its former self, but Tőkés with customary zeal succeeded in reversing this decline in fortunes and, indeed, the resolute support given by his parishioners was to become a vital factor in allowing the stubborn Priest to withstand the war of attrition that the authorities were to wage against him throughout 1989.

Tőkés considers that the authorities moved from a passive acceptance of his activities to active intimidation following two events which occurred in the autumn of 1988. The first of these in September was the delivery of an open letter from the Arad Deanary, of which the Parish of Timişoara was part, to the Bishop of Oradea attacking Ceauşescu’s systematization policies. The second, was a joint Catholic–Reformed Church ecumenical service which was held in Timişoara on 31 October. Attended by many young people and intellectuals it seems to have raised the spectre of organised dissent in the eyes of the authorities and they responded
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by beginning proceedings to evict Tőkés from his living in Timișoara. A formal notice of suspension was filed on 31 March 1989, but this was vigorously contested in the courts and there followed eight months of intense legal wrangling before the final eviction decree was issued on 7 December. Whilst the wheels of justice slowly ground forward, the pressure increased on Tőkés so that, eventually, he was placed under virtual house arrest and subjected to a campaign of intimidation which at one point saw him attacked in his own home by masked men.

During the week before the expulsion, the local authorities seem to have become increasingly concerned about the possibility of demonstrations at the removal of the troublesome Priest and efforts were made to persuade Tőkés that he should rescind the plea, he had made the previous Sunday, for witnesses to gather outside the church on the morning of 15 December, the day of his proposed eviction, since they assured him they could not act to secure his removal until the following Monday at the earliest. But their cajolery only seems to have fallen on deaf ears, and on the morning in question, some thirty to forty mostly elderly members of the congregation, who did not have to work, gathered outside the nondescript turn-of-the-century block that houses the Hungarian Reformed Church and the residence of its Pastor to observe events and offer Tőkés their moral support. The building lies just off a small square over the canal from the centre of Timișoara where a cluster of worn houses momentarily widens to allow for the concrete platform of a tram stop and, in December 1989, the crowded passing trams were to act as a grapevine spreading news of the events outside the church throughout the city. Those who stood on the pavement waiting for trams mingled with the members of the congregation learning of the plight of Tőkés and swelling the size of the crowd so that, in the restricted space, it appeared more numerous, giving heart to the parishioners and drawing in the curious.

The continuous bustle on the boulevard meant that any events had to be played out against a public backdrop and this may help explain why the authorities, somewhat surprisingly, allowed the small peaceful assembly to continue even though it blatantly contravened the draconian public gathering laws. It seems probable their approach was in part conditioned by a general desire to avoid any adverse publicity that might arise from the use of open coercion against Tőkés, who during 1989 had become something of an international cause célèbre. From April his plight had been regularly featured on the Hungarian based Kossuth Radio and in July he had attracted a great deal of attention, when in an interview broadcast on the Hungarian television current affairs programme 'Panorama' he had prominently attacked the Hungarian church authorities in Romania for their servility and weakness in front of both Ceaușescu’s systematization campaign and
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his continuing onslaught against the Hungarian community. News of the Pastor had also spread beyond Hungary to Western Europe and all the main Western short wave radio bands broadcast to Romania, so that, by the beginning of the demonstrations, there was a general consciousness of Tőkés and his protest not only in Timișoara and Romania but also within the wider world. One consequence of this was that both the British and American Embassies in Bucharest dispatched officials to Timișoara to report on the situation and, although they were subsequently forced to leave the scene, their appearance around mid-morning on 15 December appears to have influenced the authorities to take a low-key approach to events, keeping the security forces in the background in the hope that the affair might blow itself out. However, this cautious approach was to badly backfire since, by giving Tőkés’ parishioners free access to the Pastor for the first time in several weeks, it only strengthened the resolve of both parties. Through the very act of assembling to show their dissent the people had summoned up the courage to act illegally and now the perception came ‘...that we had power. We were able to control what was happening. We had driven the Securitate away. It was like living a wild dream, a forbidden fantasy.’ By the next day, rumours were sweeping Timișoara that the Securitate and the town’s authorities were powerless in the face of open defiance and this, in turn, brought many more people to the church to see if the story was true.

As the day progressed, a core of less than one hundred in which Romanian Pentecostalists and Baptists increasingly mingled with Hungarian Calvinists was surrounded by an ever changing crowd of onlookers, so that, by the early evening, the numbers had grown sufficient to bring traffic to a virtual standstill on the nearby boulevard. As the crowd grew and the proportion of Tőkés’ parishioners became diluted, the mood of the gathering began to change becoming more radical and adopting a markedly anti-government tone, as the protesters began to show a brazen contempt for those in positions of authority. When the Mayor of Timișoara, Petru Moț, arrived and tried to disperse the gathering by promising to issue a temporary permit to allow the Pastor to stay in Timișoara and to repair windows and doors broken in earlier incidents, he was met by so much hostility that Tőkés had a real fear that he would be lynched by the crowd. Tőkés had to negotiate with the crowd not only in order to protect the Mayor but even to be allowed to talk to him and, afterwards, despite countless pleas from the Pastor few of the throng outside the church were willing to depart quickly. As Tőkés heard chants of ‘Liberty!’ rising from outside his window, he sensed that control of the protest was slipping away from his hands and as the crowd began to gain a sense of its own power, so it can be said that the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 had
begun. However, at this stage, the response of the regime to this apparently minor challenge was to cautiously open negotiations with Tőkés and a small group of his parishioners and, although during the evening there appears to have been some scuffles on the fringes of the crowd with attempted arrests by the authorities, there were no overt signs of coercion and the day seems to have ended peacefully with some fifteen to twenty people still maintaining a vigil outside the church into the early hours of the next morning.

The protesters take to the streets

A handful of protesters seems to have stayed the whole night outside the church and, by the middle of the next morning, when Mayor Moț appeared once again bringing with him some workmen to repair the Tőkés' flat, their numbers had
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increased to about seventy. The psychology that might lie behind the Mayor's actions has been explored by Tőkés: 'While I stood at a broken window, I was the symbol and the evidence of the harshness of the regime. Mending the window was a calculated attempt to improve its image in the eyes of the crowd.' At this stage the authorities still seem to have hoped that they could defuse the situation through minor concessions and dialogue, and so talks took place between the Mayor and an ad hoc negotiating committee of six Romanians and four Hungarians. The presence of Romanians within this committee would seem to mark an implicit acceptance that the issue had now been broadened beyond the confines of the Tőkés dispute, but despite this, it appears that the Mayor was still only able to give assurances relating to the Pastor and, when even these were not kept, such as the failure of the authorities to produce a written guarantee that he would not be evicted despite promises that it would be faxed from Bucharest, it only served to heighten the mistrust of the crowd.

By nightfall the gathering had grown to be over a thousand strong and was predominantly Romanian and youthful in composition. Earlier at the request of both the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Tőkés had made repeated attempts to disperse the crowd but had been unable to do so, and now he was to write: '... the crowd looked to me as a figurehead, in truth I was a prisoner of their anger.' Indeed, there had been a perceptible change in atmosphere as the protest broadened in scope and the slogans chanted took on a politicised edge with earlier calls for bread and meat being replaced with 'Down with Ceaușescu!', 'Down with the Dictator!', 'Down with the re-election!', 'Down with tyranny!' and the all pervasive 'Liberty!' By early evening numbers had swollen sufficiently to block the passage of the trams passing through the square and impromptu orators leapt up onto the buffers of the stranded vehicles to address the crowd, who thus incited, in the absence of any visible militia, began to break the windows of nearby shops. Turning their backs on Tőkés and seeking more affirmative action sections began to drift towards the centre of the town leaving a trail of damage in their wake. The largest group headed towards the students' halls of residence complex before a section broke off to march to the local Party headquarters. Here, finding the building apparently deserted and no militia in the vicinity, only a solitary fire engine which was quickly overrun, they began to break windows but failed to enter because the door was heavily barred. Foiled in their efforts to gain admittance to the building the crowd instead vented its anger on neighbouring shops, breaking windows and setting fire to the tomes of Ceaușescu looted from a bookstore, until the appearance of some thirty riot troops armed with tear-gas and batons prompted the protesters to turn tail and run into the night.
Map of Timișoara

A: County Council Building
B: Opera House
C: Orthodox Cathedral
D: Garrison Headquarters
E: Town Hall
F: University
G: Students' Halls of Residence

To Tőkés' Church

Uniformed members of the security forces also started to appear in the area around Tőkés' church. At first their numbers do not seem to have been sufficient to control the crowd and their presence only further incited the demonstrators, but, later, when reinforcements arrived, a systematic attempt was made to clear the streets with fire engines moving up and down the boulevard drenching the protesters in cold water. Following momentary panic the crowd seems to have regrouped and begun to retaliate by hurling stones and other missiles and there, then, followed over the next couple of hours a total breakdown of order, as a running battle ebbed and flowed through the surrounding streets with, at one point, a barricade of bread crates, planks and scaffolding raided from a building site being built across a nearby square. As the fighting flared and then died before reigniting again in the hours up to midnight, much of the area was devastated, as the windows of shops were broken and vehicles badly damaged, including a jeep set on fire and a fire engine ransacked with its hoses and other parts cast into the canal. Meanwhile elsewhere in Timişoara, some 2,000 people had gathered in the main square in front of the Cathedral, possibly in the hope that Metropolitan Nicolae would act as a mediator with the authorities. Members of the security forces were also by now visible here with a cordon guarding the Town Hall to the side of the Cathedral and, at times, hotheads had to be dissuaded from assailing the troops on the reasoning that they were there to defend that building rather than attack the demonstrators. After a while, in search of reinforcements this crowd moved out of the centre towards more outlying districts and during the next few hours after midnight there followed a number of further skirmishes with the security forces — often of an intense nature — before the last demonstrators were dispersed sometime around four in the morning. Before this, at approximately 3.00, Tőkés and his wife Edit had been seized from his church together with seven friends. On his own account Tőkés was brutally beaten and brought into the presence of Ion Cumpănaşu, head of the Department of Religious Denominations, who forced him to sign a blank piece of paper effectively accepting his dismissal and eviction. Subsequently, in separate cars he and his wife were taken to Mineu, Sălaj, their designated place of internal exile.

It seems that the authorities still considered Tőkés to have been the focus of the revolt and that by removing him they could cut the problem from its roots, but, the next day, a Sunday, in the absence of work even larger crowds were to gather on the streets many curious to see the testimony of the rioting of the night before. For aside from being a purely emotional response the breaking of so many windows by the crowd had an important practical significance. All traces of previous anti-Ceauşescu outbursts had been expunged from the historical
The overthrow of Nicolae Ceauşescu record through lack of visible markers, unreported by the authorities they had been destined to remain mere unsubstantiated rumours, but the wreckage left by the violence of 16 December was such that even when the authorities tried to cover the evidence, as they apparently did at the County Council building, enough remained for news of the scenes of devastation to quickly spread throughout the city bringing yet more people on the streets to see if the stories were true.55

Thus, all morning large numbers of people circulated through Piaţa Operei and the surrounding area and amidst sporadic outbreaks of booing and chanting occasional strains of the old patriotic anthem Deşteaptă-te Române! could be heard.56 Around midday a sizeable portion of this crowd, about 2,000 strong, started to drift towards the County Council building. Here, in front of the Party headquarters, they found a double cordon of troops together with fire engines and, as they approached, one of these moved forward and began spraying water.57 Instead of cooling their ardour this only seems to have incited the crowd further and rushing the source of their discomfort they broke the windscreen and set the vehicle on fire. In the pitched battle that followed in which hand-to-hand fighting predominated in marked contrast to the long-range stone throwing of the previous night, the crowd succeeded in pushing the cordons far enough back to allow a small group of mostly young demonstrators to break into the building. And, before the troops inside and outside regrouped to drive the protesters out, they had time to ransack the ground floor as well as part of the first, throwing all that easily came to hand out of the windows and attempting to set fire to what remained.58 Radu Bâlan, the Party Secretary in Timiş, only seems to have escaped by passing quickly through a back door and outside he was immediately surrounded by a group of shouting demonstrators, but, still, he was permitted to pass through the crowd unharmed.59 Eventually, the security forces wielding bayonets gained the upper hand and slowly pushed the protesters away from the building but not before several military vehicles and fire engines had been badly damaged and set on fire.60 Part of the crowd fled towards the Bega Canal, where fighting continued around a bridge until mid-afternoon, whilst the rest, smashing windows and sometimes looting shops on the way, streamed back towards the centre of the city. Here a mass of stone and petrol bomb throwing protesters was held at bay around the Hotel Continental by two newly arrived armoured vehicles, one of which constantly sallied at the crowd. Another tank seems to have moved further towards Piaţa Libertăţii, a much smaller and more constrained space planted with trees, in which there were several buildings used by the military including the local army garrison headquarters. Unable to manoeuvre in the confined area the trapped tank came under attack from demonstrators who tried to disable it by thrusting iron bars.
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into its tracks whilst in scenes of chaos elsewhere in the square shop windows were freely broken and a newspaper kiosk set on fire. In this atmosphere of confusion and unrest, somewhere in the vicinity of Piața Libertății in the middle of the afternoon of Sunday 17 December 1989, the first gun-shots of the Romanian Revolution were heard.

Concomitant to these events a major incident was also unfolding outside the centre of the city, in Calea Girocului, on the other side of the Bega Canal. Earlier in the afternoon the seven armoured vehicles, that had appeared in the centre of the city, had travelled down this road crushing a car as they passed and drawing curious onlookers onto the street. When, later in the afternoon, a second column of tanks appeared, the crowd moved quickly to catch them in an ingenious snare. At one point, because of some road works in the middle of Calea Girocului the tanks were forced to make a brief diversion from the main road through some side streets and, when this occurred, the crowd moved to swiftly block the main road in front of them with trolley buses. Caught in the restricted space between this barricade and the excavations behind them the vehicles were forced to a standstill and, whilst others rushed to block off all the remaining exit points, a crowd of demonstrators moved to immobilize the tanks by thrusting iron bars into their tracks. Then, after some amongst the throng tried to set fire to them the crews were forced to abandon the stationary vehicles but, still, the officer in charge, although bleeding from a scalp wound, was able to lead his men through the crowd back to their base without hindrance. Thus, by late afternoon on 17 December, the authorities faced a critical situation. They had virtually lost control of the centre of Timișoara, the Party headquarters had been ransacked, the centre of the town was largely in the control of an angry crowd who were vandalising property at will — some gauge of the scale of the unrest comes from official assessments that at this time over 300 shops were damaged at a cost of 5,000 million lei — and six tanks had fallen into the hands of the demonstrators presaging a potentially dangerous escalation in the conflict.

The response of the authorities

The authorities seem, at first, to have considered that the problems in Timișoara could be solved through negotiations. But these had been conducted on 15 and 16 December at the lowest possible level by the Mayor of Timișoara with no national figures being present nor even representatives from the local county leadership, who might have mustered more authority, and unable to give the assurances required by the protesters Petru Moț had proved incapable of defusing the situation. Then, when the situation began to move out of control, the regime switched to a policy
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of outright coercion, apparently, in the belief that the removal of Tőkés and the cracking of a few heads would be sufficient to bring a return of order. However, these two aims were not necessarily complementary, nor, as it turned out, strictly related, and, anyway, the numbers of troops initially deployed were to prove totally insufficient for the task in hand allowing the demonstrators to achieve a series of minor ‘victories’ which built their confidence for future confrontations. This oscillation between policies of dialogue and repression meant that during the first days of the revolution the security forces were mostly reacting to the agenda set by the protesters, and their failure to take decisive action to prevent the disturbances spreading from the restricted confines of the area around Tőkés’ church to the centre of Timișoara allowed the situation to spiral out of control.

During the night of 16 December Ceaușescu was constantly kept abreast of the situation — he seems to have telephoned Tudor Postelnicu, the Minister of the Interior, at least fifteen times — and ordered a vigorous dispersion of the demonstrations through a ‘show of strength’ policy in which the army with tanks would cow the protesters into submission. However, a rather bizarre military parade that passed through the centre of Timișoara on the morning of 17 December with flags flying and bugles blowing, instead of demoralising the crowd, merely seems to have left most of the onlookers thoroughly bemused and, in fact, provided a pretext for the crowd to gather and solidify. The order for armoured vehicles to be deployed in the centre of the city was to prove a disastrous blunder, because manifestly unsuitable for operations in a constrained urban environment against fast moving stone throwing youths they only served to provoke the protesters. And, when some of the tanks fell into the hands of the crowd, it marked a sharp escalation of the crisis turning it from being a mere local disturbance to one that would convulse the very foundations of the regime.

In response to the situation developing in Timișoara a full meeting of the PEC was convened around four in the afternoon of 17 December and this was followed, one hour later, by a teleconference of county Party heads and senior military officials. The transcripts of both meetings have survived and were published after the revolution, but contain little factual evidence. Instead, in the public carpeting of ministers and the ritualistic self-abasement of Postelnicu it is difficult not to see the whole PEC meeting as being a charade, a piece of political theatre, perhaps designed to strengthen any waverers within its ranks, but with little meaningful content. It seems the real decisions were being made elsewhere. Indeed, both transcripts confirm what had long been suspected, as Ceaușescu, occasionally abetted by his wife, dominates proceedings and impatient demands for any
questions are met by a deferential near silence, and, in many ways, these celebrated transcripts are most interesting for the insight they give into the mind of the Romanian leader.68

At both meetings Ceauşescu started the proceedings by giving a short synopsis of the events as he perceived them. Beginning with Tőkés and the problem of securing his removal Ceauşescu noted that the issue had been allowed to drag on too long and that mistakes had been made by the local authorities in Timişoara, who should have moved more quickly. However, maintaining full commitment to the norms of ‘socialist–legality’, even within such an intimate gathering, he stressed that the eviction fell within the remit of the judicial process and was not directly the concern of the PEC. More pressing were other aspects of the case for the actual violence in Timişoara was the work of a few ‘déclassé’ elements and Tőkés was a mere facade for more sinister forces: ‘...we have the involvement of foreign circles, of foreign spy agencies, beginning with Budapest because he [Tőkés] also gave an interview. Actually the facts are well known. Moreover, it is known that both in the East as well as in the West everyone is saying that things ought to change in Romania. Both East and West have decided to change things and they are using any means possible.’69 At an earlier PEC meeting, before the outbreak of the demonstrations in Timişoara, Ceauşescu had presented the situation in even starker terms: ‘We are in a state of war. All that has happened and is happening now in Germany, in Czechoslovakia, and in Bulgaria and, in the past, in Poland and Hungary, are things organised by the USSR with the support of the Americans and the West.....what has happened in the last three countries — East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, they were coup d’état organised..., with the riff–raff of society with foreign support. This is how these things should be understood’.70

Taken with his address to the nation of 20 December and his speech in Bucharest on the next day these statements confirm that Ceauşescu’s reading of the unfolding protests in Timişoara was conditioned by his interpretation of events elsewhere in Eastern Europe.71 He was convinced that Romania was under attack from external foes and that the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Treaty Organisation allies had joined forces with the West in planning his overthrow, infiltrating agents into the country in order to foment unrest and pave the way for a high level coup d’état and, indeed, the soldiers leaving for Timişoara seem to have been told that they were going to fight Hungarian insurgents.72

The consequences for decision making of this interpretation of events were to be considerable, as the monolithic world–view, espoused by the centre, proved itself incapable of reacting flexibly to the reality of the periphery for, once the picture was formed and became received wisdom, it seems to have become immutable with
All available evidence being manipulated to fill it. By seeing the unrest as the work of a few foreign agents and domestic malcontents Ceaușescu seems to have been able to convince himself that the vast bulk of the people could be relied upon to rally to his cause, once the situation was clearly explained to them, a need stressed in his teleconference with the county leadership. To a large extent his position was based on a mythologised view of 1968 when in a rousing rally in the centre of Bucharest he had condemned the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia and made a stirring declaration of Romania's national independence of action.

At the time, this had won him great popular acclaim and, now, although he was aware that the situation was more serious than in 1968, he seems to have believed that the threat to Romania's territorial sovereignty was such as to permit him to successfully play the same national card for a second time. He declared to his colleagues: 'We will fight to the end... because independence and sovereignty is nurtured and defended by struggle, because if in 1968 we had not taken action, not been active and not gathered the people here, not armed the Patriotic Guard, they would have come over us as they did in Czechoslovakia, because both the Soviets and the Bulgarians were at the border'. However, this time it was Romania which was the bastion of unreconstructed neo-Stalinism, and all efforts to rally the population to Ceaușescu's side were only to reveal the weakness of his position, most conspicuously during the calamitous rally in Bucharest on 21 December. The emphasis on foreign agents provocateurs was to lead to a non-recognition of the underlying causes of the revolution and an apparent inability to predict that large numbers of workers would join the protests. Indeed, the priority Ceaușescu placed on the non-disturbance of industrial production was to seriously undermine the efforts of the security forces to restore order. Perhaps, because in part he recognised the need to continue regular food deliveries and to preserve an air of normality, the message that signs of industrial unrest must be ruthlessly suppressed led to a direct raising of tension in Timișoara, as troops were deployed outside and, later, inside factories. It also meant that the security forces could never exercise absolute control of the situation because there was no provision for the imposition of a total curfew — even after the official institution of a state of emergency in Timișoara on 21 December the free passage of night-shift workers was allowed and, at the height of the violence on 17 December, the display of papers and a valid excuse seem to have been sufficient to pass any military cordon.

Ceaușescu's fears of a coup d'état seem to have fuelled his continuing suspicions as to the loyalty of the security forces and at the PEC meeting he accused them of defeatism and capitulation. According to his analysis of the disturbances, their inability to control events in Timișoara was rooted in the failure of the senior
commanders in Bucharest to enact his commands and, during the PEC meeting, he repeatedly asserted that the orders he had given for all units to be armed with live ammunition and to move in firmly to crush the demonstrations had been ignored by Tudor Postelnicu, General Iulian Vlad, head of the Securitate and General Vasile Milea, Minister of Defence. Certainly, neither Vlad nor Milea appear to have ordered their respective forces to carry live ammunition that night, as there are no confirmed reports of shooting at that time in the city, but whether this amounted to a calculated act of disobedience on their part must be questioned. Ceauşescu himself seems to have had an unfounded confidence that in the face of a little more resolute action from the security forces the protesters would rapidly turn tail, at one point declaring that ‘Had one of them fired they would have fled like partridges’. This statement finds echo in a declaration made by the head of the Stasi, Erich Mielke, in 1989 who, likewise, seems to have considered that the protesters in East Germany were ‘cowardly dogs’ who at the sight of dogs and truncheons would ‘run like rabbits’, and it would appear not impossible that the leaders of the Securitate and the army from their elevated position above society may have also come to share such beliefs. The orders given by Ceauşescu also seem to have been somewhat vague and, perhaps as might be expected, Milea, Postelnicu and Vlad all allude to this in their responses to his hostile questioning at the PEC meeting. Indeed, at one stage, Ceauşescu even admits as much himself when he states his instructions had not carried all the details, and Elena Ceauşescu also implies the same when she asks them ‘if it was not clear why did you not ask?’ It seems that Ceauşescu’s commands may have been open to selective interpretation and the failure of senior officers to act decisively rather than being an act of wilful disobedience on their part may have reflected their own faulty analysis of the situation. It may be questioned, given the fluidity of the disturbances in Timișoara, which appear to have left even the officers on the ground uncertain as to the actual situation pertaining in the city, whether any clear appraisal was ever transmitted to the centre, and, certainly, at the PEC meeting both Milea and Vlad were to state that they ‘had not thought things would reach such proportions’. In the virtual absence of trained riot control forces military commanders may also have been reluctant to sanction the deployment of armed troops in the knowledge that, if the demonstrators did not heed warnings to disperse, they risked embroilment in a massacre, and their apparent reluctance to follow Ceauşescu’s order to send tanks onto the streets may also be because they realised the inappropriateness of the tactics. The wide variety of forces the authorities could draw upon to counter the demonstrations and the varying command structures involved may also have led to problems of coordination. During the evening of 16 December
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the Securitate officers present in Timișoara seem not to have been informed by the local Party that they had mobilised several hundred activists to counter the protests, and, during that night, not only these forces but units from the army, Securitate troops, USLA, militia, Border Guards and Patriotic Guards all seem to have been deployed on the streets of the city.  

Instead of the armed forces, Ceaușescu continued to place greater reliance on the institutions of the Party. When giving his final orders before embarking on his trip to Iran he left full responsibility for their enactment in the hands of the county leadership with a stipulation that all military operations should be controlled from the local Party headquarters. This additional stress on the political leadership of the operation may have further undermined the willingness of senior army commanders to continue the struggle. Indeed, Ceaușescu drew a strong contrast between the wavering loyalty of the army and Ministry of Interior forces and his continuing belief in the reliability of the Patriotic Guard. At the PEC meeting he fondly reminisced of the time when workers had been mobilised to secure the communist takeover in 1945, he also traced his success in 1968 to the same root, and, later, following the apparent failure of the army and the forces of the Ministry of Interior to bring order in Timișoara, on his return from Iran, he was again to turn to irregular worker auxiliaries in a last vain attempt to regain control of the city. But, now, after Ceaușescu had first berated Postelnicu, Vlad and Milea and threatened them with dismissal and possible execution, he granted each an apparent reprieve following fawning assurances of continuing loyalty. With his anger at the storming of the County Council building evident he gave clear orders for his forces to open fire — first in the air to warn, then at the legs, and, finally, to kill — and offered an emphatic statement of intent: ‘...immediate measures must be taken to rapidly crush what is happening in Timișoara, put the army on a state of alert, in a fighting state, both the units of the Ministry of Interior and those of the Defence Ministry and wherever there is an attempt at unrest, crush it rapidly, without any kind of discussion.’

As the crisis had escalated, Ceaușescu had responded by dispatching a steady stream of senior generals to Timișoara. General Emil Macri of the Securitate and the two commanders of the militia, Major-Generals Constantin Nuță and Mihalea Velicu, who had arrived separately in the city in the morning of 17 December, were joined in the afternoon by Ion Coman, Secretary of the Central Committee responsible for military and security affairs, and a number of senior army generals including Ștefan Guse, Victor Stănculescu and Mihai Chițac. In the morning of 17 December troops deployments had been largely defensive with concentrations...
around the Town Hall, County Council building and in the vicinity of Tökés' church, but with the arrival of these senior generals and army reinforcements, on the basis of the orders received from Ceaușescu in Bucharest, in the early evening, the security forces began an offensive operation to ruthlessly crush the demonstrations. As the light began to fade, the crowd still remained in control of the centre of the city occasionally smashing windows and looting stores, most prominently in Piața Operei where two shops were ransacked and set on fire. The strategy of the security forces seems to have broadly been to throw a cordon around the middle of the town to prevent more demonstrators from reaching the centre, although these tactics also had the concomitant effect of stopping any of the crowd from leaving. Then, slowly, the troops seem to have advanced squeezing the bulk of the trapped protesters into the broad open space of Piața Operei with the soldiers coming to take up positions at either end of the square, one detachment in front of the Opera House, the other by the Town Hall, nearer the Cathedral. Then, as the two sides faced each other in the dark sometime between 18.00 and 19.00 in circumstances that remain far from clear, the troops opened fire on the crowd. There may have been a shouted command to disperse first, followed by some warning shots, but rapidly the guns were trained directly on the unarmed crowd, perhaps initially shooting at their legs but, then, to cold-bloodedly kill. In the grisly carnage that followed several score demonstrators fell dead or wounded whilst the rest struggled to flee from the scene. Those leaving the centre encountered others arriving from the suburbs — news spread fast as most of Timișoara could hear the sound of gunfire — and, whilst some continued towards the square to see the events at firsthand, others spread outward and, at this point, there seems to have been a general diffusion of the violence from the centre to the periphery of the city with one of the most serious incidents occurring just to the north of the centre, in the vicinity of an army unit stationed in Calea Lipovei, leaving several more casualties. However, the military operation had managed to scatter the crowd and with few major concentrations of demonstrators left the security forces seem to have been able to fairly easily mop up any remaining opposition, the general picture that emerges being of troops roaming the streets, occasionally shooting and arresting virtually anybody upon whom they could lay their hands. Having regained control of the centre and dispersed the main body of demonstrators, the army, then, set about recapturing control of the tanks left stranded in Calea Girocului. A small detachment of troops had arrived in the area earlier in the evening but the size of the crowd had been sufficient to force a stand-off, and, it was not until nearer midnight, when reinforcements arrived from the centre, that the tanks were finally removed, but again only after much
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shooting and casualties amongst the civilian population. By the time a heavy rainstorm broke in the early hours of the morning, the security forces had regained control of Timișoara from the demonstrators but at a fearsome price. Over sixty civilians were dead and more than 250 lay wounded in local hospitals.

Ceauşescu flies to Iran

Faced with the greatest threat his regime had ever encountered on the morning of 18 December at 8.30 Ceauşescu flew to Iran for a three day state visit. Based on a long-standing invitation the arrangements for the trip had originally been made in the summer, but given the apparent seriousness of the conditions he left at home Ceauşescu’s reasons for continuing with the engagement have long been subject to speculation. For the Iranians the visit was initially much welcomed, because, like the Romanians, they had become something of a pariah nation and Ceauşescu’s arrival was seen as breaking their diplomatic isolation. However, when the first news of the events in Timișoara began to filter through, it is possible that they made a last-minute attempt to cancel the visit and after the revolution the Iranian Ambassador in Bucharest, Mohammad Jamshid Gowhari, was recalled and sacked for failing to give Tehran an accurate picture of the situation in Romania. Certainly, the arrival of Ceauşescu created a certain amount of discomfort in Iran and, under attack from radicals in the Majlis and the press, the Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, felt constrained to defend the visit on the ground that ‘If Nicolae Ceauşescu had not come to Iran, we would have been harmed on several important questions of defence vital to the country…. We had reached some agreements with the Romanians, parts of which had not been implemented and if Ceauşescu’s visit had not taken place, a great loss would have been inflicted on the interests of the Islamic Republic’.

It seems that Romania and Iran were close to clinching an enormous arms deal which reportedly involved the sale of 155 T55 tanks and possibly the Orao–IAR93 fighter at a reputed unit cost of around $10 million, as well as the Romanians overhauling and modernising all Soviet military equipment secured by Iran. In exchange, Romania was to receive 130,000 tonnes of crude oil and 1 billion m³ of natural gas per year. The considerable arms exporting business built up by the Romanians during the 1980s was in sharp decline by 1989 and the possibility of securing such important contracts was probably sufficient to persuade Ceauşescu of the merits of keeping to his original schedule, and during his stay he is reported to have signed contracts to the value of more than $2bn. The need to preserve a display of normality and a desire not to lose international prestige may also have played a role in determining Ceauşescu’s decision, but it would also seem that from
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his perspective, with the security forces having restored order in Timișoara, the worst of the crisis may have passed and, although he foresaw the state of emergency continuing until the new year, this would seem to indicate an expectation that the storm could be weathered, as previous disturbances had been in the Jiu Valley and Brașov. Unusually, Ceaușescu left Elena behind in Romania to coordinate Party and government work with the Vice President, Manea Mănescu, but, in effect, whilst he was away in Iran, the political process was frozen, the policy of repression was not checked and no attempt was made to establish a further dialogue with the demonstrators in Timișoara until the situation had passed out of the control of the authorities. The absence of Ceaușescu during such a crucial period can only have weakened the position of the regime and, in particular, appears to have undermined the willingness of the security forces to continue to suppress the demonstrations. His departure also led to rumours that he had fled the country and this perhaps created an additional sense of disappointment when he returned, strengthening the feeling of desperation on the streets.

The growth of unrest in the factories

From 18 December with the security forces patrolling the streets and a state of emergency applied in Timișoara in all but name, as people were instructed to pass only two at a time and any larger gathering was quickly dispersed, the protests were largely driven from the public spaces into the only alternative place of mass socialization that was available, the factory workplace. The communist penchant for constructing big factories in even larger industrial complexes allowed for a concentration of sentiment and facilitated the free flow of information amongst the workforce. At cigarette breaks and informal gatherings news circulated of casualties amongst the families of workers and the innocence of the victims was graphically contrasted with tales of the barbaric behaviour of the security forces. The passage of news about the disturbances was also further aided by the authorities who ordered the convening of a series of workplace meetings in the hope of mobilising the workers against the demonstrators. Ostensibly held to 'explain' the events and denounce the perpetrators as 'hooligans' these meetings for most workers merely offered confirmation of the rumours about the extent of the damage and unrest; and, indeed, amongst the commuters from outside Timișoara, who until that point had probably little idea of what had passed in the city over the weekend, they served to inform them of the events. Often given by representatives of the county Party leadership or higher management these speeches appear to have normally been heard in silence, but in some of the larger factories, such as Electrobanat, they seem to have provided a forum for debate. There, after
preliminary meetings with senior management and representatives of the county leadership, section heads returned to address their workmates, but not holding the same stamp of authority as higher officials their accounts sometimes led to cross-questioning and heated debate, thereby providing a platform for the airing of views critical of the regime.

As well as trying to mobilise the workforce in its support at the same time the regime also made an attempt, on the evening of 18 December, to disguise the extent of the massacre by taking forty bodies from the mortuary at Timișoara for incineration in Bucharest. However, this act of subterfuge was to badly backfire on the authorities, because by closing the mortuary area for the duration of the operation they only prompted the spread of rumours, and one of the most emotive and sustained rallying cries amongst the demonstrators during the days that followed was for the return of the bodies for decent Christian burial. Indeed, as the unrest progressed, rumours and myths became increasingly significant in mobilising the crowd, with two incidents in particular coming to be seen as symbolising the conflict. On 18 December in the late afternoon troops opened fire on a group of young protesters gathered on the steps of the Cathedral leaving a twenty-two-year old man dead. Until this point the precincts of the Cathedral seem to have come to represent an ideal of protection and sanctuary in the minds of many of the protesters — a place at which the forces of repression would not dare shoot. Thus, when it occurred, this incident, underpinned by ideas of sacrilege, seems to have embodied the image of a Manichean battle between good and evil, vividly striking the popular imagination and leading to a perceptible rise in tension.

Discontent which had been simmering throughout Monday broke to the surface on Tuesday, when the general turbulence within the factories ignited into a series of wildcat strikes, the most significant of which was to be at the Electo-banat [ELBA] works in the west of the city. An armoured personnel carrier had been stationed in the vicinity of the factory since Monday, and on Tuesday at the outbreak of the strike troops seem to have entered the actual premises, or at least, come to the gate. Thus, when the workers downed tools and marched on the offices of the management amongst demands for improved conditions, there appeared from an early stage more politicised calls for the withdrawal of the army from the area. When the management proved unable to persuade the strikers to return to work, Radu Bălan, Petru Moș, another local Party official, Constantin Poza, and General Gușe arrived to negotiate with the workers. Apparently, they were initially greeted enthusiastically but the workforce still refused to disperse, despite repeated promises that more formal negotiations would be opened to address their grievances. Meanwhile, as the talks continued within the factory,
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a crowd attracted by rumours of unrest gathered outside near the bridge over the Bega Canal. More armoured vehicles and soldiers arrived and, shortly afterwards, the security forces opened fire injuring and possibly killing a member of the crowd. The shot or shots were heard from the factory and one of the victims, a woman, seems to have been brought for emergency treatment in the works' dispensary. In the streets around the factory the situation then ignited into the, by now, familiar pattern of protest, as windows were broken, vehicles and a newspaper kiosk set ablaze and stones and petrol bombs thrown at tanks and troops, with the latter retaliating by opening fire seriously wounding and possibly killing several demonstrators.104

The strike at ELBA and the shooting and rioting in the area weaved a further strand in the mythology of the revolution with the rumours following the incident being particularly graphic, the most striking being that a young boy had been shot on the bridge and his body thrown into the Bega.105 Gradually, as these rumours spread the events seem to have become conflated and the distinction between factory and street blurred, the news was not only of a strike but also of shootings at ELBA, so that instead of a single person, Tőkés, the symbol of the revolution had now become a whole factory.106 Soon sympathy strikes were being reported and the next day, as the strikers marched from their factories towards the centre of the town, slogans were chanted in support of the ELBA workers and the main column even marched across Timișoara to the factory before turning towards the centre.107 The violence of that day also heralded the failure of the policy of repression. Even with such large numbers of troops and armoured vehicles in the city the authorities seemed powerless to halt further outbreaks of unrest and during the coming day their resolve was to be tested until it broke.

The denouement of the revolution in Timișoara came on Wednesday 20 December 1989. As the morning shift appeared for work, protests seem to have swept through most of the larger factories with crowds gathering in the open spaces shouting slogans. The authorities reacted by resorting to the same tactics as the day before, with representatives of the county Party leadership going to the larger factories to try and negotiate a return to work. However, they were to meet with no greater success than previously, although, again, it seems the anger of the workers was focused more on the security forces and the central authorities than local officials and management.108 In many of the factories there seems to have been some discussion as to the relative merits of remaining united within the protective walls of the workplace or risking dispersal on the streets of the city. But, then, after some initial hesitation and often encouraged by news via those
telephones still functioning that others were on strike or through the sight of fellow workers on the road before them, they poured forth in steadily increasing numbers. The exact circumstances that surrounded the exodus from the workplace remain unclear and, especially, questions relating to the spontaneity of the protest and the degree of organisation and leadership involved. Nor is it clear what proportion of workers actually joined the demonstrations, because it seems the turnout varied from factory to factory, with the management in some cases blocking exit by locking the gates. As the marchers set out for the centre, the security forces were still in position to halt their advance, but, when confronted with such vast crowds, they seem to have shown little resistance and to have readily given way.

There seems to have been several columns of protesters but the largest — reportedly it took a quarter of an hour to pass any single point — took a long, meandering route to the centre in order to gather support on the way, passing from the industrial complex on Calea Buziașului to the ELBA factory before turning to reach Piața Operei shortly after midday. Here it was confronted by a cordon of troops and armoured vehicles in the area around the Town Hall but, after a few moments of hesitation, the crowd surged forward and shouting ‘The Army is With Us!’ and ‘Without Violence!’ overwhelmed the soldiers clambering all over the armoured personnel carriers, placing flags in the barrels of the machine guns and handing meat and bread to the young conscripts. From this moment the army was effectively neutralised as a force in Timișoara and the city passed into the hands of the protesters.

Arriving in Piața Operei the crowd seems to have split and, whilst the larger part stayed in the square, a seizable proportion headed towards the nearby Party headquarters. Those who stayed in Piața Operei flooded up the open space towards the Opera House with the remaining troops retreating before them. The main door of the building was barred but, as the soldiers withdrew up a side-street, access was allowed through a back entrance. Around 14.00 in the afternoon the first person arrived on the balcony and announcing that he was Lorin Fortuna, a Professor at the Technical University of Timișoara, he urged the crowd not to leave the square but to stay united and strong. Quickly Fortuna was joined by other figures and throughout the afternoon a steady stream of speakers representing various factories and ethnic groups appeared to addressed the enormous crowd, which had grown to be perhaps 40,000 strong. Shortly after the speeches began, some of the armoured personnel carriers overrun earlier in the day arrived in the square still covered with protesters to be followed a little later by a group of senior officers who walked unhindered through the crowd to reclaim the vehicles and lead them back to barracks. This was the start of a general withdrawal of the army from
the centre with the last units leaving from the County Council building in the late afternoon.

As the section of the crowd which had broken off to march to the Party headquarters approached the building, the army initially held firm but after some negotiations the soldiers retreated to either side leaving the main entrance clear. Earlier in the day the Prime Minister, Constantin Dăscălescu, and a senior PEC member, Emil Bobu, had arrived from Bucharest and now there were repeated calls for them to come onto the balcony to address the crowd with Dăscălescu, eventually, appearing only to withdraw when he was shouted down. A request, then, seems to have been made for a deputation of demonstrators to enter the building to conduct negotiations with the representatives of the regime and, subsequently, a small group of between thirteen and eighteen protesters coalesced. It seems that the numbers are imprecise because they entered in several batches, the last group including Fortuna not arriving until late in the evening. The delegation included at least two women and spanned a wide range of professions and places of employment, but, generally, its members seem to have been drawn from the more mature demonstrators with many being married with children. None seem to have been publicly known before the revolution although several, notably Sorin Opera and Petre Boroşoiu, had achieved some prominence during the violence of the preceeding days. The talks began around 15.00 with the chief negotiator on behalf of the regime being Dăscălescu, supported by Cornel Pacoste and Bălan, with many of the senior generals also being present. The delegation drawn from the demonstrators seems to have been a genuine ad hoc construction with no preparation of a common negotiating position beforehand and this together with the fact that they were somewhat overawed by the senior officials facing them led the talks to initially follow the regime's agenda, focusing on relatively minor issues such as the granting of passports, housing and the supply of services. However, against a background of continuous chanting from outside the representatives of the protesters seem to have gradually become more assertive, shaping their own demands and occasionally appearing on the balcony of the building to legitimise them by gaining the approbation of the crowd. Indeed, their first demands being almost entirely concerned with the situation in Timişoara, as they called for information on the number of dead, wounded and arrested as well as an answer to the question 'who had given the order to open fire?'; reflected this as in many ways they were little more than a coherent articulation of the slogans of the demonstrators. Then, as the afternoon progressed, a more radical position seem to have evolved with demands for the resignation
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of Ceaușescu and his government and a call for free elections. At this point, the talks apparently ground into a stalemate with Dăscălescu playing for time by constantly referring to the need to confer with Bucharest; some attempts also seem to have been made to buy off members of the delegation through the offer of inducements. Eventually, it became clear that the authorities were only willing to concede three of the lesser demands, guaranteeing the immunity of the delegates, the release of detainees and the return of the bodies of the dead; and, after Ceaușescu’s uncompromising speech at 19.00 in the evening in which he blamed the disturbances on hooligans and foreign provocateurs and offered no respite on the road of socialist construction, the negotiations gradually fizzled out although Dăscălescu and Bobu seems to have remained in Timișoara until the early hours of the next morning.

With the end of the negotiations and the withdrawal of the army from the centre an uneasy stalemate settled on Timișoara with power resting fully neither with the demonstrators ensconced in the Opera House nor with the representatives of the regime left in the Party headquarters. In the square the demonstrators set about consolidating their position by establishing a guard under the leadership of Sorin Opera to protect the Opera House and surrounding buildings. However, in contrast to the euphoria of earlier in the day, as the numbers in the square dwindled to a few hundred, the prevailing atmosphere became one of suspicion and apprehension, rife with rumours of approaching troop trains. Indeed, a total of fifteen trains had been dispatched from Oltenia during the evening carrying between 10–20,000 workers, many by all accounts dragged straight from their night shifts roughly armed with make shift clubs and truncheons and told they were going to fight ‘hooligans’ and ‘irredentists’ on the streets of Timisoara. If they had arrived earlier and received adequate local leadership, these worker auxiliaries may have wreaked havoc in the city but, when the first train arrived in Timișoara South Station at 7.18 on the next morning, 21 December, the Oltenian workers found nobody to meet them except for a few hundred protesters. Ten other trains followed at regular intervals until 11.15, but tired, hungry and confused most of the workers remained on board, waiting to return home with only a few journeying to Piața Operei to see the events for themselves.

During the night, many of those who had been most prominent in the day seem to have departed from the Opera House exhausted, leaving those with staying power to come to the fore; stamina was at a premium and physical presence seems to have been the main criterion for holding power at this time. The main beneficiary of this situation was Fortuna who seems to have moved to formally
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constitute the Romanian Democratic Front sometime during the hours of darkness, establishing a membership of seven and an executive bureau of five with himself as leader. However, the next morning, as the numbers on the balcony once again swelled, Fortuna’s position seems to have come under challenge and pressure exerted for the bounds of the new Front to be considerably widened. It soon became clear to all that there was little cohesion amongst the leaders of the uprising and many of the youths, who had borne the brunt of the fighting, felt they had been deliberately marginalised. A forceful argument was made that the new Front should be broad enough to represent all those who had been at the forefront of the struggle, and in what was to turn out to be a veritable dress rehearsal for later events in Bucharest, these demands eventually led to the formation of an elaborate structure encompassing a series of commissions on agriculture, the economy and other fields. The other main area of disagreement seems to have centred on the proposed platform of the new body, particularly its position vis-à-vis the government, with some voices calling for negotiations whilst others wished to persevere with demands for its resignation. Eventually, a programme drawn up by Fortuna the night before was redrafted, although the final version was not to appear in print until 22 December. In what appears to be a compromise text this programme called for the resignation of Ceaușescu but also stated that the Romanian Democratic Front had been formed as a political organisation in order to negotiate with the government with the express goal of the democratisation of the country. Following this there was a list of demands relating to free and democratic elections, freedom of the media, the opening of international frontiers, respect for human rights, freedom of worship, reform of the economy and education, the right to demonstrate freely and for improvements in both medical care and food supply. In relation to the events in Timișoara it demanded that those who had given the order to fire be called to account, the return of the dead for decent burial and the freeing of those arrested, before closing with a request that the authorities recognise the RDF and begin negotiations.

In truth the new leaders were mostly very tired, having slept and eaten little for several days, frayed tempers were often in evidence and the continuing uncertainty and possible dangers of their position only added to the stress. Soon they found themselves being bombarded by demands from the crowd and, from 22 December, these were to intensify following the arrival of the international mass media. Ion Savu is open when he states that they just did not know what to do for the best, as over many years they had been painfully schooled in dissatisfaction but not in the skills needed to construct a revolution, whilst wild rumours that more trains full of Patriotic Guards were en route to the city and that the water
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supply had been poisoned continued to destabilise the situation. It was in this atmosphere of confusion and doubt that Radu Bălan appears to have been asked by some of the protesters to join the leadership. In general, he seems to have been not unpopular in the city and he was applauded when he first spoke from the Opera House balcony. His return may have been partly accepted because of the growing chaos in Timișoara and the pressing need to normalise the situation, to ensure a return to work and the regular supply of foodstuffs, but it may also have been a deliberate ploy by some of the rivals of Fortuna to undercut his power base.\(^{128}\) By the morning of 22 December events in Timișoara had followed a course which Bucharest was soon to emulate as young and inexperienced demonstrators tried to come to terms with ‘untainted’ representatives of the old regime.

The revolution outside Timișoara

By 21 December the authorities were facing a sharply escalating crisis, as the disturbances spread from Timișoara, first, to other towns in the Banat and Crișana and, then, into Transylvania. Although the regime had moved quickly to seal the borders of Romania to prevent news of the unrest reaching the outside world, it apparently initially did little to disrupt domestic communications, and, so, tidings of the events rapidly spread across the country by telephone and sometimes through the stories of travellers, as the railways also continued to run on schedule throughout the disturbances. This survey can only offer a tentative picture, but, broadly, during 21 December it seems that most of the towns in the county of Timiș, such as Buziaș and Lugoj, experienced demonstrations, as did those of neighbouring counties, including Reșița in Caraș Severin, Oradea in Bihor and Arad.\(^{129}\) Further afield the most serious incidents seem to have occurred in the big Transylvanian cities of Cluj, Sibiu and Brașov as well as in the capital, Bucharest, and, in the morning of the next day, the disturbances spread from these cities to encompass many other urban centres, including Tîrgu Mureș, where the authorities opened fire and killed a number of demonstrators, Bistrița, Sântu Gheorghe, Făgăraș, Orșova and Ploiești, with the only areas apparently remaining quiet during this period being the southern and eastern extremities of the country.\(^{130}\)

The patterns of protest within these urban centres broadly seem to have corresponded to the forms already encountered in Timișoara, with street confrontations between loose groups of mostly young protesters and the security forces being followed by larger mass demonstrations. However, a division can be made between those cities which experienced conflict and those that did not, with the the fine line between the two being largely drawn not by the protesters but by the actions of the security forces. Amongst the cities which experienced violence during
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this period some of the most telling images emanated from Cluj, where in the early afternoon of 21 December a mixed crowd seems to have spontaneously gathered in the centre of the city, in Piața Libertății outside the Catholic Cathedral, and started to chant anti-Ceaușescu slogans. When armed troops appeared the crowd began to jeer and a young actor, Calin Nemeș, stepped forward taunting the soldiers to fire if they dared. Quickly he was joined by two others but their brave challenge was only to be met by bullets, which left one of the three, Lucian Mathias, dead and Nemeș wounded. Following this incident, which occurred mid-afternoon, shooting was to continue all night as demonstrators constantly regrouped to challenge the security forces, leaving by the morning several dead and many wounded.

However, the dynamics that lay behind the protests and the overall pattern of events in those cities which experienced violence at this time can best be seen through a closer scrutiny of the revolution in Sibiu. Here, in keeping with the rest of the country the security forces seem to have been placed on alert from 17 December with Nicu Ceaușescu, who was First Secretary of the county, apparently following his father's lead and declaring that the nation was in a state of war and that all demonstrations should be vigorously dispersed by whatever means necessary. Leading Party officials were dispatched to all the main centres in the county and an attempt made to buy the quiescence of the population by distributing extra food supplies with strenuous efforts also being made to ensure that power supplies were not disrupted. In fact, Sibiu was to remain quiet for several days more, although news of the events in the Banat circulated freely, and before demonstrations broke out on 21 December it was apparently widely known that the previous day, instead of firing on the crowd, the army in Timișoara had withdrawn from the city. During the evening of 20 December leaflets seem to have circulated calling for a demonstration in support of Timișoara and, early the next morning, a mixed bunch of between twenty and fifty, by all accounts rather nervous protesters, including a man from Timișoara itself, gathered in Piața Unirii shouting 'Timișoara!' and singing a ragged chorus of Deșteaptă-te Române! This display of dissent quickly drew the security forces to the scene and they dispersed the demonstration arresting some of those involved. But apparently undaunted the protesters, now swollen in numbers by the inclusion of some workers, even though they had been forbidden to leave their factories, regrouped under the 'eyes' of the old Saxon houses in Piața Mare. Some carried a make shift banner emblazoned with the single word 'Liberty' whilst others linked arms and danced the Horia Unirii but, before long, the security forces arrived again and commenced to break up the protest and arrest the demonstrators. However, this time, emboldened
by their greater numbers, the protesters fought back rushing the vehicles of the militia and liberating the prisoners, in the process a jeep being overturned and set ablaze. This escalation in the conflict drew military reinforcements including armoured personnel carriers to the scene and a cordon of troops was thrown across the square. The protesters responded by moving to fraternize with the soldiers but this brought little response and, under pressure from the growing crowd, the army began to fall back and regroup. As they started to change positions, some clashes occurred between the two sides and the troops opened fire, perhaps mostly at first in warning, but, nevertheless, leaving four protesters dead and many more wounded.

In a pattern already familiar from Timișoara, a ragged street conflict now erupted with the more aggressive of the crowd directly challenging the soldiers, as the fighting ebbed and flowed across the square, before a section of the protesters began to head towards the local Party headquarters. This was also defended by a cordon of soldiers, but they refrained from opening fire and, instead, a tense stand-off ensued with the crowd alternatively noisy and quiet, shouting slogans, singing Deșteaptă-te Române! and, occasionally, breaking into dance. No contact was established with the occupants of the tightly sealed building although many believed Nicu Ceaușescu was inside and some even seem to have thought he might take the opportunity to seize power. Others marched to the local industrial zone in search of greater numbers but few workers seem to have directly joined the protest, since most had been locked inside their factories, although some showed their sympathies by tossing portraits of Ceaușescu from windows along with copies of his works. Returning to the centre the protesters again came face to face with the army, but, this time, more widespread fraternisation broke out with the young soldiers, most of whom seem to have come from the local Military Academy. An uneasy peace prevailed and this seems to have continued until later that evening, when some members of a crowd, which had formed in front of the militia station demanding the release of prisoners, began to throw stones at the windows. Soon cars were set ablaze in neighbouring streets and more shooting followed again leaving a number of protesters dead.

The next morning the town seems to have been the scene of further demonstrations with one column from the Balanța factory reported as marching by as if it was going to a mass meeting, shouting slogans and waving banners. By midday a crowd of approximately 1,000 had gathered outside the militia—Securitate headquarters again demanding the release of all those arrested the day before. A dialogue seem to have begun between those in the building and the protesters
outside in a tense but still peaceful ambience. Avram paints a vivid and plausible picture of the atmosphere inside the building being one of confusion and uncertainty as the occupants, having apparently been instructed to defend the building at all costs, found themselves effectively leaderless with Nicu Ceauşescu already having left town and all the senior officers away at the army base. There seems to have been a total breakdown of communications with all attempts to gain clarification of orders from both Sibiu and Bucharest eliciting only evasive and inconclusive replies. The crowd seems to have asked the militia to surrender the building but to whom and under what terms? Meanwhile, those outside were eager to see this bastion of the Ceauşescu regime in Sibiu fall and, amidst much pushing and shoving, they eventually forced the gate of the building and brushing aside a cordon of soldiers streamed into the internal courtyard. But, here, they were met by clouds of tear-gas and sporadic gunfire which left a number of protesters and inhabitants of nearby buildings dead. Indeed, it was reports of this fighting — apparently the first in Romania after the flight of Ceauşescu — which, when they reached Bucharest during the afternoon of 22 December, sparked off many of the fears of a ‘terrorist’ onslaught on the capital itself.

In Braşov, too, the army had been on alert from 17 December but all also remained calm until the morning of 21 December. However, in contrast to Cluj and Sibiu, when disturbances did break out, they remained largely peaceful with apparently no casualties being recorded in the city before the flight of Ceauşescu from Bucharest. The authorities bearing in mind the unrest of 1987 had already taken steps to pre-empt any demonstrations by locking the gates of the lorry factory, the seat of the disturbances at that time. However, no such precautions seem to have been taken at the aircraft works, where, at the beginning of the morning shift, it seems upwards of one thousand workers left the factory to march to the centre of the city. Within a short distance they were confronted by a line of soldiers, who fired a volley of warning shots into the air, but this does not seem to have been sufficient to stem the tide of demonstrators who merely bypassed the barrier by flooding down a side street. It seems that the soldiers had been instructed to halt the column of protesters but had received no precise orders regarding how this should be achieved. Now, following the same pattern as the earlier protests in Timișoara, the thousand or so workers began a lengthy perambulation through the streets of Braşov calling upon onlookers to join them, seeking through their act of brazen defiance to build courage in faltering hearts. Eventually, the column came to a halt outside the heavily guarded Party headquarters where they blended with other protesters in demanding that the Party officials inside open negotiations to settle their grievances.
The weight of the military forces outside the County Council building seems to have been sufficient to force the protesters to search for further reinforcements with groups heading towards the lorry works and the 'Tractorul' factory. Outside the lorry works the chanting crowd called upon the workers trapped inside to come and join them and, eventually, some seem to have forced the doors and exited out onto the street to join the demonstration. By just after midday an estimated 80,000 people were packed into the square in front of the Party headquarters. Facing them was a cordon of troops, which included students from the local military academy, and, soon, the familiar pattern of fraternisation between soldiers and civilians began with the passing of cigarettes and food. The crowd again insisted that the authorities opened negotiations and this time an ad hoc committee of twenty-three protesters was allowed to enter the building to present a list of demands, the first of which was apparently the resignation of Ceaușescu. They were received by Petre Preoteasa, the First Secretary of the county, and the rather desultory negotiations which followed, eventually, ended with a promise that their demands would be forwarded to Bucharest. Meanwhile, outside, the demonstrations continued into the early evening, although by then the crowd had thinned considerably, and, as an air of tension built in the square, the military at one point fired warning shots into the air and unleashed water cannons on the protesters. The next morning brought further huge demonstrations with perhaps 100,000 gathering again in the centre of the city, outside the County Council building. The demonstrators chanting and burning pictures of Ceaușescu remained peacefully outside the building, until hearing the news of his flight from Bucharest they surged inside.\textsuperscript{135}

It seems that similar demonstrations, usually peaceful in nature, occurred in a host of other smaller centres throughout Romania, with a typical example of the pattern of unrest, perhaps, being the events in Făgăraș, near Brașov, where, following a demonstration on 21 December, large crowds again gathered on the morning of the next day when protesters marched on the factories urging the workers to come and join them. Some supervisors seem to have allowed their staff to join the protests, but factory security guards at others, including the IUC works, tried to prevent their exit by posting notices warning the workers of the serious consequences that would follow. Apparently unconcerned by these threats, the posters were torn down, as the workers poured onto the street, joining those of the Chemical Combine as they marched to the Party headquarters in the town. After an hour, the crowd broke in and, as elsewhere, ransacked the premises throwing portraits of Ceaușescu and copies of his work out of the window.\textsuperscript{137} However, there were exceptions to this general rule of peaceful protest in the small centres, one case being Cisnădie where on 21 December a crowd gathered outside the local
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militia station, apparently, in the belief that some of those arrested in nearby Sibiu were being held inside. Some members of the crowd seem to have tried to force a passage through the blocked entrance of the building with a bulldozer and, as the militia trapped inside opened fire, two civilians were killed. The crowd reacted by wreaking havoc across the town setting fire to the council building, smashing shop windows and ransacking the office of the local textile factory.\textsuperscript{138}

The revolution in Bucharest

Simultaneously, as the revolution was spreading like a bushfire through towns and cities across much of Romania, demonstrations also broke out in the capital and this was now to be the main seat of the disturbances. On 20 December Ceaușescu had arrived back in Romania at 15.00 in the afternoon — apparently three hours earlier than scheduled — before, in the evening, making the defiant broadcast to the nation which effectively scuttled the negotiations then taking place in Timișoara. After the broadcast, workplace meetings were convened at factories across Romania to mobilise support for the regime and to denounce the events in Timișoara. These were probably arranged at short notice and, noticeably, those in Bucharest seem to have been addressed only by union and works Party officials not by any major political figures.\textsuperscript{139} At the same time, at a session of the permanent bureau of the PEC the decision was being taken to mount a similar spectacle on a far greater scale the next morning in Piața Palatului, in the heart of Bucharest. This huge mass meeting, to be covered live on national television and radio, was intended to display to the Romanian public the widespread popular support the regime continued to enjoy and, thereby, legitimise the repression of the demonstrations in Timișoara. Given the rising tensions it was a high risk strategy which, in hindsight, Postelnicu was to say ‘made little sense’, but Ceaușescu seems not to have seen it in that light.\textsuperscript{140} He appears to have held an abiding belief that he still enjoyed the broad support of the mass of the population and that, once it was realised, the very independence and territorial sovereignty of the country was under attack from ‘reactionary, imperialist, irredentist, chauvinist circles and foreign espionage services’, then, the spirit of 1968 would once more be resurrected allowing him to maintain his hold on power.\textsuperscript{141}

The organisation for the meeting seems to have been entrusted to Barbu Petrescu and the Party apparatus in Bucharest, principally, the municipal committees and First Secretaries of the sectors of the capital.\textsuperscript{142} News of the meeting seems to have been circulating around Bucharest from late on the evening of 20 December becoming more widely known on the next morning, as the Party organisation within the factories sprung into life to mobilise the workers.\textsuperscript{143} Selected by unit
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the workers were then bussed to the centre where they were issued with placards and banners and formed in a long column for the march to Piața Palatului. On their arrival the column seems to have been screened to weed out any potentially disruptive elements. Eyewitnesses describe the mood as being subdued, and when the meeting began around midday, the apathy and passivity of the gathering was evident in the muted response given to the warm-up speeches from the balcony. The large but loosely packed crowd stretched to the furthest confines of the square holding aloft placards and banners proclaiming the successes of communism and portraits of an improbably youthful ruling couple, whilst before them on the balcony of the Central Committee building Ceaușescu stood with Elena at his side surrounded by many of the Party leadership. Then, following an introduction by Petrescu, Ceaușescu approached the rostrum and began to speak at 12.31. Barely had he begun passing through a few brief introductory sentences when he was interrupted by high-pitched screams and considerable commotion within the crowd. Quickly the live transmission on radio and television was broken to be replaced by a choir singing patriotic songs, but not before the look of startled bemusement on Ceaușescu’s face had been captured by the cameras and fixed in the minds of viewers throughout the country. Many Romanians trace this moment as the turning-point at which they realised the frailty of Ceaușescu’s grasp on power and the possibility that his overthrow might be secured. It also seems probable that similar thoughts were passing through the minds of many of Ceaușescu’s senior Party colleagues and the commanders of the security forces, who perhaps began to think seriously about the possibility of a political succession.

The commotion caused the screens to remain blank for three minutes but the source of the disturbance has never been properly determined. Some have suggested it was the result of loud noise, possibly caused by a deliberate act such as the letting off of a firework, and Postelnicu has stated that this was the opinion of those on the balcony, but equally it may have come from an entirely accidental source, such as a collapsing lamp stand. The noise made the crowd, already tense and rife with rumours, begin to panic and push and shove in all directions and, simultaneously, or possibly shortly afterwards, some muffled protests were shouted from its midsts, although these were only loud enough to be indistinctly picked up by the recording microphones. After three minutes, enough of a semblance of order was restored for Ceaușescu to continue his speech, but, already, ominously those from the back of the gathering had begun to drift away. He first announced a series of measures to improve living standards raising the minimum wage from 2,000 to 2,200 lei and also increasing children’s allowances, pensions and social security benefits as well as pledging the introduction of a maternity allowance.
These increases had been approved at the meeting of the PEC, held earlier that morning, but they cannot be seen as a serious attempt to buy popular support, as the figures involved were small and the rises had all been announced earlier in the month during the 14th Congress of the RCP. Then, turning to the events in Timișoara Ceaușescu sought to win the support of the crowd by calling for national unity to meet the many dangers faced by Romania in a hostile world. To Ceaușescu it was obvious that in Timișoara the country was facing "...action orchestrated by circles who want to destroy Romania's integrity and sovereignty, halt socialist construction and put our people under foreign domination...we have to work in complete unity and with determination against all those who are trying to weaken the strength and unity of the nation and who are in the service of various espionage services and imperialist circles to divide Romania again and subjugate our people." In the face of these threats he exhorted his compatriots that it was "...better to die fighting in full glory than again to be slaves in the ancient land..." However, his tired words elicited little enthusiasm and, by the end of the speech, he was again being interrupted by indistinct chanting, and so the rally seems to have been brought to a peremptory end. Confused and alarmed the crowd streamed rapidly away so that within ten minutes the square was virtually deserted. Placards were left heaped on the pavement or strewn on the ground, and, as the television crew began to pack up their cameras, squads of cleaners entered to tidy up the square. The first deployments of troops also began to appear.

The authorities seem to have taken some precautions to forestall possible unrest with, for instance, a special watch being placed on student dormitories to prevent demonstrations, and during the evening of 21 December several known dissidents were rounded up by Securitate and moved out of Bucharest. Senior Party officials had already been despatched to the chief urban centres and all military units throughout the country placed in a state of alert since 17 December with units of the Patriotic Guard also partly activated. In preparation for the mass meeting in Bucharest eight platoons of Securitate troops in buses had been placed in reserve at strategic points throughout the centre of the capital, whilst others joined a detachment of soldiers stationed in Piața Palatului. Another group of 300 cadets from the Military Finishing School for Officers of the Militia had also been ordered to join the mass meeting in civilian dress. However, news of the meeting had travelled far and wide within Bucharest attracting people towards the centre and, now, as these new arrivals mingled with the workers leaving the square, there were isolated incidents of unrest. Scattered groups of youths moved through larger crowds of onlookers and passing shoppers shouting slogans and urging their fellow citizens to join them in protest. A bookshop was broken
into and its contents scattered on the street whilst in front of the Athenée Palace Hotel the crowd formed a large circle and began to dance the *Horia Unirii*. Some shop windows were broken on Calea Victoriei and, once reinforcements arrived, the security forces moved in to break up the protests with tear–gas and baton charges forcing the demonstrators to flee down side streets pursued by troops who made many arrests.

Whilst it was relatively easy to disperse demonstrations in the narrow confines of Calea Victoriei, it was to prove more difficult in the broader expanses of Piața Universității under the windows of the towering Intercontinental Hotel, a traditional refuge for many of the foreign visitors to Romania, which was now to be the focal point of the revolution in Bucharest. The crowd seems to have gathered here at around the same time as the meeting began to unfold in nearby Piața Palatului with reports speaking of demonstrators climbing onto the low wall at the entrance to an underground car park to address the gathering. Shortly after the official meeting had dispersed, a section of this restless crowd appears to have tied to push up a side street back towards Piața Palatului, but their progress was blocked by a line of shield bearing troops, and, as the two sides came into open confrontation, an officer of the militia stepped forward and firing directly into the unarmed gathering wounded two of the protesters. These seem to have been the first of the many casualties of the revolution in Bucharest. Soon, the first detachments of soldiers began to arrive in the area accompanied by ten armoured personnel carriers, but, initially, there was no further shooting and the demonstration remained peaceful, as the crowd began to fraternise with the troops. Facing the protesters in Piața Universității was a phalanx of shield bearing Securitate troops behind which were ranged first several fire engines and then armed soldiers from the military units. In the late afternoon some fresh military reinforcements seem to have arrived and according to submissions to the Senatorial Commission of Inquiry into the events of the revolution, at that time, an army lorry became partially blocked by the crowd who called for its withdrawal. When this was not forthcoming someone threw a brick which shattered the windscreen of the lorry and struck the driver a blow on the head. Hurting out of control the vehicle sped forward knocking down and injuring twenty–three civilians and three or four members of the riot police, before coming to a halt just inches short of an armoured personnel carrier. The incident inflamed the crowd and surging forward towards the wounded demonstrators they knocked the riot police aside. In the ensuing chaos shots were fired and seven demonstrators fell dead. This outbreak of shooting was to herald a night of mayhem out of which it is difficult to make any discernable order, as security forces and demonstrators continued to battle
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in and around Piața Universității with both the Minister of Defence, Milea, and the Minister of the Interior, Postelnicu, coming to the scene in person to direct operations on the streets. In the early evening fire engines seem to have been used to try and disperse the crowd but, as midnight approached, protesters were still ranging freely and blocking most of the side streets in the area. In one widely reported incident a barricade built across Bulevard Bălcescu was set ablaze and, when armoured personnel carriers under the cover of clouds of tear-gas and gunfire moved forward to try and dismantle the barrier, one caught fire before they succeeded in the task.\textsuperscript{154} By 3.00, when the streets were quiet and cleaning crews had moved in to paint over the slogans daubed on the walls and remove the debris of battle, over fifty demonstrators were dead, more than 460 wounded and 698 arrested.

The revolution in Bucharest was to follow a pattern remarkably similar to that in Timișoara. During the afternoon and night of 21 December the disorganised street protests mostly by youths had been ruthlessly suppressed by the authorities. News of the shootings and violence had rapidly spread throughout the capital via the telephones that remained working throughout the period, and, as fleeing demonstrators mingled with changing night-shift workers, a deep seated public anger began to arise which harboured alongside emotions of utter revulsion at the actions of the regime a growing sense of expectation. In the early hours of the next morning the situation was described as calm with municipal transport operating and food shops open but, gradually, knots of demonstrators began to assemble and within many factories and institutes workers began to gather in the open forecourts before setting off to march to the centre of the city.\textsuperscript{155} Overhead a helicopter hovered dropping leaflets calling on the demonstrators to call off their protest and for students not to allow themselves to be manipulated by foreign powers.\textsuperscript{156} Army units were placed at various strategic points around the city, such as outside the Turbomecanica factory, on the route from Drumul Taberei, in Piața Gorjului, and in Bulevard Republicii, to try and stem the flow of the crowd and in several places volleys of warning shots may have been fired but to no avail.\textsuperscript{157} As it became clear that the existing forces could not bring order to the streets, instructions were issued for heavy military reinforcements to proceed to the capital.\textsuperscript{158} Then, as the situation continued to deteriorate for the regime, at 10.58 a declaration of a national state of emergency was broadcast on the radio which put all units of the armed forces, Ministry of the Interior and Patriotic Guard on full alert and banned public gatherings of more than five people.\textsuperscript{159} This was immediately followed by a short announcement that General Milea had
committed suicide after acting as a traitor. Fully reflecting the beleaguered atmosphere within the Central Committee building the statement made constant references to treacherous behaviour accusing Milea of orchestrating rumours and lies in ‘close co-operation with the traitors within the country and with the imperialist circles’ and of giving ‘false information in connection with the situation in our country’. The elaborate myth, which has grown up around the death of Milea, makes it difficult to establish the impact of his decease on the unfolding events. It is alleged that the news had a considerable influence upon the soldiers on the streets leading to a sharp decline in morale, but it is probable that this has been exaggerated, since despite claims to the contrary, there are few signs that Milea was universally loved within the lower ranks. Instead, news of his death seems to have added to the mounting tension and was interpreted as a sign of growing panic within the regime. Operationally following the death of Milea there are conflicting claims as to who took command of the army, with submissions to the Senatorial Commission stating that General Stânculescu assumed sole command, whilst other sources suggest a looser collective of senior officers took control, including Generals Eftimescu, Voinea and Constantinescu, but, once again, with Stânculescu to the fore.

After the dispersal of the demonstrations of the night before on the morning of 22 December troop dispositions were changed, so as to move the heaviest concentrations to Piața Palatului and the immediate vicinity. By 7.00 there were fourteen tanks, forty-five armoured personnel carriers and over 1,000 troops of both the army and the Securitate in the area. However, by the time Ceaușescu made his last ill-fated attempt to address the crowd from the balcony at approximately 11.30, these tanks and the troops had all been withdrawn from in front of the Central Committee building. According to the representations made to the Senatorial Commission the order for these units to withdraw was given by General Stânculescu at 10.45 with the process beginning at 11.00, although the final order to return to barracks was not jointly given by Stânculescu and Major-General Ilie Constantinescu until 12.15, after the departure of Ceaușescu. Other submissions state that slightly earlier, at around 10.00, Colonel Dumitru Pavelescu of the Securitate troops also ordered his men to withdraw, although the last of these did not leave until 13.30–14.00, long after the flight of Ceaușescu. It is stated that this order was made on his own volition although the decision was relayed to General Vlad, the head of the Securitate, who concurred. At 11.20 a further order was passed from Stânculescu and the army high command in the Central Committee building for four helicopters, two from the presidential flight together with two others, to fly to Bucharest. These took off from the nearby Otopeni airbase at
11.33 with the first landing on the roof of the building at 11.40 whilst the others circled overhead. The presence of so many helicopters would seem to suggest that it was planned to rescue most of the political leadership, although this was to prove impossible, once the demonstrators had secured control of the rooftop.

The decision to pull back the troops from in front of the Party headquarters was a crucial moment in the revolution. It moved the security forces out of direct confrontation with the demonstrators, effectively allowing them to abrogate their responsibilities to Ceaușescu, and by permitting the demonstrators unhampered access to the Central Committee building it ultimately paved the way for the downfall of the regime. Whether the order to pull back was given independently of Ceaușescu or with his sanction remains one of the chief mysteries of the revolution. By 10.00 the army was already breaking ranks and military discipline fast crumbling with open fraternisation occurring between soldiers and civilians throughout much of the centre of Bucharest, as cheering and waving protesters clambered aboard tanks and gathered around official buildings.\textsuperscript{166} With the effective ending of the army's fighting capabilities, did the army high command — some reliving again the scenes from Timișoara — give the order to return to barracks in an effort to protect their troops and equipment and retain at least a semblance of order and military discipline? Such a response is the standard remedy to fraternisation and is usually the prelude to a regrouping of the armed forces, perhaps involving the drafting in of reinforcements from elsewhere, hitherto uncontaminated by contact with civilian populations, before embarking on a further attempt to crush the demonstrations. Such a pattern seems to have been followed in China in 1989, when following fraternisation between civilian protesters and members of the Beijing garrison the authorities appear to have called upon forces from outside the capital to crush the Tiananmen Square demonstrations, and in the final days of the Iranian Revolution, as over one million demonstrators marched through Tehran, the high command took the decision to withdraw the troops from the streets so as to forestall any possible mutiny.\textsuperscript{167} Once the Romanian army in Bucharest engaged in widespread fraternisation and had effectively merged with the crowd, the senior officers had little option but to withdraw their forces, whether or not this was under the direct orders of Ceaușescu. It is not necessary, therefore, to invoke the need for a concerted plot on the part of the high command of the Romanian army to explain the actions taken. However, this is not to rule out the possibility that one or more of the senior officers were privy to the intentions of those who had been plotting a coup or, indeed, may have been part and parcel of these plans. Certainly, given the tide of events considerable doubts must have surfaced within the minds of all the high command about the wisdom of
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maintaining the security forces' association with the embattled Ceaușescu once the sheer scale of the demonstrations made further suppression of the protests practically impossible. Moreover, it seems that pressure for a change of strategy may also have been applied by military allies, because around 9.00 in the morning of 22 December Colonel Mihailov, the military attaché in Romania of the Armed Forces Council of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, is reported to have spent thirty minutes in conversation with Nicolae Eftimescu.

Or, as an alternative hypothesis, did Ceaușescu perhaps sensing that the army could not stem the tide of protests prefer to place his faith in one last attempt to address 'his' people whilst at the same time taking the prudent step of ordering helicopters in case an evacuation was necessary? He was expected to make another attempt to address the nation from the TV studios in the Central Committee building at 13.00, but, before then, he seems to have ordered the organisation of another mass rally, and for the crowd to be able to assemble the square had first to be cleared. During the previous evening Petrescu seems to have attempted to mobilise the Patriotic Guard, although only about 300 arrived at Piața Universității late at night, and these had been sent back to their factories in the early hours of the morning. Until the very end Ceaușescu seems to have retained enormous faith in the Patriotic Guard and other paramilitary forces of worker auxiliaries, and perhaps with some justification, because they had not failed him in Timișoara rather they had lacked local leadership to organise them when they arrived in the city. Now, it seems quite in keeping with his interpretation of events for him to have made one final attempt to rally the workers to his side but, when he appeared on the balcony at approximately 11.30 and began to speak, he was soon interrupted by boos and catcalls and ushered inside. Then the crowd rushed the doors of the Central Committee building and meeting little opposition streamed inside.

Most of the stories relating the flight of Ceaușescu tell of an undignified scramble to the roof of the building after the lift became blocked between the fifth and sixth floors. Then at 12.08, just before the first members of the crowd reached the fleeing leadership, an overloaded helicopter staggered into the air carrying Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, Emil Bobu, Manea Mănescu and two members of the presidential bodyguard, Major Florian Raț and Captain Marian Rusu. Ten minutes later it touched down at the presidential residence at Snagov, just north of Bucharest, and here the fugitives seem to have quickly gathered some possessions whilst Ceaușescu made a series of telephone calls to the first-secretaries of various counties to try to discover the situation in the country as a whole. Around 13.15 the helicopter departed again, but this time with only the two Ceaușescus and their
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bodyguards on board, Bobu and Mănescu having departed separately by road. According to the pilot of the helicopter, Lieutenant-Colonel Vasile Maluțan, after he had warned Ceaușescu of the danger that they were being tracked by radar and might be shot down, he was ordered to land. There then followed a farcical, almost tragi-comical, series of events which saw the presidential couple bustled from one car to another until, finally, they arrived at their point of detention in Tîrgoviște during the early hours of the evening.

Notes

1. The clear light of hindsight was not available to commentators at the time and it is perfectly understandable that after long years watching Ceaușescu resort to every possible stratagem to remain in power so many continued to harbour doubts that he would be overthrown. For instance Mark Almond wrote on 20 December 1989 'Perhaps Ceaușescu's system of "dynastic socialism" will collapse, but the odds are against it.' Mark Almond, 'Ceaușescu's many props', The Times, 20 December 1989, p. 14; see also the Editorial, 'Balkan Caligula', The Times, 19 December 1989, p. 15.

2. At the centre of Ceaușescu's stance was an absolute refusal to counternance any dilution in the powers of the Party. His adamant refusal to contemplate the redistribution of any resources manifested itself in an unremitting hostility to any economic activity outside the confines of the state sector. The emphasis, instead, was on upholding the sanctity of socialist ownership and central planning via the 'objective' laws of scientific socialism with the overall result being a seemingly endless stress on high levels of industrial investment at the expense of the production of consumer goods. Indeed, Pavel Câmpeanu has suggested that the realisation that once the external debt was repaid domestic living conditions were unlikely to improve was an important factor contributing to the rise of discontent in 1989. Pavel Câmpeanu, 'The revolt of the Romanians', The New York Review of Books, 37:1, 1 February 1990, p. 30. For Ceaușescu's ideology see Michael Shafir, ' "Ceaușescuism" against "Gorbachevism" ', Radio Free Europe Research, RAD Background Report/95 (Eastern Europe), 30 May 1988, pp. 1–5.


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10. For the text of Brucan’s statement on the Brașov disturbances see Brucan, *The wasted generation*, p. 136. The statement was given to the BBC and UPI for world-wide distribution and appeared in a number of newspapers in the West. Gheorghe Apostol, a previous chairman of the Romanian Trade Union Council had been between 1944–69 a member of both the full Central Committee and also the powerful Executive Committee. After falling out with Ceaușescu he had been posted as Ambassador to Argentina and Brazil. Constantin Pârvulescu, one of the founding fathers of the RCP, had been General Secretary of the Party in 1944 and a Central Committee member between 1944–60. Grigore Răceanu was also a veteran member of the Party. For details of the careers of Birlădeanu, Mănescu and Brucan see chapter three.


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14. The mythical status accorded to the Securitate has bedeviled any attempt to gauge its true strength, but after the revolution the new head of the Romanian Intelligence Service, Virgil Măgureanu, was to reveal that it had directly employed 14,259 military and 984 civilian personnel. For a country of twenty–three million, supposedly ruled by a grip of iron, the small size of these figures has caused some comment and it might be questioned whether they tell the whole story because, whilst it may be reasonably accurate as regards 'official' personnel, it seems that many governmental institutions carried behind an official façade an 'unofficial' Securitate 'shadow' whose operatives maintained close links to the security forces within some kind of reserve function. It seems probable that the boundaries of the Securitate may have stretched wider than those actually declared by Măgureanu who was perhaps offering a highly restrictive interpretation of who should be considered a securist, and one possible indication of approximate size may be had through a comparison with manning levels at their East German counterparts the Stasi. The Stasi had 85,000 regular employees of which between 21,000–29,252 can be considered 'directly operative', a figure not too dissimilar to that of the Securitate cited above. There were also 109,000 'unofficial' employees mostly paid informers. The special security considerations of East Germany may well have produced higher manning levels, but, if these figures are applied on a pro rata basis to the more populous Romania, they would suggest that the Securitate should have consisted of 150,000 regular employees with approximately 44–61,000 officers and up to 230,000 paid informants. For the Romanian figures see BBC EE/0932, B/10, 27 November 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1200 gmt, 22 November 1990, and for East Germany see Richard Popplewell, 'The Stasi and the East German Revolution of 1989', Contemporary European History, 1:1 (1992), pp. 44–46. Katherine Verdery & Gail Kligman, 'Romania after Ceaușescu: post–communist communism?', in Ivo Banac (ed.), Eastern Europe in revolution (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 127 n. 19, also doubt the official figures and suggest the Securitate must have employed at least 100,000 (including paid informants). Throughout this work the widely accepted popular term 'Securitate' has been used in preference to the official title of Department of State Security (Departamentul Securității Statului).

15. Amongst the literature on systematization see Michael Shafir, 'The historical background to rural resettlement', Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian
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17. Amongst the considerable literature on ethnic relations in Romania see for instance George Schöpflin & Hugh Poulton, Romania's ethnic Hungarians (London: Minority Rights Group, 1990).

18. This sense of hopelessness engendered by Ceau ş ecul's re-election would seem to be comparable with the situation in East Germany after the May 1989 local elections which had also been invested with popular expectations that they would mark an important turning-point in which 'trust in politics and government would be strengthened'. Instead, they brought little more than blatant ballot rigging and, for many East Germans, they seem to have been the last straw driving them to consider emigration. Popplewell, 'The Stasi and the East German Revolution of 1989', p. 55.

19. Claudiu Iordache was later to say that the weather was worth five divisions in their victory. George Galloway & Bob Wylie, *Downfall: the Ceauşecus and the Romanian revolution* (London: Futura, 1991), p. 175.

20. Sometimes bright lights were enough to disperse the protesters. Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gară*, p. 47.

21. See, for instance, the graphic eyewitness account of a young soldier who tells of terrified conscripts spending most of a night firing blindly into a thick fog at unimaginable terrors only to discover empty fields by the light of day. Viorel Domenico, *După execuţie a nins* (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 1992), pp. 27–31.

22. Miodrag Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89* (Timişoara, 1990), pp. 155–156, states that only the telephone line controlled by the railway functioned throughout the revolution, but in the accounts contained in Suciu there are constant references to telephones still functioning in Timişoara as late as 20 December. See, for instance, Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gară*, pp. 58, 138, 170–71, 183, 185–86, 225, 238. Indeed, on that day Hungarian radio was able to broadcast a dramatic telephone interview with a resident of Timişoara stating that the army was withdrawing and a committee had been set up by the demonstrators. Imre Karacs & Marcus Tanner, 'Romanian troops surrender', *The Independent*, 21 December 1989, p. 1. Telex services also seem to have remained uninterrupted
by the disturbances as were train services. Within Oltenia awareness of the unrest in Timișoara was heightened when thousands of workers were dispatched from the region in a vain attempt to bring order in the city.

23. Likewise television signals from Bulgaria, where Todor Zhikov had been overthrown at the beginning of November 1989, could be received in Bucharest.


25. See, for instance, Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 17-19; Traian Liviu Birăescu, 'De ce Timișoara?', in Timișoara 16-22 decembrie 1989 (Timișoara: Editura Facla, 1990) pp. 11-15. The Military Border first established on the Croatian/Slavonian border during the sixteenth century as a defence against the Ottoman Empire was extended eastward to include much of the Banat shortly after the area had formally passed to the Habsburg Monarchy through the Treaty of Passarowitzi in 1718. See G.E. Rothenburg, The Military Border in Croatia 1740-1881 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966). In 1799 when the Banat was divided into counties much remained under direct Austrian rule but some passed under Hungarian administration and, later, through the Ausgleich of 1867 the whole area became part of the Kingdom of Hungary. Following the First World War the Banat was divided between Romania and the nascent Yugoslavian state with the lion's share going to the Romanians.

26. The chief settlers in the Banat were the Hungarians, Germans and Serbs but other colonists had come from as far afield as Albania, France, Bulgaria, Italy and even Turkey. The Germans of the Banat, known as Swabians as opposed to the Saxons of Transylvania, were distinguished from the latter by the lateness of their settlement, their lack of formal autonomous institutions, and their Catholicism. Lacking the formidable defences against outside intrusion erected over many centuries by the Saxons they had been better placed to act as something of a catalyst for the development of the Banat as a whole. For more details on the colonisation of the Banat see Karl A. Roider, 'Nationalism and colonisation in the Banat of Temesvár, 1718-1778', in Ivo Banac, John G. Ackerman & Roman Ssporluk (eds.), Nation and ideology: essays in honor of Wayne S. Vucinich (Boulder, Col.: East European Monographs distributed by Columbia University Press, 1981), pp. 87-100.

Many of the Serbs had arrived in 1690 amongst the 30,000 largely Orthodox families who had been led into the Banat in search of protection from the Turks by the Patriarch of Peć Arsenije III Crnojević. See Barbara Jelavich, History of the Balkans: eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 92-93. During the 1950s the Banat was subject to the infamous Operacija Bărăgan which sent up to 34,000 Serbs but also members of other ethnic groups into internal exile on the barren plain of South East Romania and, although many subsequently returned, according to Birăescu a bitter resentment persists in the town over the deportations even until today. Birăescu, 'De ce Timișoara?', p. 13. See also Mircea Enescu În 1951, securitatea gi P.M.R. au
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strămutat zeci de mii de “elemente periculoase orânduirii socialist”’, România Liberă, 2 July 1993, p. 11.

27. Recensământul populaţiei şi al locuinţelor din 5 ianuarie 1977 (2 vol Bucharest: Direcţia centrală de statistică, 1980) and Anuarul statistic al României 1992 (Bucharest: Comisia naţională pentru statistică, n.d.). 43% of the urban inhabitants of Timiş in 1977 were born outside the county. 71% of the urban population were Romanian, 13% Hungarian, 12% German and 2% Serbo-Croat. The urban areas included Buziaş, Deta, Jimbolia, Lugoj, Sinnicolau Mare as well as Timişoara but a large majority of the urban population, 75%, lived in the latter.


30. Born 1 April 1952, Tőkés, was the son of a Hungarian Reformed Church Pastor. After attending Cluj Theological Institute he was posted first to Braşov and then to Dej. In Dej he came into conflict with the authorities over his activities on behalf of the church and the Hungarian minority. Following a lengthy court action he was eventually evicted from the church premises and forced to return to live with his parents in Cluj. After two years of constant protest over his ‘illegal’ dismissal he, eventually, secured a hearing by a review committee which in 1986 awarded him the post in Timişoara. He was also a contributor to the Hungarian samizdat journal Ellenpontok. For full details of László Tőkés’ career see László Tőkés, With God, for the people: the autobiography of László Tőkés (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990); Felix Corley & John Eibner, In the eye of the Romanian storm: the heroic story of Pastor László Tőkés (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1990).

31. Amongst these Swabian writers were Herta Mueller, Richard Wagner, William Totok and Rolf Bossert, most of whom had published scathing indictments of the conditions in Romania in West German newspapers. See Dan Ionescu ‘New developments in the harassment of ethnic German writers’, Radio Free Europe Research, Situation Report Romania/8, 18 April 1986, pp. 7–10.

Filip Teodorescu states that he headed an internal ‘audit’ carried out by the Securitate in Timiş in October 1989 and that the county was judged to be ‘quiet’. Filip Teodorescu, Un risc asumat: Timişoara decembrie 1989 (Bucharest: Editura Viitorul Românesc, 1992), p. 45.

Filip Teodorescu, former deputy head of the III Directorate of the Securitate, which was concerned with counterespionage, came to public prominence as the most eloquent and seemingly open of the defendants on trial for crimes committed during the repression in Timişoara. His subsequent book was, therefore, eagerly awaited with some expectation that it would reveal more about the actions of the authorities at the time. Unfortunately, these hopes were not met and the book is little more than an unrestrained apologia for the Securitate. Frequently contradictory and displaying a marked partial view it still finds difficulty
in amassing evidence for its main suppositions relating to foreign involvement in the revolution. However, used sparingly and taking into account the 'health warning' above it can, nevertheless, sometimes shed incidental light on the actions of the regime, and so it has, therefore, been cited several times in this study.

During 1989 there were several reports of unrest in Timișoara but none of these seem to have reached any great proportions largely it seems for lack of sufficient focus for the protest. See Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, pp. 6-7, for details of incidents after a Romanian victory in a football match against Denmark in November 1989 and an abortive protest at the U.M.T. factory at the re-election of Ceaușescu at the November Party Congress with the 300-400 workers who gathered being dispersed by the management.

32. On the decline in the congregation see Tökés, With God, for the people, p. 84. While Tökés was under virtual house arrest his parishioners smuggled food and fuel into his apartment giving him important moral as well as material support. Petitions were also addressed to the Bishop and a secret communication group ensured that a constant flow of news about the Pastor reached Hungary and, thence, Western Europe. ibid. pp. 122-44.

33. The authorities seem to have been convinced that Tökés penned the letter but, although he was one of the instigators, the actual author was Janos Molner. For full details see Tökés, With God, for the people, pp. 105-14.

34. The complex legal arguments seem to have centred on whether it was the local church or the Bishop who had the right to determine who was to reside in the church premises and if the Bishop had followed the correct procedures in securing the eviction notice. See Tökés, With God, for the people, pp. 4, 137-38; BBC EE/0649, B/7, 29 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 1928 gmt, 26 December 1989. Tökés' lawyer gives his version of events in Előd Kincses, 'Minciuna și adevarul', Adevarul, 26 December 1989, p. 2; and for László Papp's justification for the eviction see BBC EE/0647, B/6-7, 23 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 1632 gmt, 21 December 1989.

35. The windows of Tökés's apartment were also broken in another incident and possibly allied to this campaign on 12 September 1989 a key member of the Presbytery, Ernő Ujvarossy, was found dead in a local wood in unexplained circumstances.

36. Tökés, With God, for the people, pp. 16-18. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 21. On 13 December Tökés had been summoned before Alex Robu, County Secretary responsible for Religious Denominations. According to Ratesh Tökés asked for a permanent vigil to be established at the entrance of the church building and this continued throughout the week catching the imagination of the city. Tökés does not mention such a gathering and merely refers to asking for witnesses to assemble to observe his eviction on the coming Friday, Tökés, With God, for the people, pp. 3-5; Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, p. 18. Even if a vigil was not mounted, it would seem that Tökés parishioners' continued visiting the church throughout the week and many others having heard of the Pastor's predicament passed by out of curiosity to observe how the situation was evolving. Milin, Timișoara: 15-21 decembrie '89, pp. 14, 17.

37. Secretly recorded in March by a Canadian, Michel Clair, it was presented on Hungarian Television by Alajos Chrudinak who spearheaded Tökés' campaign in Hungary.

38. Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, p. 18; Milin, Timișoara: 15-21 decembrie '89, p. 16.
39. This view is supported by the British official involved. See also Tököes, *With God, for the people*, p. 7; cor p. 21 and Teodorescu, *Un risc asumat*, pp. 54–55, who in an inventive passage presents the two as spies. The *Securitate* can be presumed to have held similar views to their East German counterparts, the *Stasi*, who saw Western journalists and diplomatic missions as conspiring to place ‘anti-socialist activities’ under the ‘protection of international publicity…’. Popplewell, ‘The *Stasi* and the East German Revolution of 1989’, p. 52.


42. The plaque erected on Tököes’ church/apartment after the revolution commemorating the event dates the outbreak as 15 December.

43. Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89*, pp. 17–19; Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, p. 21; Tököes, *With God, for the people*, p. 20. All the delegation of parishioners were subsequently arrested.

44. At the same time three doctors also arrived to examine Edit, the pregnant wife of Tököes, in the hope of persuading her to leave the flat. It is also possible that at this time there was some attempt to arrange a counter-demonstration. Tököes, *With God, for the people*, pp. 146–149; Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89*, p. 21.

45. Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89*, pp. 23–24; Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 20. These two valuable books contain dozens of eyewitness accounts of the revolution in Timişoara not only from the leading players but also from less partisan observers. The narrative of the revolution in Timişoara presented in this study is largely a synthesis of these accounts, occasionally fleshed out by other sources. In using such sources two problems have emerged. The first relates to the fragmented nature of the revolution in Timişoara, particularly during the first days, which narrows the perspective of every account and frequently leads to contradictory evidence. The composite picture presented here is based on a correlation of these varied accounts. Secondly, it would appear, perhaps naturally, that the evidence supplied by some of the leading actors in the revolution has a tendency to become self-congratulatory and occasionally carries marks of hindsight. Due caution has, therefore, been shown in the use of these accounts, especially, when no additional corroborating evidence is available. I am grateful to Dennis Deletant for securing for me Milin’s book.


48. Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89*, p. 32; Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 29. Milin includes the account of one of these speakers, Tiberiu Kovács, a twenty-two-year old worker.


51. For accounts of these incidents see Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89*, pp. 35, 42–46; Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, pp. 46–47.
52. Arrested alongside Tőkés they were beaten and interrogated before being released on 20 December 1989, Corley & Eibner, *In the eye of the Romanian storm*, pp. 30–31.


54. There may also have been a small incident in this area some time in the morning in front of the regional offices of the CFR which resulted in the firing of tear-gas and the use of a fire engine to disperse the crowd. Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 51.


56. Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 48, suggests that by 11.30 the crowd numbered 4–5,000 although diplomatic reports were later to suggest a slightly lower figure of 2–3,000.

57. Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 90, suggests the area was guarded by between 350–400 members of the security forces consisting of detachments of Securitate troops, USLA, Securitate officers, border troops and other units including, it would seem, around fifty members of the Patriotic Guard. For a full descriptions of the following events see the accounts in Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, pp. 51–62; Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, pp. 73–92.

58. It is at this point that the famous symbol of the revolution the Romanian flag, with its communist emblem removed from the centre, may have made its first appearance. As described by Petre Boroşoiu a young girl seized the flag from the main meeting chamber of the building and he then cut out the emblem from the centre. In doing so, he was following the tradition of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 57; Jonathan Eyal, *Why Romania could not avoid bloodshed*, in Gwyn Prins (ed.), *Spring in winter: the 1989 revolutions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 156.

59. Some protesters may have climbed onto the balcony and tried to address the crowd. Radu Bălan had spent his early career in the Banat occupying a string of posts in Timiş including First Secretary of the Municipal Committee of Timişoara and Mayor of the city between 1978–1981. In 1982 he became a full member of the Central Committee. In June 1988 he was removed as a Central Committee Secretary but appointed an alternative member of the PEC. ‘Romania: explosive’, *East European Newsletter*, 2:13, 29 June 1988, pp. 1, 3.

60. Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 59, suggests two fire tenders and three military lorries were burnt out.


62. For full accounts of these events see Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, pp. 79–95; Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, pp. 66–124.

63. According to some accounts an attempt was made to persuade the tank crews to drive to the centre of the city to support the demonstrators. See Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 89. The story of the officer can be found in Ana Niţă, ‘Vocile marii mute: Timişoara’, *Adevărul*, 21 December 1992, p. 3.


65. During the first night of violence more troops than demonstrators seem to have ended up in hospital, Teodorescu, *Un risc asumat*, pp. 60–61; Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, pp. 21–22.
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67. The PEC meeting took place at approximately 17.00. The transcripts of the two meetings have been published and they are, generally, held to be more or less accurate, possibly having been discovered in the desk of the Chief of the Chancellory and Secretary of the CC of the RCP, Silviu Curțiceanu, during the revolution. However, rumours persist that they are not the originals but were ‘recreated’ from a number of sources, and how such documents came into the hands of the press has never been fully revealed, although it is no doubt significant that they were later to form the chief evidence for the prosecution at the trial of former PEC members. The transcript of the PEC meeting can be found in ‘Ordin clar “Trageți!”’, România Liberă, 10 January 1990, p. 3, and the teleconference in ‘Stenograma morții’, Adevărul, 10 January 1990, pp. 1-2. All extracts cited below come from these sources.

The impression of political theatre would be heightened if the story from an unidentified source is true, that Ceaușescu, at the end of the PEC meeting, in a fury threatened to resign and only reconsidered his position at the imploring of his minions. See ‘Clips in care, probabil, se putea evita baia de singe’, Adevărul, 14 January 1990, pp. 1, 3.

68. Note that at their trial all the former Party leaders denied that the PEC meeting decided to use arms against the demonstrators in Timișoara stating that Ceaușescu had given the order before without submitting it to the plenum for approval. In fact the transcript is not altogether clear on this point although, given the fact that Ceaușescu was dead and they were on trial, such a response might be expected. See, for instance, the repeat testimony of Silviu Curțiceanu at the Timișoara trial BBC EE/1129, B/4:13, 20 July 1991, Rompres in English, 0856 gmt, 17 July 1991.

69. ‘Ordin clar “Trageți!”’, România Liberă, 10 January 1990, p. 3.
70. ibid.


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73. Strong hints of this, probably rather exaggerated, to benefit the author, can be found throughout Teodorescu, Un risc asumat.

74. For the 1968 speech see Michael Costello, ‘Rumania and her allies: August 21 and after,’ Radio Free Europe Research, Rumanian Situation Report/12, 6 September 1968, pp. 1–11.

75. ‘Ordin clar “Trageți!”’, România Liberă, 10 January 1990, p. 3. After the Second World War to help consolidate the Party’s hold on the army Patriotic Combat Formations of Party members had been established and by 1945 these had risen to be over 60,000 strong. These units had, thus, featured prominently in Ceaușescu’s formative years when after 1948 he had been drafted into the army as a Major–General in charge of political indoctrination. Alex Alexiev, ‘The Romanian army’, in Jonathan R. Adelman (ed.), Communist armies in politics (Epping, England: Bowker, 1982), p. 150; Edward Behr, Kiss the hand you cannot bite: the rise and fall of the Ceaușescus (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 102–103. Later the Formations seem to have been disbanded and the creation of a revamped Patriotic Guard was announced in the 1968 speech apparently in direct response to the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Ceaușescu’s stress in 1989 on the importance of the non-existent Patriotic Guard in 1968 would seem to be testament to how mythologised his view of events had become. Ostensibly participation in the Patriotic Guard was mandatory for all until the age of sixty–two for men and fifty–seven for women giving a theoretical strength of six million although the actual core was far smaller with, perhaps, 12,000 full–time staff. William Crowther, “Ceaugescuism’ and civil–military relations in Romania’, Armed Forces and Society, 15:2 (1989), p. 213; The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The military balance, 1989–1990, (London: Brassey’s for the IISS, 1989).

76. ‘Ordin clar “Trageți!”’, România Liberă, 10 January 1990, p. 3. It is not entirely clear if any shots of any sort were fired on the night of 16 December. However, it seems to have been only the border troops and the militia who were fully armed at this stage.


78. The lack of information is suggested by Teodorescu who records a briefing at which the chief of the militia in the county, Colonel Ion Deheleanu, could only give a personal eyewitness account of events. Teodorescu, Un risc asumat, p. 64.

79. The principal army unit seems to have been the 18 Division of the Romanian army commanded by Colonel Zeca. The Ministry of the Interior forces included militia, Securitate troops, Securitate officers, USLA and Border Guards. Inter–service rivalry between the army and Ministry of the Interior has frequently been a source of comment. See, for instance, Dan Morgan, ‘Romanian army rankled by interference’, The Washington Post, 24 December 1989, p. A.24. However, there also seems to have been corresponding strains within the armed forces between the relatively favoured air force and navy and the neglected army, and in the ranks of the Ministry of Interior between the Securitate and the militia. Jonathan Eyal, ‘Romania: between appearances and realities’, in Jonathan Eyal (ed.), The Warsaw Pact and the Balkans: Moscow’s southern flank (Basingstoke, England: Macmillan, Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, 1989), pp. 80–85. Teodorescu, Un risc asumat, p. 65 and for Securitate officers not been given the full picture see Teodorescu, Un risc asumat, p. 60.

80. ‘Ordin clar “Trageți!” ’, România Liberă, 10 January 1990, p. 3.
81. Major-General Ştefan Gușe was First Deputy Defence Minister and Chief of the General Staff; Lieutenant-General Victor Stănculescu, First Deputy Defence Minister; Lieutenant-General Mihai Chițac, head of the chemical troops and Commander of the Bucharest garrison; Major-General Constantin Nuţă, Deputy Minister of the Interior and head of the General Inspectorate of the Militia; Major-General Mihaiela Velicu, deputy head of the General Inspectorate of Militia. Emil Macri was the head of the Economic Counter-Espionage Directorate of the Securitate. Amongst the most senior civilian officials sent to Timișoara were: Ilie Matei, candidate member of the PEC since 1986 and First Secretary of Timiș County Party Committee, Ion Cumpănașu, head of the Department of Religious Denominations and Nicolae Mihalache, First Deputy of the Chief of Organisation of the CC of the RCP.

At the trials following the revolution considerable time and effort was spent in attempting to establish who had given the order to open fire and who had executed this command in Timișoara. It does not seem necessary for this study to enter into all the frequently conflicting evidence appertaining to these matters. At the teleconference held at 17.00 in response to Ceaușescu’s evident frustration at the non-appearance of the senior generals he had sent to Timișoara Coman initially said they were not present because firing had begun and, shortly afterwards, under repeated questioning he declares that he had ordered the security forces to open fire. However, at his trial he stated that he only said this to placate the angry Ceaușescu and that Gușe and Stănculescu had only arrived at Timișoara airport on 17 December after firing had started. See BBC EE/1102, B/11:30, 19 June 1991, Rompres in English, 1844 gmt, 12 June 1991; ‘Stenograma morţii’, Adevarul, 10 January 1990, pp. 1–2. In fact, Coman had arrived at Timișoara airport at 16.20 although he did not reach the centre of the city until later. Gabriel Mitroi, ‘Mârturia unui ofiţer de la aerodromul militar Giarmata, care a făcut parte din trupele de represiune dislocate la Consiliul judeţean Timiș, puse la dispoziţa lui Ion Coman, secretar al C.C. al P.C.R.’ Timișoara 16–22 decembrie 1989 (Timișoara: Editura Faleza, 1990), p. 184.

It seems highly probable that the original order emanated from Ceaușescu and this was stated by Coman and later reiterated by Stănculescu, Gușe and others. BBC EE/1150, B/3:11(a), 14 August 1991, Rompres in English, 1750 gmt, 6 August 1991. An interesting aside in relation to this matter concerns Stănculescu, as there have been persistent rumours that it was he who gave the order to open fire and these were later to undermine his political legitimacy after the events. For instance, at the same trial Radu Bâlan acknowledged that on 22 December 1989, when he had been asked by the people of Timișoara who had fired at them, he had answered ‘The army commanded by General Stănculescu’ a statement confirmed by another witness — ‘I saw and heard for myself... when General Stănculescu asked lower echelons to effect the order of the supreme commander, Ceaușescu, for restoring order in Timișoara.’ BBC EE/1126, B/10:27, 17 July 1991, Rompres in English, 1810 gmt, 11 July 1991.

82. The stores were a fur shop and a perfumery, and the incident happened between 17.00 and 17.30. Only a small number of people were involved and some of the demonstrators seem to have made an effort to stop the vandalism. When a fire engine finally arrived it was ineffective. See Milin, Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89, p. 69. This incident has attracted some infamy as it has been suggested that the shops were deliberately ransacked and set ablaze in order to form a pretext for the subsequent shooting in the square. See, for instance, Milin, Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89, p. 65, and Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, p. 71; for
descriptions of dubious characters present at this time also Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, p. 29. Against this accusation it should be noted that the looting in Piața Operei was only a small part of the general rampage throughout the centre of Timișoara at that time, and that also given the seriousness of the situation and the fact that shots had already been fired the army hardly needed further excuses for opening fire.

83. The local hospitals reported that as the night lengthened the wounds moved up the body — starting from the legs and progressing to the torso. Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 45.


86. This is the figure of casualties in the main hospital of Timișoara at around 3.00 in the morning of 18 December. It is quite possible that more casualties were at some of the other hospitals in the town and there are also persistent reports that a large number of the wounded refused to seek medical assistance for fear of the Securitate. Milin, *Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 101; Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 134.

87. The two states had a recent history of reciprocal high level diplomatic visits with the Iranian President, Ali Khamenei, having visited Bucharest in February 1989. At the time of the revolution rumours arose that Ceaușescu took with him to Iran a large shipment of gold either for his personal use in the event of being forced into exile or for the payment of armed intervention by Arab or Iranian terrorists. See ‘Și in Iran uriașe stocuri de aur ale clanului scelerat’, *Adevărul*, 26 December 1989, p. 1. For an Iranian denial of such claims see Reuter, ‘Switzerland puts freeze on assets of Ceaușescu’, *The Washington Post*, 25 December 1989, p. A.40, and for a markedly anti–Iranian western newspaper report upholding much of the speculation concerning Ceaușescu’s secreting millions in gold in Iran and the presence of Iranian revolutionary guards during the revolution see Jack Anderson & Dale Van Atta, ‘Iran embarrassed by Ceaușescu visit’, *The Washington Post*, 17 January 1990, p. E.17. See also Constantin Vranceanu, ‘Planul “Z–Z” și telefonul roșu’, *România Liberă*, 28 September 1990, pp. 1, 3. Ceaușescu’s departure for Iran does not seem so bizarre when placed against the fact that within a week of the November 1987 disturbances in Brașov he had also left Romania on a state visit that time to Egypt.


90. Prior to 1989 Romania does not seem to have been credited with any defence sales to Iran, although it is possible Romanian weaponry may have reached the country during the long Iran—Iraq war of 1980–88. Romania had long been active in the region selling vast amounts of armaments to Iraq and other Arab countries as well as undertaking the maintenance of Soviet military hardware in Egypt during the early 1980s. At the time, there were reports that the Romanians had delivered 200 modified T55 tanks to the Egyptians with persistent rumours suggesting that some of these later passed to Iraq. It, therefore, does not seem beyond the realms of possibility that some of the military equipment the Romanians were due to overhaul in Iran was of Romanian origin having been
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91. In relation to his decision it is noticeable that many specialist commentators in the West shared a corresponding belief that Ceaușescu would not fall, see note 1. Ceaușescu's decision to leave for Iran is also instructive in relation to claims, at the time and later, of the imminence of a conflict with Hungary.

92. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 33.

93. On the streets of Timișoara a new slogan was heard 'Ceaușescu the criminal, has fled to Iran!' Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, p. 209.

94. A state of emergency in Timiș county was only officially instituted by presidential decree on 21 December. For the text of the decree translated into English see BBC EE/0646, B/2–3, 22 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 0910 gmt, 21 December 1989. There were reports of sporadic violence in areas such as Calea Girocului see Milin, Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89, pp. 107–108.

95. One of the most vivid and persisting images of the first days of the revolution was of the bayoneting of a pregnant women. This can be found in Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 26, and in two separate descriptions in different locations in Milin, Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89, pp. 58–61. Another eyewitness in Milin also recounts seeing a pregnant woman crushed by the tracks of an armoured vehicle at this time.

96. A famous exception to the general rule of silence was the speech given by Claudiu Iordache at his institute IPROTIM. See Galloway & Wylie, Downfall, p. 124.

97. The operation was led by Lieutenant-Colonel Ioan Corpodeanu, deputy head of the militia of Timiș, and Colonel Nicolae Ghircoiaș, head of the Technical Criminalistic Institute of the Ministry of the Interior. The latter had been stationed at the hospital since 17 December to keep a tally of the number of dead and wounded. Between 1.30 and 4.15 on the morning of 19 December they gathered the bodies of forty (some reports say forty-three) victims of gunfire and loading them into a refrigerated lorry, first, took them to the local militia headquarters and, then, to Bucharest where that evening they were cremated and the ashes scattered at the mouth of a canal in Popești-Leordeni, on the outskirts of the capital. The operation is popularly supposed to have been directly sanctioned by Elena Ceaușescu and some credibility is given to this theory by her earlier comments at the 17 December PEC meeting: 'You should have fired on them and had they fallen, you should have taken them and shoved them in a cellar . . . . Not one should have got out'. 'Ordin clar "Trageți!"', România Libertă, 10 January 1990, p. 3. For a full account of this incident see the summary of the facts from the Military Procurator reprinted in Teodorescu, Un risc asumat, pp. 294–299, together with the eyewitness accounts in Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, pp. 151–54, 160–63. Details of the identity of the corpses removed from the mortuary appear in 'Primim de la asociația „17 decembrie”
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98. From 20 December the slogan 'Where are our dead!' was to be heard on the streets and the return of the bodies was one of the chief demands of the negotiators that day. Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 119. The removal of the bodies is another incident that has entered the mythology of the revolution and it lies at the root of the uncertainty that has continued to exist over the exact number of victims in the violence of 17 and 18 December especially since most of the hospital records relating to this period also seem to have been destroyed.


102. Guse gives his version of the events in 'Ce mai aveţi de spus?', *Adevarul*, 1 February 1991, p. 2.


105. This rumour appears in a number of the accounts of the incident. See Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 111; Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, pp. 170–71, 211; Tatomirescu, 'Nopţile şi zilele revoluţiei române', p. 163.


108. Moş and Poza again went to ELBA, Bălan and Cornel Pacoste to UMT, Vasile Bolog to Electrotimis. Reportedly at Electromotor the workers made repeated attempts to get the management to join the march to the centre. See Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 119, and at ELBA Moş and Poza seem to have been met with indifference rather than hostility.

109. Some reports suggest that workers’ councils first appeared at this stage of the revolution giving some shape to what had previously been a spontaneous and unorganised protest. Vladimir Socor, 'Pastor Tookes and the outbreak of the revolution in Timişoara', *Report on Eastern Europe*, 1:5, 2 February 1990, p. 21.


111. There are some reports of shooting and even of demonstrators being killed but these are unconfirmed. See Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 117. There is no agreement on whether the security forces were under orders to fire or not that day because, although after the revolution various army officers were to say that they had received an order not to fire, this can be interpreted as bearing the hallmarks of post revolutionary hindsight. Milin, *Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 161. Whatever, it would seem likely that none of those who marched to the centre of Timişoara this day were aware of any change in policy on the part of the regime.
At this juncture Claudiu Iordache made a famous impassioned speech asking the army to withdraw. See Galloway & Wylie, *Downfall*, p. 126; Milin, *Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, pp. 124–25.

Details as to how some members of the crowd were able to force their way into the building differ slightly. Presumably different positions and times of arrival led to varying perspectives, but the uncertainty gave rise to a suspicion that some of those present had been in position beforehand and were, therefore, connected with the Securitate. Whatever, the first to gain entry by breaking a window seems to have been Fortuna. Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 204. Galloway & Wylie, *Downfall*, p. 127; Milin, *Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, pp. 125–27.

A loudspeaker system was already in place on the balcony. According to Teodorescu it had been erected on the instructions of the county leadership earlier that morning in anticipation that Dăscălescu would use it to address the crowd. Teodorescu, *Un risc asumat*, p. 106.

Amongst the first to enter the building after Fortuna seem to have been Sorin Opera, Valentin Virtan and Ștefan Ivan followed shortly afterwards by Claudiu Iordache. The representative of the Serbs was Unipan Veliko and his memories and speech are reproduced in Milin, *Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, pp. 129–30.

The following negotiators are named in two or more sources: Sorin Opera, 27, mechanic, Electrometal; Ion Marcu, electrician, UMT; Petru Petrișor, lawyer; Dumitru Cornel Pop, 49, economist, Electrobanat; Ion Savu, 39, *aprovizionare serviciul*, Detergentul; Simona Tomuța; Petre Borșoioiu, 28, actor; Lorin Fortuna, 41, University Professor and Valentin Virtan. A further member of the delegation may have been Adela Săbăilă. The various accounts of the negotiations all differ and are mostly from the side of the protesters with each narrator apparently striving to place his own personal contribution in an optimum light. The following draws on short accounts by Opera, Borșoioiu and Bălan and a longer detailed account by Savu including some poor photographs of the lists of demands drawn up in his diary at the time.

Cornel Pacoste, a Deputy Prime Minister and full member of the Central Committee since 1980, had previously been First Secretary of Timiș and chairman of the County Peoples' Council 1982–85.

According to a poor reproduction of a page from Savu's notebook reproduced in Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 273, the first demands were: a) who gave the order to fire? b) the number of dead, c) the number of wounded, d) how many were arrested, e) the dead for burial, f) illegible, g) a list of the citizens committee to be broadcast on TV and radio, h) illegible, i) the children from the cathedral, j) the calling of a national day of mourning. Point (i) seems to have referred to the shooting on the Cathedral steps on 18 December.

It is difficult to piece together the exact contents of the final list of demands from these talks, although there seems to be general agreement that it was more
radical than the programme drawn up later at the Opera House. A final version of the County Council building programme apparently comprising six points was taken by Virtan to the Yugoslavian Consulate later that evening. Milin, *Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, p. 133.

Savu in his memoir of the occasion lists the following points: a) the dismissal of the government, b) the dismissal of Ceaușescu, c) the constitution of a government of national salvation, d) information on the number of dead and wounded, e) the freeing of those arrested, f) the return of the dead for burial, g) the live transmission of events from the town on TV and radio, h) the communication to the Yugoslavian Consulate of the composition of the committee and their demands. However, a poor reproduction of the demands in Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 274, does not exactly tally with this list and, most importantly, there seems to be no reference to point (c) above. However, several other demands are listed including: the opening of the borders, a day of national mourning and free elections.

News of the meeting rapidly reached the West, perhaps through the Yugoslavian Consulate, because it is reported in *The Times* of 22 December — although the negotiations are erroneously dated to 21 December. According to this report the negotiators had asked for ‘...free elections; the withdrawal of Army and police; punishment of all those responsible for the massacre of innocent people; admission into the country of foreign journalists; and for the truth about the protests and police brutality to be published in the Romanian press’. Dessa Trevisan, Ernest Beck & Michael Knipe, ‘Troops mow down crowd in Bucharest’, *The Times*, 22 December 1989, p. 7.


122. They reached Timișoara airport at 04.32 in the morning of 21 December, Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 241. The text of Ceaușescu’s speech translated into English is reproduced in BBC EE/0646, B/1–2, 22 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1700 gmt, 20 December 1989. The first detainees were released later in the afternoon. They were freed factory by factory, the first being those from UMT. Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 177.


124. Seven trains departed from Craiova, three from Râșnovichi Vlcea, two from Slatina and one each from Drăgășani, Caracal and Balș. For details see Milin, *Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, pp. 170–71. It seems the operation had been ordered by Ceaușescu and was organised by Dinca and the leaders of the Patriotic Guard, possibly including Milea, via the Party Secretaries in the counties of Dolj, Olt and Vlcea. Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p. 211; Mircea Bunea, ‘Vulpile din boxă’, *Adevărul*, 31 January 1990, p. 3.

125. The other five trains were stopped at various stations in the Banat. At 18.30 with the approval of Ceaușescu they were apparently ordered to withdraw and return home.

126. Other members at this time may have been Petre Borozoiu, Ștefan Ivan and Luminița Miliutin. According to Miliutin she was swiftly elbowed out of power by Fortuna and the same allegations are also made by Petre Borozoiu. Milin, *Timișoara: 15–21 decembrie '89*, pp. 142–43.

127. Although this programme was drawn up on 20 December, according to Savu, troops intervened to stop it being printed on 21 December and it eventually only appeared on 22 December, shortly after Ceaușescu had fled from Bucharest. The printed programme appeared on a leaflet headed ‘The Tyranny has Fallen!’ and
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it was this text that later in the afternoon was broadcast on Romanian radio. The leaflet is reproduced in Milin, Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89, p. 173, and the translated text of the radio broadcast can be found in BBC EE/0648, B/7–8, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1820 gmt, 22 December 1989. A second, slightly more enunciated version of the programme, appeared shortly afterwards in the journal of the Romanian Democratic Front, Victoria, and the text of this is given as an appendix in Milin, Timişoara: 15–21 decembrie ’89, pp. 169–170. This unlike the demands outlined above did not call for the resignation of Ceauşescu, perhaps because, although it was dated 20 December, it did not appear until after his fall, but made additional demands for economic reform including the encouragement of private initiative in small businesses and agriculture and the opening of the network of shops previously restricted to the nomenclature. It also requested that 29 December be declared a day of national mourning for the victims of the revolution and the cessation throughout the country of attempts to suppress the demonstrations. Finally, addressing the country it called upon the whole population of Romania to join in the struggle for the democratisation of the country and to form in all areas, factories and institutes branches of the RDF to claim constitutional rights and to enter into a general strike from 21 December until final victory was achieved. It closed by expressing its thanks to the heroic population of Timişoara which had contributed decisively to the salvation of the Romanian nation from dictatorship.

128. At least this seems to be the stated intention of Ion Savu who says it was he who fetched Bălan to the Opera House. His testimony can be found in Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, pp. 246–48.

129. In Buziaş the demonstrations closely resembled those in Timişoara with many workers striking and marching in a large column to the centre of the town. See Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, pp. 194–97. Disturbances in Arad including deaths were reported on Hungarian radio. See BBC EE/0647, i, 23 December 1989. For Oradea see Corley & Eibner, In the eye of the Romanian storm, pp. 215–16.


132. These details are taken from the text of a transcript of a meeting held at the Party headquarters on 17 December 1989. It was reproduced in full in the Sibiu newspaper Tribuna with extracts appearing in Adevărul. The authenticity of the document has never been proven. ‘Un ordin scelerat al lui Nicu Ceauşescu “Trajeţi fără somatie”’, Adevărul, 9 January 1990, p. 1.

133. This description of events in Sibiu is largely taken from Vasile Avram, Zeul din labirint: Sibiu, decembrie 1989 (Sibiu, 1992). This book seems to be the best account of the revolution in the city and is broadly corroborated by the descriptions to be found in other sources such as ‘Vocile marii mute: Sibiu’, Adevărul, 21 December 1992, p. 2. The apparently rather exaggerated testimony of the men who claim to have circulated the leaflets can be found in Jonathan C. Randall, ‘Romanian says patriotic song signalled revolt’, The Washington Post, 9 January 1990, pp. A.1, A.15.
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134. After the revolution some of those responsible for the shooting from the militia–Securitate building that day were brought to trial and convicted. See, for instance, the case of Ion Botarul in Virgil Lazăr, ‘Sibiu: un nou terorist condamnat’, *România Liberă*, 13 January 1990, p. 2.

135. The testimony of the officer commanding the unit can be found in Ion M. Ioniţa, ‘Vocile marii mute: Braşov’, *Adevărul*, 21 December 1992, p. 3.


138. After the revolution on 9 January 1990 Liviu Vanga, the militia chief at Cisnădie, and Aurel Marcu from Sibiu were convicted of these crimes and sentenced to twelve and–a–half years in prison with nine years deprivation of civic rights. The court also authorised the relatives of the victims to sue for damages. It is possible that the sentences were increased on appeal. See ‘End of the line for Ceauşescu’s men’, *The Times*, 10 January 1990, p. 24; Virgil Lăzăr, ‘Procesul teroristilor’, *România Liberă*, 10 January 1990, p. 2; BBC EE/0690, B/6:20, 16 February 1990, Rompres in English, 1009 gmt, 14 February 1990.

139. For accounts of such meetings together with photographs showing obviously unenthusiastic workers see ʻÎntreaga naţiune, în deplină unitate în jurul partidului, este hotărîtă să–şi apere cu fermitate cuceririle revoluţionare, independenţa şi integritatea patriei, să continue neabătut construcţia socialistă’, *România Liberă*, 21 December 1989, p. 2.


143. Various accounts speak of the meeting being postponed and then reinstated, but none of these tally as to precise times. If true, they do suggest some official doubt as to the wisdom of holding such a gathering. See Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, p. 38; Gheorghe Ioniţă, ‘Bucureşti: revoluţia ceas cu ceas’ in *Romania: singe, durere, speranţă 1989–1990* (Bucharest, n.d.), p. 16.

144. See, for instance, the testimony in Alan Cowell, ‘Punished by Bucharest, city’s choice was revolt’, *New York Times*, 5 January 1990, p. 14.

145. It seems that in some units of the security forces the troops were ordered to watch the speech allowing them to witness Ceauşescu’s moment of consternation. Petre Mihai Băcanu, ‘Terenurile morţii: plutonul de “intervenţie” al căpitanului Pop’, *România Liberă*, 7 January 1994, p. 7.
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146. See Galloway & Wylie, Downfall, p. 134. Postelnicu, ‘Tudor Postelnicu martor ocular’, p. 19. It is possible that the sound of fireworks came from the snapping of the poles of banners as they were dropped in the chaos. Petre Mihai Băcanu in România Liberă, under the rubric ‘Intercontinental 21/22’ during March and April 1990 carried a series of unsubstantiated interviews with a group of young workers from the Turbomecanica factory who claim to have started the unrest by chanting ‘Timișoara’ and other slogans. As other workers moved away in an attempt not to become associated with the protest, in order to prevent themselves from becoming isolated the young demonstrators say they ran into the crowd creating mayhem. The same series of articles also suggests that the firework was thrown by a young man, Adrian Constantin, and that Leon Nica mounted a lone protest in another part of the square. See Petre Mihai Băcanu, ‘Intercontinental 21/22’, România Liberă, 17 March, pp. 1, 2; ibid. 24 March, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 31 March, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 1 April, pp. 1, 4; ibid. 3 April, pp. 1, 4; ibid. 5 April, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 11 April, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 19 April, p. 1; ibid. 25 April, pp. 1, 3. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 107, also notes reports that the disturbances were caused by the sound of shooting or moving tanks being played on the loudspeakers that were set up to enthuse the crowds with pre-recorded cheers for the leader. These claims may be based on rumours which seem to have circulated at the time of the demonstration, that the city was surrounded by tanks. Whatever the source, the disturbances were great enough to injure fifteen people. See ‘Raportul Comisiei Senatoriale Pentru Cercetarea Evenimentelor din Decembrie 1989: Secțiunea 3.1.’, Adevărul, ‘Editie specială’, 25 May 1992, p. 2.

147. However, there is some evidence that the crowd may have perceived it as an attempt to buy them off. See Blaine Harden, ‘Romanian dictator Ceaușescu is overthrown’, The Washington Post, 23 December 1989, pp. A.1, A.15.


149. The same tactic as regards the student dormitories had been employed at the recent Party Congress. See Dan Martian interviewed by Ion Lăsăr, ‘Pentru un dialog real cu cetățenii’, Adevărul, 25 January 1990, p. 5. Amongst the dissidents treated in this way were Dumitru Mazilu and Gabriel Andreeescu. See Alexandru Tonescu, “Există riscul impușcării lor in incidentele din stradă”, România Liberă, 20 October 1994, p. 16.

150. The security forces had been activated under the code name ‘Radu cel frumos’. Amongst PEC members Nicolae Constantin was sent to Cluj, Ioan Toma to Timișoara, Gheorghe Pană to Brașov and Constantin Olteanu to Iași and Suceava.


152. The office was apparently the commander of the militia of Sector 4 Bucharest and the casualties were recorded in hospital by 13.30. ‘Primul ucigaș de 21 decembrie ’89’, Adevărul, 21 December 1994, p. 1, includes a photograph of this incident.

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154. Amongst the security forces deployed in Bucharest that night there were units from both the Bucharest army garrison and the Ministry of the Interior including staff and pupils from the Military Academy of the Ministry of the Interior and the Military Finishing School for Officers of the Militia.

155. For the situation that morning see the Tass report reproduced in BBC EE/0647, i, 23 December 1989. Sergiu Nicolaeşcu, ‘În fine revoluţia’, in Televiziunea Română, Revoluţia Română în direct (Bucharest: Televiziunea Română, 1990), p. 237, gives a colourful account of how with only limited success he tried to incite the ‘Griviţa’ workers to march on the centre by addressing them through a portable megaphone he had thoughtfully prepared the day before.


157. For an account of the incident in Piaţa Gorjului see ‘Manifestanţii au fost urmăriţi şi în Piaţa... Gorjului’, România Liberă, 23 December 1993, p. 10. Arriving at 9.00 a military detachment made up of several units seems to have been swamped by demonstrators and forced to withdraw. For Bulevard Republicii see Ioana Uru, Florentina Dolghin & Ioan Lăcștă, (eds), ‘Ei, tinerii, au făcut revoluţia. Ei, tinerii, scriu istoria’, Magazin Istoric, New Series 24:3 (1990), p. 4.

158. Ordered to the capital were units from Târgovişte, Mihai Bravu and Slobozia. None arrived before the flight of Ceauşescu but several were to play a prominent role in the fighting following his departure.


160. For the text in translation see BBC EE/0648, B/9, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 0858 gmt, 22 December 1989. Milea died sometime between 9.15 and 10.00. The circumstances surrounding his death have long remained one of the enigmas of the revolution and the verdicts of western writers have fully reflected divisions of opinion in Romania as to whether Milea committed suicide or was murdered on the orders of Ceauşescu. Thus, Martyn Rady, Romania in turmoil: a contemporary history (London: I.B. Tauris, 1992), p. 103, and John Sweeney, The life and evil times of Nicolae Ceauşescu (London: Hutchinson, 1991), p. 211, suggest he was murdered whilst Behr, Kiss the hand you cannot bite, p. 3, and Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 42, refrain from any absolute judgement but appear to lean towards a verdict of murder. A more neutral view is taken by Almond, The rise and fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu, p. 12, who additionally notes the evidence of Colonel Corneliu Pircălabescu who appears to have been the last person to see Milea alive and who later testified at the trial of Bobu, Dincă, Mănescu and Postelnicu that it was suicide. Earlier Bobu had told the court that Ceauşescu had ordered Milea to be shot. For a fuller account of Pircălabescu’s evidence see Associated Press, ‘Trial is told of General’s suicide after he defied Ceauşescu’s order’, New York Times, 31 January 1990, p. A.10; Victor Dinu, ‘Cum a murit generalul Milea?’, România Liberă, 31 January 1990, p. 5. Galloway & Wylie, Downfall, pp. 143–144, cleverly incorporate both possibilities by suggesting that Milea committed suicide after Ceauşescu ordered him shot for treason. In support of this assertion, they draw on the testimony of Stânculescu who states that both the postmortem and coroner’s report gave a verdict of suicide.

The oration of Colonel-General Ion Hortopan at Milea’s funeral was ambiguous when he spoke of ‘...one who was and will remain in the conscience of the Romanian Army..., killed by Ceauşescu’s dictatorial clique...’. BBC EE/0652,
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B/13:23, 3 January 1990, Agerpres in English, 1913 gmt, 29 December 1989. However, submissions to the Senatorial Commission of Inquiry into the Events of December 1989 'Raportul Comisiei Senatoriale Pentru Cercetarea Evenimentelor din Decembrie 1989: Secțiunea 3.1.', Adevărul, 'Ediție specială', 25 May 1992, p. 2, follows the official line of suicide stating that after Milea came out from a meeting with Ceaușescu at 9.00 and ordered the army not to fire on the crowd he climbed to his office as head of the Patriotic Guard on the sixth floor of the Central Committee building and asked for a pistol on the pretext that he was preparing to go out onto the streets. Then he retired into his office alone and shot himself. He apparently did not perish immediately but died on the way to hospital.

Immediately after the fall of Ceaușescu an elaborate myth of the martyrdom of Milea began to be propagated. On 28 December he was posthumously promoted from the rank of Colonel-General to full Army General and Mark Almond has remarked how his death by suicide metamorphosed him '...from villainous minion of the tyrants into their innocent victim, ...'. Almond, The rise and fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, p. 12. As the body of Milea lay in state before his burial, the image of the noble officer who defied the orders of the dictator and refused to order his troops to fire on defenceless civilians was assiduously cultivated by members of the new regime to proclaim the innocence of the army from the charge that they had opened fire during the revolution. Submissions to the Senatorial Commission of Inquiry make constant reference to Milea specifically ordering the army not to open fire on the morning of 22 December, but given the cult that has grown up around his death and the need of the army to rehabilitate themselves after their role in the suppression of the demonstrations these claims must be treated with some caution. An alternative explanation to the circumstances surrounding the death may be that on the morning of 22 December when the army was already being swept up by the overwhelming tide of demonstrators Milea was faced with the possibility of having to order his troops to fire on their brothers in arms and unable to effect such an order he committed suicide. Such a scenario was evoked by Dumitru Mazilu in his oration at the funeral. Whilst affirming that Milea '... is the symbol of the Romanian revolution, marking a turning point which changed the course of events and helped us emerge victor.' he also added '...when he received the loathsome order to fire at the army, said "I am also the army. Hence I shot the army." ' BBC EE/0652, B/13:23, 3 January 1990, Agerpres in English, 1913 gmt, 29 December 1989.

161. Milea was appointed Minister of National Defence in place of Constantin Olteanu in December 1985. He had been Chief of the General Staff of the army since 1980 combining this post after 1982 with Chief of the General Staff of the Patriotic Guard a post he also held from 1974–79. At the time of his death he was still chief of the Patriotic Guard as well as being a candidate member of the PEC. There is little evidence to suggest that Milea was as well loved as claimed. Much of his career had been devoted to furthering the cause of the Patriotic Guard, and it is unlikely that senior army officers approved of his split loyalties between the army and this organisation. Eyal, 'Romania: between appearances and realities', pp. 104–105, contrasts Milea's evident enthusiasm for the full integration of the Patriotic Guard into military planning with the more circumspect approach of the former army Chief of Staff, Colonel-General Ion Gheorghe. Likewise, when Milea was appointed, it was reported that he was a staunch supporter of Ceaușescu's policy of using the army within the domestic economy, a form of forced labour detested by many soldiers. See Anneli Maier
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162. More damaging for military morale was probably the myriad of stories circulating including rumours that some militia vehicles had been burnt during the previous night with troops being killed and wounded. Petre Mihai Băcanu, 'Terenurile morții: plutonul de “intervenție” al căpitanului Pop', *România Liberă*, 7 January 1994, p. 7.

163. Stories abound concerning the behaviour of Stănăulescu during this period. Following the repression in Timișoara on 21 December, on his own admission he deliberately attempted to render himself inactive by first persuading a doctor to place him in a drug induced stupor and, then afterwards, by feigning a broken leg and having his limb encased in plaster. He claims he took this action so as not to have to read a proclamation to the revolutionaries. For these stories see Galloway & Wylie, *Downfall*, pp. 131–144, Almond, *The rise and fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu*, p. 11, 'Mărturile generalului Stănăulescu', *Adevărul*, 3 November 1993, p. 1.


166. The Tass correspondent in Bucharest reported that a wave of demonstrators chanting 'The Army is with us!' had mingled with bewildered soldiers and that 'hundreds of people' had climbed onto tanks and armoured personnel carriers. Report from *Izvestia* translated in *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 41:51 (1989), p. 14. Between 10.30 and 11.00 around 300 to 400 demonstrators gathered outside the militia station on Ștefan Cel Mare. Eventually a delegation was
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allowed to enter and a declaration drawn up pledging support for the protesters, *Revoluția Română în direct*, pp. 199–200.


168. Again it is instructive to compare the position in Romania with Iran where, before the final overthrow of the government on 11 February 1979, a number of senior Iranian generals including the Chief of Staff had already come over to the side of the opposition. Moshiri, *Iran*, p. 129.

169. Daniel Uncu, *Reportul SRI asupra evenimentelor din decembrie 1989: ultima cacealma a domnului Măgureanu*, *România Liberă*, 1 July 1994, p. 6. Uncu’s information is drawn from the Romanian Intelligence Service report on the events of December 1989. The Nicolae Eftimescu he refers to is ranked as a Colonel, and so, it is by no means certain, whether he is referring to Lieutenant-General Nicolae Eftimescu who had been promoted to the rank of Colonel-General after the revolution.

170. *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 177. At his trial Dinca stated that on the morning of 22 December Elena Ceaușescu ordered him to proceed to the ‘23 August’ factory to organise the workers to march to the centre. However, at the same time Barbu Petrescu, the Mayor of Bucharest, appeared and at Dinca’s suggestion he was dispatched instead. *Procesul a început: din rechizitoriul Procuraturii generale*, *Adevărul*, 28 January 1990, p. 3. For the view of the protesters see Richard Donkin, *I’ve waited all my life for this*, *Financial Times*, 23 December 1989, p. 2.


172. Bobu and Mănescu were captured at Gâiești in the evening of 22 December.

173. For Maluțan’s story see Clyde Haberman, ‘Pilot tells of dictator’s vain bid to fly to freedom’, *The Times*, 2 January 1990, p. 6.

174. There are many accounts of the flight of the Ceaușescus and, although most are rather full of hyperbole and implausibly contrast the pitiful and dejected state of the fleeing couple with the heroism of those who were forced to drive them, the basic facts seem to be fairly uniformly acknowledged, even if the motives of many of the participants still remain unclear. Indeed, even the intended destination of the helicopter when it took off from Snagov remains unknown. According to the pilot he initially tried to return to base at Otopeni but was forced by his passengers to, first, make for the military airbase at Boteni and, later, when Ceaușescu changed his mind, for Pitești. However, Brucan alleges that from the beginning Ceaușescu planned to head for Tîrgoviște to form a centre of resistance. Such a scenario may serve a political purpose in that it helps gives a rationale to the later decision to execute Ceaușescu and, at first sight, the flight path of the helicopter seems to bear little relation to an attempt to reach that city. However, some support for Brucan’s position comes from documents recently published which purport to show that Ceaușescu had detailed plans for evacuation from Bucharest, including the use of sewers, and then for the establishing of an armed resistance centre elsewhere in the country. Drawn up following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia these were later modified in 1976 to take into account the
possibility of an internal coup, possibly with the backing of the Soviet Union. However, it should be noted that the veracity of these documents has not been fully established and that the originals seem to have been hand-written implying, if nothing else, an extremely limited circulation. The existence of a plan does not mean that it was ever put into action and, certainly, nowhere in the text is it envisaged that the presidential couple would land in a field near the village of Serdanu just outside the town of Tîtu and flag down the first Dacia for a lift. The car was driven by a local Doctor Nicolae Decă who drove the Ceaușescus to the village of Văcărești, just outside Tîrgoviște. Initially, there seems to have been some confusion over which car was stopped, as the registration number noted by Maluțan and later broadcast on the television was incorrect. At Văcărești either in fact or invention the doctor seems to have run out of petrol and the couple transferred to another car driven by Nicolae Petrișor. He took them to Tîrgoviște where Raț left the couple possibly because he was dispatched to find the local Party First-Secretary — Rusu had already been lost somewhere en route. Petrișor was left alone with the presidential couple and for reasons which remain unclear, they shortly afterwards arrived at the local Centre for Plant Protection. The couple stayed at the centre for a short time until two local militiamen came to collect them and for the rest of the afternoon they seem to have been driven in the car of the militiamen around the vicinity of Tîrgoviște. Apparently at various times they were recognised and chased and spent some time hiding in a nearby wood trying to decide what to do before eventually arriving at the local militia station at 18.30 where they were detained. On the flight of the Ceaușescu’s see: Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 70-73, Behr, Kiss the hand you cannot bite, pp. 4-17, John Simpson, The darkness crumbles: despatches from the barricades revised and updated (London: Hutchinson, 1992), pp. 279-86, Galloway & Wylie, Downfall, pp. 168-172, Almond, The rise and fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, pp. 13-18, Sweeny, The life and evil times of Nicolae Ceaușescu, pp. 213-14, 218-21; Silviu Brucan & Ștefan Gladin, ‘Fuga lui Ceaușescu din C.C. nu a însemnat sfârșitul dictaturii’, Adevărul, 4 April 1991, p. 3; Voinea Ene Fănică, ‘Noi secvențe privind arestarea și comportarea celor doi tirani’, Adevărul, 19 January 1990, p. 3. For revelations that plans existed: Mirel Curea, ‘Nicolae Ceaușescu a ajuns la Tîrgoviște conform planului „Z”’, Evenimentul Zilei, 8 July 1993, p. 3; Mirel Curea, ‘Ceaușescu știa de planul „Dnestru” încă din 1976’, Evenimentul Zilei, 10 July 1993, p. 3.
If the events leading to the flight of Ceaușescu can now be seen with relative clarity those that directly followed still seem to languish under ever deeper layers of obfuscation. Yet the salient fact remains that it was the period following the flight of Ceaușescu that witnessed by far the greatest bloodshed of the revolution. Between 17 December and noon on 22 December over 150 people died in Romania and more than 1,100 were wounded, but following the overthrow of Ceaușescu the numbers escalated sharply so that by 10 January a further 900 people had lost their lives and over 2,200 had been wounded. At the core of the revolution there still persists the mystery of who was fighting whom during this period, for despite the intense speculation and reams of newsprint devoted to this matter both within the country and abroad little concrete evidence has yet appeared to elucidate the true character of the murderous conflict that scarred the streets of Romania at this time.

The study of these events is severely hampered by the lack of available sources. It is noticeable that the four books about the revolution in Timișoara all stop short of considering the events after 22 December and that still no comprehensive study

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has appeared of the fighting in Bucharest. The lack of any work of scholarly synthesis means that the narrative of events has to be reconstructed from the scores of frequently contradictory eyewitness accounts that have appeared in a totally random pattern throughout the colossal number of publications which have blossomed forth in Romania since the revolution. Many of these magazines, produced on a shoestring by enthusiastic amateurs, collapsed and died within a few weeks of their first issue, often passing away unkept and unrecorded by a state library system which was itself unwilling or unable to keep track of this frenzy of journalism. Moreover, the highly political slant of many of these publications means that most of these articles offer only a limited perspective on events with the writers usually being content to marshal a series of often highly contentious 'facts' in support of one particular line of argument.

This continuing lack of knowledge seems particularly surprising when it is remembered that much of the revolution was publicly aired on TV and that many of the events in the capital took place under the full glare of the spotlight of international media attention. Instead, the tendency has been for the events to become less not more clear with the passage of time, as fact and fiction have become woven together to form a number of intricate tales. Andrei Codrescu, a Romanian born poet long exiled in the United States, visiting the country shortly after the revolution noted:

It was hard to meet a citizen who had not somehow been at the centre of events, particularly those events that were most likely to strike a familiar chord with a stranger who had seen them on TV, heard them on the radio or seen them in the papers. The revolution, I soon found, was a collective story belonging to every single Romanian. Whatever was added to it, from whatever source, was immediately incorporated in the larger tale. Romanians are a great, imaginative people. The tale of the Timigoara family [with whom he was travelling] was spoken at once by several voices — even the children had many details to add — and there was barely any chronology. In fact they argued about what happened when as if they were relating a dream.\(^2\)

Matters are not aided by the fact that many of the chief actors of the period now seem to be suffering from a collective amnesia, sometimes expressed through elaborate riddles, as in Iliescu’s reply when asked why the full facts have not yet come to light: 'It's not a question of guarding them.... The secrets must be known to be guarded.'\(^3\) Others, most noticeably Silviu Brucan and Nicolae Militaru, have been selectively disclosing fresh facts but their new testimony is frequently at complete variance with earlier utterances leaving unresolved the question of which version, if either, is correct. Indeed, the tendency has been to define and redefine the events
Table 2.1: Deaths during the Romanian Revolution.\textsuperscript{a}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Civilian</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Min. Interior</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bucharest\textsuperscript{b}</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timișoara area</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibiu area\textsuperscript{c}</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brașov area</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ploiești area</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constanța area</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craiova area</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluj area</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oradea area</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mureș area</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Băcău area</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iași area</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>1,053</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>167\textsuperscript{d}</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\textsuperscript{a} These figures appear to be fully comprehensive and include all deaths associated with the revolution between 15 December 1989 and 10 January 1990 including foreign news reporters and the victims of the An–24 air crash on 28 December. However, note that the figure is still slightly less than that given by the army of 1,104.\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{b} The municipality of Bucharest plus coterminous counties. Note that the army gives a far lower death toll for Bucharest of 543 (forty–eight before 22 December, 495 afterwards).

\textsuperscript{c} In Sibiu 300 were wounded, 230 of whom required hospital treatment — 180 civilians, twenty–seven army and twenty–three Ministry of the Interior.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{d} In its own figures the army registered a higher death toll of 260 (545 wounded) whilst that of the Ministry of Interior was lower at sixty–five (seventy–three wounded). It seems possible that this apparent discrepancy might partly have arisen due to the transfer of Ministry of Interior units into the army during the revolution.

To meet post–Ceaușescu political needs, with the revolution being shamelessly exploited to provide a tendentious political legitimacy or elaborated through a series of complex conspiracy theories into a myth of a revolution manipulated by foreign powers or stolen by a small group of former communists who favoured the maintenance of the status quo — a Romanian version of the Mazzinian \textit{Revoluzione Mancata}. 
Table 2.2: Opinion poll on revolutionary events occurring in local area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revolutionary events occurring in local area</th>
<th>Yes(^a) (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Don't know (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violence</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrests</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrations</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attacks upon institutions</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public meetings</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal participation in events</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family participation in events</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^a\)No explanation is given as to why the figures do not tally to 100%.

The extent of the violence

Although after the revolution the seriousness of the conflict was occasionally to be the victim of hyperbole, as in exaggerated descriptions of 'Massive attacks with an extremely large force' being launched on the Ministry of Defence by 'successive waves of terrorists', the high casualty figures recorded at this time leave little doubt as to the ferocity of the fighting (table 2.1).\(^6\) In Timișoara the night of 22/23 December has been described in almost apocalyptic terms: 'After the massacre we felt that on Saturday morning we would all be picked up from our homes and lined up against the wall. We felt that it was not just the end of the revolution, but of the entire world.'\(^7\) However, the amount of physical damage recorded, even in the centre of Bucharest, excepting the destruction of the University Library, was surprisingly small given the huge amounts of ammunition expended, one army unit alone in Bucharest having fired over 175,000 rounds.\(^8\) Indeed, the lack of visible damage to certain key installations such as the TV station and the Central Committee building compared with surrounding structures fed suspicions as to the artificial nature of the violence and suggestions that the pattern of destruction had not been accidental but contrived.\(^9\)

The exact bounds of the violence after the flight of Ceaușescu on 22 December is still far from clear. However, the overwhelming impression is that the vast bulk of the country remained largely peaceful and, in the absence of detailed information, the best indication available as to the scale of the revolution are the results of
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an opinion poll from December 1992 covering urban and rural areas from every county as well as Bucharest (table 2.2). Although outbreaks of violence seem to have predominately occurred in urban areas, the relatively high figure of 31% knowing of violent incidents in their locality would perhaps indicate that they were more widespread than previously suspected. True revolutionary acts such as the storming of official institutions, usually RCP offices, however, do seem to have been relatively rare. More common were peaceful demonstrations and public meetings, but what is most striking, in general, is the low degree of participation. It seems that less than a quarter of the population aged seventeen or over took part in some action in support of the revolution, leading to the inescapable conclusion that for most Romanians it was essentially a passive event. The particularly large number of 'don't knows', even three years after the revolution, would seem to offer ample confirmation not only of this but also of the confused nature of events.

Whilst bearing in mind the continued absence of any definitive picture for the country as a whole and particularly rural areas, the results of this poll taken together with available eyewitness accounts suggest that three distinct patterns of revolutionary action (or inaction) can be discerned:

a) Fighting involving the security forces accompanied by mass demonstrations and the destruction of property.

b) Peaceful mass demonstrations frequently accompanied by the sacking of RCP offices.

c) Limited or no action.

Since they can be considered to be the true 'seat' of the revolution, it is those that fall into the first category that are chiefly considered in this chapter. Fighting seems to have broken out in nearly all of the fifteen largest cities in the country — most seriously in Bucharest, Timișoara, Brașov and Sibiu — as well as a number of smaller towns. Indeed, within the typology an important pattern emerges relating to the size of the population centre with the probability of unrest sharply diminishing in direct relation to the size of the settlement. Thus, nearly all the violence during the revolution occurred in major population centres whilst most smaller towns together with the countryside remained largely peaceful. Whereas it is probably true that in each city the causes of the conflict were distinctive — in particular in Sibiu it seems to have been related to fears and expectations arising from the residence of Nicu Ceaușescu in the town — it is also noticeable that violence tended to be centred on large administrative centres which usually had military garrisons located within their bounds or nearby. Beyond these larger
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centres most of the smaller towns in Romania seem to have experienced a generally peaceful revolution with revolutionary action usually being restricted to the storming of RCP offices and sometimes Securitate headquarters. Countless towns and even some of the smaller cities appear to fall into this category, with the experience of Pitești seeming to be reasonably typical. Here, following Ceaușescu's departure from Bucharest, the local Party leadership and head of the Securitate also seem to have fled allowing the protesters to seize first the County Council building and, then, following negotiations with those left inside, the Securitate headquarters in the town with the crowd entering and searching through the files. Later, there were some unsubstantiated reports of Securitate officers shooting from the windows of a local hospital, but the miscreants were never apprehended and apparently disappeared without trace. In a generally tense situation security was tightened with checkpoints being established throughout the town but searches of the industrial plants revealed no booby traps, and the only recorded casualty seems to have been an engineer shot in the leg by a colleague.

In the many small villages of Romania the revolution seems to have largely remained nothing more than a slightly unreal drama played out on the television. Apart from the occasional roadblock established by eager youths little more seems to have followed in most villages as the hand-over of power (when it did occur) was usually effected peacefully. In commune centres, where the institutions of state power - people's councils, collective farms and militia stations - were located, many local officials seem to have simply left their posts often to be replaced by elected committees of respected individuals, although frequently this only seems to have resulted in the previous occupants retaining power, as Robert Fox apparently found in Sinmihaiu Român just outside Timişoara. In Hirseni commune, near Făgăraș, David Kideckel found that a factory engineer assuming the mantle of leader of the local Front on apparently no authority other than his own, had dismissed the incumbent Mayor from his post with his place eventually being filled after a few days of confusion by the former Deputy Mayor. The new Front leader initially won some support in the village but, when he failed to keep his early extravagant promises, he was largely ignored and lapsed back into obscurity once the local PCNU was established.

However, in some rural areas of the country there were deeper rooted tensions and these seem to have sometimes boiled over into petty violence or even worse. In a few places in Transylvania an ethnic dimension appears to have come into the picture as members of Romania's Hungarian minority took the opportunity to settle old scores, as in Dealu in Harghita, where on 29 December 1989 after
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a drinking bout, up to 300 villagers aggrieved over what they saw as years of mistreatment attacked one militiaman and, then, laid siege to the house of the local militia commander beating him to death when he tried to escape. This incident was exceptional, and more typical seems to have been the experience of the mixed Romanian and German village of 'P', the parental home of the German Romanian author Richard Wagner, close by the River Maroș midway between Arad and Timișoara. When Wagner returned shortly after the revolution he discovered that:

They chucked out the mayoress and her deputy; the second deputy took over the official duties, till a week later they chucked him out too. They sacked the mayoress' husband who ran the cooperative society, the manager of the corn-mill, the director of the hat factory. The people dragged out the chief of the local police — or militia, as the Communists called it, consisting of three men whose main occupation was harassing or beating people and getting bribed by would-be emigrants — and gave him a thrashing. Since then he has slipped away to his home town, four villages away. The second militiaman is in prison for brutal assaults. The third is still in office under the new public order authority, now called 'police' again like before the War.

The geographic dispersal of the fighting across the country and particularly its intermittent and sporadic nature makes it very difficult to offer a comprehensive picture of the violence. To obviate this problem this study will concentrate chiefly on political developments and merely aim to offer a sketch of some of the unrest within Bucharest, focusing particularly on the TV station, with the hope of being able to draw from this example some wider conclusions as to the nature of the fighting as a whole. This is partly because even in the capital considerable problems exist as to identifying the extent of the unrest. Broadly, the heaviest firing seems to have been concentrated in four zones: around the TV station, the Ministry of Defence, Piața Palatului and outside the city centre at Otopeni Airport, although other locations also seem to have experienced outbreaks of shooting including Gheņeca Cemetery, the Drumul Taberei Telephone Exchange and Băneasa Airport. The sound of gunfire was also reported in many of the more outlying districts of the capital but few if any eyewitness accounts have yet been discovered to elucidate these incidents. However, whilst the geographic dispersal of the conflict remains in doubt, in terms of its duration a clearer picture emerges. Although sporadic outbreaks of shooting and other forms of unrest were to continue until the new year, it seems that the vast bulk of the victims of the second phase of the revolution fell within a space of little more than forty-eight hours, stretching
from the evening of 22 until 24 December. The greatest bloodshed occurred on 23 December with the violence effectively petering out on Christmas Day.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{The revolution in Bucharest}

As noon passed on 22 December 1989 and the Ceau\textsc{s}escus fled from Bucharest thousands milled in the broad expanse of Pia\c{t}a Palatului outside the Central Committee building. Stretching far and wide the huge mass filled the wide boulevards of Bucharest with people only leaving the jubilant throng to drag friends and relatives out onto the streets to witness the historic events unfolding before their eyes. Swelling ever larger the exuberant, chanting crowd was euphoric as the naturally expressive Romanians drank in the feeling of freedom and release after long years of suppression. The future seemed to hold unlimited vistas for a people revelling in new found possibilities, as the barriers of society were cast aside and generals and future presidents rubbed shoulders in apparent equality with workers and students. However, as they were carried along in this mass celebration members of the crowd also recall remaining acutely conscious of their own individuality, remembering the revolution as being, above all, an intensely felt moment of personal self-deliverance in which they paid at times only a superficial regard to the wider unfolding political scene.

As Ceau\textsc{s}escu's helicopter took to the skies from the roof of the Central Committee building members of the crowd were already surging through the doors below. Meeting no opposition — the guards on duty seem to have melted away — the tide of demonstrators, many described as very young, swept through the huge building commandeering offices and scattering papers everywhere as they mingled freely with bewildered Party apparatchiks and soldiers of the army and Ministry of the Interior.\textsuperscript{21} People clambered unto the balcony recently vacated by Ceau\textsc{s}escu and began to address the crowd below through the same loudspeaker system he had used in his abortive attempt to speak to the angry throng less than an hour before. The identities of many of those who spoke that day have long since been forgotten, as also have their often inarticulate utterings, but now their words fired the crowd who responded in unison like a Greek chorus, elongating the syllables of their chanted replies: 'Li-ber-ta-te!', 'Ro-mâ-ni-a!', 'Nu ple-câm!'\textsuperscript{22} Some of the speakers seem to have been merely content to revel in their newly found freedom of public expression — one man was reported as intoning over and over again the words 'Ceau\textsc{s}escu has gone' — but others had more serious messages to relay.\textsuperscript{23} Amongst the first to mount the balcony and speak was General Gheorghe Voinea who openly pledged to the crowd that the army was truly on the side of the people and Colonel Corneliu Pirc\c{a}l\dublum{b}escu is popularly credited with declaring
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the same on behalf of the Patriotic Guard later in the day. Others gave voice to more political messages and throughout the afternoon a succession of aspiring leaders some of them senior members of the Party addressed the crowd seeking to legitimise their position through the direct approbation of the people — amongst those who spoke were Ilie Verdeț, Constantin Dăscălescu, Ion Iliescu and Dumitru Mazilu, the name of Corneliu Mănescu was also heard although he does not seem to have appeared in person. Some were booed, some were cheered, whilst down in the square below several vans from Romanian television carrying another, more powerful, loudspeaker system frequently offered an alternative commentary in a cacophony of sound which raised still further the feeling of disorder and chaos. Many unknown hopefuls also came to the microphone, some clutching vague manifestos hurriedly drawn up after the violence of the previous night. The most prominent of these early groupings was led by a young University Professor, Petre Roman, who gathering a few friends together under the name of the People's Unity Front made a brief general statement from the balcony repeating it shortly afterwards on the television.

Inside the Central Committee building the situation was no different from outside with chaos reigning as excited clusters of demonstrators drew up hasty governments and drafted optimistic plans for the future. The atmosphere has been likened to a madhouse as 'Governments were formed one after another, everybody was yelling, everybody was trying to run the palace and the country'. Within this mayhem some members of the RCP made a rearguard stab at preserving the position of the Party and achieving an orderly transfer of power within its bounds, although, like all others that day, recognising the collapse of the traditional order they felt constrained to legitimise their position by making an effort to harness the enthusiasm of the young revolutionaries. Thus, sometime between 14.00 and 15.00 Ilie Verdeț, Vasile Vilcu and Iulian Vlad, the head of the Securitate, joined a group of young revolutionaries attempting to bring some order to the proceedings. Verdeț announced he was going to set up a Committee to Coordinate Action with the intention of providing a forum from which to chose a provisional government with the immediate aim of bringing some order both to the passage of people through the Central Committee building and to the streets outside. Verdeț's attempt to establish a new regime is popularly supposed to have lasted exactly twenty-two minutes and certainly was prolonged no more than half an hour before it collapsed, and either at this time or slightly later the Prime Minister, Constantin Dăscălescu, tendered his resignation in a gesture which, although it was largely robbed of significance by the prevailing circumstances, nevertheless, still officially marked the passing away of the last vestiges of the old regime.
The television and the revolution

From mid-morning on 22 December large numbers of people had also been gathering around the TV station although, initially, they remained outside the building with protesters mounting cars to address the crowds. The TV remained on standby for transmission because all morning it had been carrying Ceauşescu's pronouncement of a state of emergency and, eventually, a delegation of protesters were allowed into the building to ask the management to restart transmission so as to spread news of the events in Bucharest to the rest of the country. The accounts of these meetings are extremely uneven, but a general feeling emerges that the management of the TV were evasive and prevaricated for as long as they could perhaps, partly because the Director, Petre Constantin, was away at the Central Committee building apparently preparing for Ceauşescu to make another broadcast to the nation. The first armoured vehicles laden with demonstrators arrived around mid-day bringing with them the actor Ion Caramitru, dissident poet Mircea Dinescu and shortly afterwards the film director Sergiu Nicolaescu. The presence of these three well-known Romanian cultural intellectuals, perhaps together with the return of Constantin with first hand knowledge of what was happening in Piaţa Palatului, seems to have been enough to secure the beginning of transmission at about 13.00.

The first person to appear on Romanian television following the flight of Ceauşescu was Ion Caramitru who opened with the words: 'Brothers, thanks to God, we are in the television studios, we managed to reach here on the back of tanks, with the army and with students and with the men whom you see and with thousands of Romanians, ...'. These opening words heralded news of the revolution for most Romanians. After the stultifying tedium of broadcasts during the Ceauşescu years, the appearance of the rather dishevelled Caramitru and Dinescu together with the open appeal to God were the clearest possible indications of a transcendent break with the past. The sight of this poet and actor instantly gave a sense of real revolution and a colour and romance to the proceedings that equalled the projection centre stage of Václav Havel in Czechoslovakia. They gave the revolution a human face, providing an acceptability both at home and abroad which perhaps would not have been so forthcoming if the first images presented to the world had been of the old soldiers and former Party officials Militaru, Tudor, Iliescu and Brucan. In one sense, it might be alleged that they, probably unwittingly, served as a mask to legitimise the incoming Iliescu group, but their melodramatic appearance also undoubtedly raised expectations of real change.
The dramatic imagery conjured by Caramitru of a journey to the building on the back of tanks instantly set a mood of excitement and tension, and during the first hour several short breaks of transmission, which were covered by music or an eerie silence, only served to heighten this sense of drama. Several times the images were intercut with pictures from the seething courtyard below, where figures scrambled to utter a few incoherent words into the microphone, whilst above in the crowded broadcasting studio jostling figures and competing voices all tried to announce tidings of the great victory as Caramitru and Dinescu strove manfully, but not entirely successfully, to bring some order to the proceedings. The prevailing image conveyed to the viewers was, thus, one of confusion interlaced with uncertainty and unease because, although the army appeared to be on the side of the revolution, victory was by no means assured with strong suspicions remaining over the intentions of the Securitate and the unknown whereabouts of the Ceauşescus. Indeed, although the early appearance of Captain Mihai Lupoi and his fulsome assertions that the army, really, was on the side of the people calmed any lingering doubts that may have remained over the position of this institution, his constantly interrupted and frequently contradictory speech also strengthened several strands within the rapidly coalescing revolutionary mythology, as he declared that the army had not been guilty of firing on the civilian population and, instead, implicitly pointed the finger of suspicion at the Securitate whom he melodramatically begged to come to the side of the army so as to restore order in the country. This pronouncement coupled with an appeal by Caramitru for the Securitate to return to barracks gave weight to the already visible trend of expunging the army of any blame for the earlier killings and transferring it wholly to the Securitate, in the process casting the latter as the sole enemies of the revolution. A further reflection of the prevailing mood of uncertainty were also the calls for mass mobilisation to ‘defend the television station’ as, apparently following the old adage of safety in numbers, Nicolaescu urged half of the population of Bucharest — one million people — to come and gather at the TV station to assure the prospect of victory.

Faced with the need to end the sense of uncertainty and to fill the political vacuum some tentative efforts were made to establish order with Dinescu at one time, rather impractically, asking for the Air Force to be ready to ferry representatives of every county to the TV to form a provisional government later that day. Whilst Nicolaescu, apparently not accepting the total collapse of the previous regime, stated that he personally was ready to negotiate with representatives of both the Party and the government. Some of the pressures that lay behind these initial moves to bring order to the situation were later revealed by Dinescu, who
commented that the army — without being specific as to whom he actually meant by this term — at an early stage in the proceedings had demanded the appearance of 'serious politicians' instead of 'a few crazy poets and intellectuals', adding that in his opinion if Iliescu had delayed his arrival at the TV station for another hour, then, the revolution would have failed.  

The next phase of the revolution, as portrayed by the television, began after one of the breaks in transmission. In place of Dinescu and Caramitru there appeared the regular TV presenters, Teodor Brateş and Petre Popescu, and it was these two who were to hold the floor during the rest of the day's broadcast bringing a greater sense of order and some calm to the proceedings. A stream of speakers then began to appear who, in a confusing mix of the old and new, can broadly be divided into five major categories. Firstly, there were representatives of the current military leadership: Generals Voinea, Chiţac, Guşe and Colonel Marius Oprean as a proxy for Stânculescu also General Cîmpianu and Colonel Rusi of the militia. Secondly, former members of the security forces who had fallen foul of Ceauşescu: Generals Nicolae Militaru, Nicolae Tudor, Nicolae Doicaru, Stelian Ţirca and First-Rank Captain Emil Dumitrescu. Thirdly, former senior Party members who had also come into conflict with Ceauşescu: Ion Iliescu, Silviu Brucan and Alexandru Birlădeanu. Fourthly, prominent intellectuals some of whom had been dissidents: Mircea Dinescu, Ion Caramitru and Sergiu Nicolaescu. Finally, there was a large number of then unknown civilians some of whom had been members of the Party and a few of whom came to prominence later including: Petre Roman, Cazimir Ionescu, Ion Mânzatu, and Gelu-Voican Voiculescu. In a popular culture infused with traditions of Orthodox iconography and long exposed to the politics of personality, appearance on the television familiarised many of these previously unfamiliar faces cementing their authority and turning them into icons of the revolution transmitted into every Romanian home.

The Romanian Revolution has often been termed the first television revolution but more than relaying the spectacle to a watching world, the television played an active role in shaping events. First and foremost, the television was the means by which the incoming NSF legitimised itself in the eyes of the people as the new authority in the land, and during the first hours of the revolution it was the primary conduit by which the nascent Front reached its constituency once the RCP had imploded. Although it was not the only source of communication for the security forces, the television also served as a means for relaying instructions from reserve generals outside the formal command structure. Thus, immediately after the flight of Ceauşescu, Reserve General Nicolae Militaru appeared and addressing many of the army high command personally by name (with the noticeable
exception of Stănculescu) issued a dramatic appeal for both the army and Ministry of Interior troops to 'stop the slaughter!' and return to barracks.\footnote{40} Other commands followed, but by and large the stream of senior serving officers who hurried to appear on the nation's screen on 22 December seem to have been following a political rather than a military agenda since, for them, the TV had a useful quality of record. Appearance on the screen was a means of not only distancing themselves from the past regime and openly pledging their loyalty to the new order but also of legitimising themselves and their units in the eyes of the people and thereby staving off the threat of revenge attacks for past misdemeanours. However, these messages also legitimised the medium because by appearing on the TV the leaders of the new regime not only consolidated their own authority but also that of the television itself which became cast as the source of the revolutionary truth.\footnote{41}

Through international relay images of the Romanian Revolution were spread to the four corners of the globe with the fact that it coincided with Christmas apparently heightening its appeal. The starkly black and white picture of a victorious people overthrowing the most iniquitous of dictators and, then, securing a hard fought victory against his evil henchmen played to the emotions and hearts of a watching world. The visual images produced worldwide interest in Romania and a tremendous sympathy which was afterwards cemented by poignant tales of appalling hardship in orphanages and hospitals where children were found to be suffering from AIDS. The heroic image of the revolution, as it was portrayed on the TV, and these feelings of condolence for a country that had experienced so much pain in the past fused to produce perhaps rather excessive expectations of the new regime on the part of the outside world, and, when some of its members did not turn out to be quite so pure in background as first thought and the revolution more murky and inconclusive than portrayed, the downside was similarly rather unbalanced, especially, amongst some of the international media. Indeed, when it later became clear that many of the foreign journalists had failed to retain an objective eye and distinguish the wood from the trees of Romanian rumours, it led to such a feeling of chagrin on the part of some that they were to pen a series of controversial books and articles which were to fuel both external and internal distrust of the National Salvation Front and muddy further the already clouded waters of the revolution. As Codrescu noted: 'Much of their busy and incisive reporting...turned out to be manipulation by master manipulators. And since, we were, in our turn, manipulators, the game of mirrors was practically infinite.'\footnote{42} And this seems to have particularly applied to the French:

The French had a special interest. France had fallen in love with Romania. In 1989, in the year of the bicentennial of their own revolution, after they
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had been saturated by ceremonial imagery of *la glorie* and *la patrie*, the Romanian revolution exploded like a magnificent illustration of all their history. It was the grande finale of all the fireworks show put on by every *maire* from Paris to Strasbourg. Romania gave the French the third dimension of their grand commemoration: reality.\(^\text{43}\)

The disappointment of the French when the revolution failed to live up to such heroic proportions was equally large, and, with their agenda driven to a greater or lesser extent by the sizable Romanian émigré population in Paris, relations between the French media and the new regime soon disintegrated into a morass of mutual recriminations.\(^\text{44}\) Finally, and eventually decisively, the TV also played a more nefarious role in the revolution. It served to confuse lines of communications offering an unreliable and excitable interpretation of events at a time when a calm and more reasoned approach was required, spreading images of the chaos in Bucharest and fear of the threat posed by the *Securitate* to the four corners of Romania. Many of the local vigilante groups took their cue from the TV, and the renewal of fighting in Timișoara, Brașov, Craiova and other cities seems to have been directly related to the appearance of images of conflict from the capital.\(^\text{45}\)

**Ion Iliescu and the foundation of the National Salvation Front**

Several of the earliest arrivals at the TV station moved quickly to bring Ion Iliescu to the building. Militaru states that he called Iliescu by telephone and Sergiu Nicolaescu seems to have sent Mihai Bujor Sion to fetch the future president.\(^\text{46}\) However, it was First-Rank Captain Emil Dumitrescu who made the call publicly on air.\(^\text{47}\) Iliescu says that he was in his office at work when he saw the momentous events unfolding on the television. Immediately with a group of colleagues he set off for his home where he met Bujor Sion who took him in his own car to the TV station. Whilst stressing that nobody called him to go to the TV, Iliescu does seem to have prepared the ground well before his arrival. He admits to telephoning ahead to Petre Constantin, whom he seems to have known personally, to ascertain the situation and according to the statement he gave on television at this time he also called General Stânculescu at the Ministry of Defence to ask about the military situation. Stânculescu told him that he had given the order for all troops to return to barracks and had also turned around a column which was heading from Pitești to Bucharest. He also reported fierce fighting between the army and Ministry of Interior forces in Sibiu and said that he had attempted to make contact with the leadership of the Ministry of Interior but had not been able to find anybody of authority with whom to talk. As he recounted this on the television, it prompted the observation from Iliescu that the commanders of the Ministry of Interior had probably fled with the political leadership and, when
contrasted with his effusive affirmations that the army stood shoulder to shoulder with the people, his calls on the Ministry of Interior forces to abandon the ‘clique of traitors’, as he described the Ceauşescu regime, were to drive yet another nail into the Securitate’s coffin. Iliescu also telephoned Cabinet Room Number One in the Central Committee building, presumably in an attempt, if not to contact Ceauşescu, whoever was replacing him as leader. This was passed off as something of a joke when Iliescu said that instead of the ‘Number One’ person in the room he only found a Comrade Luca, whom had never heard of him, to which Bujor Sion presciently added ‘he will know you’.

Most observers of Iliescu’s arrival at the TV speak of him entering with an immediate sense of authority. His reformist credentials had been established by an article in România Literară in 1987 but, even before this, rumours seem to have been circulating both in Romania and the West that he was Gorbachev’s preferred choice to succeed Ceauşescu. Indeed, amongst other sources, these stories had been disseminated by Radio Free Europe and, ironically, given later polemics, the authority of this institution seems to have helped established the new leader’s credentials. The result was an expectation amongst many Romanians, and certainly amongst intellectual circles in Bucharest, that Iliescu would be the next leader on the Gorbachev model, and so, when Iliescu strode into the TV studios that day, there already existed a widespread awareness and even acceptance that he was amongst the men most likely to take power.

Undoubtedly, any expectation that Iliescu would assume power was more than matched by his own hopes, and the lengthy speech he now delivered in stark contrast to the babble which had proceeded him shows obvious signs of some degree of preparation. In a powerful, if at times muddled, piece of oratory peppered with a fair smattering of socialist terminology the incoming leader launched into a searing indictment of Ceauşescu, unequivocally pinning the blame for the disasters heaped upon the country on his despotic rule, as through constant references to ‘the people’ and ‘the country’ he presented a message of collective suffering that sharply contrasted the callous disregard of Ceauşescu with his own heartfelt understanding:

Dear comrades, friends, citizens, I too am full of emotion as also were all those who spoke before me and all the citizens of this country, who experience exceptional moments. The dynamic of the events unfolding during the last days was without equal. Nobody expected that this regime that wished to master all, know all, control all, which did not show the minimum comprehension necessary to understand the dramatic nature of the times in which the Romanian nation lives, to make a sign of resolving them in a normal way, a peaceful way, through understanding, with the
citizens of the country of the grave problems which also face the economy of the country, the social situation, the material condition of all categories of the country's labour force. He pushed until the verge of catastrophe the socio-economic situation of this country, the political tension and he made himself in the last instant guilty of an odious crime...against the people. The principal culprit is Ceauşescu... This man without heart, without conscience, without brain... without soul... who did not want to give way, a fanatic who ruled this country with medieval methods and went as far as this dramatic point of opening fire, ... of ordering fire against the people of this country. And he had the affrontary to speak in the name of the people! To speak in the name of the defence of sovereignty and national independence! Who? He? He who placed the fate of this country in danger and pushed its people into misery. And as you see, he fled, he shamelessly ran away, when possible he must be brought to reckoning before the people....

Iliescu continued in the same vein a few minutes later when he attacked Ceauşescu for the legitimacy of his self-appointment and defended the RCP and communism. In bitter tones he denounced those:

Who appointed themselves leaders, who made themselves chosen by the people, they appointed themselves communist, they had nothing to do neither with socialism nor with ideology...scientific communism... they just defiled the name of the RCP, they just defiled the memory of those who gave their lives for the cause of socialism in this country.

The immediate task facing Iliescu and his supporters was the organisation of a forum to take control of the situation with a first key objective being the securing of a return of public order. To this end all 'responsible' people — and here he, particularly, referred to those who had signed the 'Letter of the Six' — were called to the Central Committee building at 17.00 that day to form a Committee of National Salvation, the meeting presumably being convened at the Central Committee building and not in the television station because it was felt the new regime should be inaugurated at the centre of power. Iliescu spoke not of 'revolution' but of 'change' and 'transformation', and his vision seems to have held surprisingly few concrete plans beyond the restoring of order and a commitment to the improvement of material conditions. It was Brucan, speaking immediately afterwards, who put some more flesh on the bones of reform when, addressing the nub of the question, he stated that the principal problem facing Romania was the transition from dictatorship to democracy, coupling this with a call for committees of 'honest men' with authority untainted by the Ceauşescu years to be organised in every town and for the formation of a provisional government until free elections could be held.
'The most obscure problem'

Iliescu's call for the Committee of National Salvation to gather at the Central Committee building returned the focus of events in the late afternoon of 22 December once more to Piața Palatului where the scenes remained chaotic. The square was still thronged by a noisy crowd and the lorry carrying loudspeakers had been joined by several large searchlights whose beams cut the night sky illuminating the balcony of the Central Committee and adjacent buildings. It is possible that by the time Iliescu appeared on the balcony around 17.30, flanked by Guse, Militaru, Lupoi, Voiculescu and Roman, the sound of shooting had already been heard in the vicinity, but whilst he spoke, it appears no further gunfire was to be heard. Iliescu first addressed the security situation by telling the people that the process of change was irreversible and that effectively the Securitate no longer existed as it had been incorporated into the ranks of the army. He, then, announced he was withdrawing to establish the NSF Council, which he hoped would give the lead for the formation of similar local institutions, as 'The old structures — the Party, the government, and so forth — have actually been eliminated.' Appealing for public support for the new provisional authority to be established before elections he closed with news of the arrest of the Ceaușescus.

When he had finished speaking, the microphone was handed to the dissident lawyer and former Party official, Dumitru Mazilu, who launched into a passionate speech which was noticeably more populist and visionary than the cautious words of Iliescu. Mazilu made a concerted appeal to the emotions of the crowd by first attacking the odious dictatorship of Ceaușescu and then praising the heroism of the martyrs of Timișoara and Bucharest before directly saluting the serried ranks below him. He, then, enunciated the outline of a political programme which he claims to have penned alone in the days after the demonstrations began in Timișoara but which, nonetheless, bears the unmistakable traces of the reformist ideas current in Bucharest and elsewhere in Eastern Europe at the time with references to such key concepts as 'restructuring', 'efficiency' and 'competence'. Noticeably though Mazilu does seem to have been the only leader of importance that day to openly reject the doctrine of Marxism–Leninism as in rousing words he pledged:

Let us organise free elections at the latest in May, next year. Let us separate legislative, executive and judicial power in the state. Let all political leaders be chosen for one or at the most two terms. Nobody to be able to claim power for life. Unlimited power clothed in abnormal garb. Two, the restructuring of the whole national economy on the criteria of efficiency. Let us restructure agriculture and let us halt the plan of murdering the villages of our country. Let us respect the peasant! Let us reorganise education, and beginning from today... cast aside, Marxism–Leninism, this
dogma....Let us eliminate lies....falsehoods....Let us establish criteria of competence, responsibility and of devotion for Romania!....Press, radio and television to pass into the hands of the people, and never again to belong to one family or one clan....Let us respect the rights of all citizens, without distinction of nationality. We are not indifferent to nationality, as the tyrant used to say, we love the minorities, and we want to live quietly and peacefully with all the country's minorities. Don't forget that amongst them there are martyrs....All foreign policy and external commerce to serve the interests of the people. Beginning from today to put an end to the export of any food so the country will starve no more....Our principal objective to be: THE HUMAN BEING. THE HUMAN BEING to be respected. We should be the ones to rejoice at the honour of living in this land. Let us be proud, let us be proud that we are Romanians!....Fellow-countrypeople, our country has outstanding men, men who in these days knew how to regain their....liberty and dignity, with the price of blood. I was last night in prison with hand-cuffs and I thought that only you..., the people are able to regain yourselves liberty and dignity. We deserve this. Victory...victory is in your hands. Don't forget fellow-countrypeople, it is your victory, only yours, it is your duty to preserve it with all your might and if we are united, this country will be reborn from the ashes....

The speech closed with a call for the formation of citizen's committees throughout the country including a national citizen's forum in Bucharest and, at this time, it seems that Mazilu did become involved with the formation of such a group, since a list of about thirty names was drawn up, but whether he ever saw this as a potential springboard to mount a bid for the leadership remains unclear, and anyway, by the end of the day, he had surfaced within the ranks of the Iliescu led NSF in which he was, eventually, appointed to the post of deputy leader. Nevertheless, although information is still somewhat sparse and contradictory, during the first days of the revolution, Mazilu does appear to have maintained a sense of separateness from the main body of the Front and latent tensions were to remain between him and the rest of the leadership which were to spill over later in January 1990.

The meeting to formally inaugurate the NSF was held in a small office elsewhere in the Central Committee building with the proceedings being recorded for posterity by a videotape which was broadcast a few days later on French TV with a transcript appearing in the press. Amongst those present were Iliescu, Roman, Gușe, Militaru, Colonel Ardeleanu, the head of USLA, Corneliu Pirclăbescu and two executive secretaries of Ceaușescu, Dumitru Apostoiu and Vasile Nicolcioiu. Later, they were joined by Silviu Brucan and Alexander Birlădeanu but others, including Gheorghe Apostol, were refused entry and the numbers present remained small rising to no more than a dozen.
Although the main item on the agenda was the formation of the NSF and the drawing up of a communique to legitimise its position, this was surprisingly little discussed, and the meeting soon degenerated into a series of scrappy exchanges during which Iliescu spent much of the time on the telephone and the others took the opportunity to catch up on the news of the day — at one point Roman recounts to Guse and Militaru how Ceaușescu escaped to their obvious surprise. The main statement made by Iliescu, at this time, is interesting only in so much it, once again, demonstrates the limits of his vision not only in terms of ideology but also as regards his apparent failure to grasp the importance of presenting an uplifting and inspiring programme for the future which would win both the support of the milling crowd outside and galvanise the waiting nation. Instead, in words riddled with the wooden formulae of socialism, Iliescu revealed his overriding concern with the practicalities of ensuring a smooth and rapid return to normality:

"...immediate measures [must be taken] at the central level as well as the local level...to ensure the function of vital institutions, the provision of energy, of heating, of water, the functioning of commercial networks, food, of public transport and all economic units which are to enter into normal activity....The CNSF with a view of fulfilling the objectives which it proposes will enter into dialogue with all the public and social forces of the country in order to achieve the unity of action of all the constructive forces of the nation....So as to ensure as rapidly as possible the organisation of the economy on a healthy basis.....[We] appeal to the workers, the peasantry, to the intellectuals in order to ensure these things."

Some of the others present seem to have realised the shortcomings of such an approach with Birlădeanu arguing that there must be phrases in a communique about moving towards democracy and fulfilling the needs of the people, but Brucan added little, and Iliescu seems to have been waiting for inspiration to come from elsewhere when he insistently asked of the whereabouts of Mazilu.

The lack of any coherent vision on the part of Iliescu, Brucan or the others was also evident in the following discussion as to the structures of the new power. Indeed, there even seems to have been some doubt as to whether they were reconstituting old structures or creating new ones with Iliescu, at one point, in contradictory fashion referring to the restructuring of a new mechanism of power. To all appearances, the new leaders had been overwhelmed by the sheer pace of events and were floundering in the face of the need to adapt to the dynamics of a mass popular uprising. Only Militaru with the blunt manner of a soldier seems to have retained something close to a clarity of purpose. Thus, when the question of what relationship any new structures might have with the state was raised, he firmly stated that, as the RCP had been before, 'The Council of National Salvation
is an organ of Party and of state’ and, in this, he was supported by Iliescu who silenced Roman when he spoke in favour of the separation of powers. The first signs were already appearing of the dissensions, which over the coming months were to solidify into the fault lines of more serious conflicts, and these broke to the surface, once again, when Roman’s declaration that the new grouping should have a single head, Iliescu, was challenged by Brucan who spoke in favour of a collective leadership.

Similar stresses were evident in the rather heated debate which followed over the name that the new organisation should bear as disagreements led to uncertainty and doubt amongst many of the embryonic leadership with again only Militaru robustly holding his position. Iliescu had used the name Committee of National Salvation at the TV station, but, now, an anonymous voice objected that ‘Salvation is not good [because] ... It belongs to a coup d'état ... National Democracy.’ Iliescu smoothly replied that ‘Democracy is with everybody’ but again he was questioned ‘what does it mean “salvation”? ’ and, later, someone baldly stated ‘It creates a state of panic when you say salvation’. Roman mentioned that he had spoken under the name of People’s Unity Front but this was rejected by Brucan. Then, other voices entered the fray arguing that the word democracy should appear before Roman correctly pointed out that Democracy Front was not possible because it had been used in the past. The debate was momentarily silenced by Militaru’s telling statement that it had to be called the National Salvation Front because it ‘has been in action for six months’, but, then, Iliescu, after asking the name in use at Timișoara and being told by Roman that it was Democratic Socialist Unity Front, began to muse on the words ‘democratic socialist’. However, Roman argued that the word ‘socialist’ was untenable and the debate closed with Iliescu agreeing that more time was needed to ponder the matter. The meeting ended abruptly when Sergiu Nicolaescu rushed into the room with the alarming news that they must flee because the building was mined, prompting the new leadership to disperse with most returning to the television station.

The choice of name for the new regime immediately marked out the Romanian Revolution, although in keeping with many of its counterparts such as the Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, the New Forum in the former East Germany and the Union of Democratic Forces in Bulgaria, the new regime chose not to label itself as a party, perhaps partly because that label was considered to be contaminated by years of communist abuse, but largely it seems out of a desire to map a consensual political future which minimized confrontational politics. However, the very name National Salvation Front with its quasi-Messianic overtones carried rather than the promise of a resurgent civic future inherent in the titles of the new citizen
bodies of the other East European countries hints of an exclusivity of purpose which left little room for bargaining or compromise and unmistakable echoes of the communist past. Indeed, nomenclaturally, its closest relation in Romanian history was the National Democratic Front, a bogus coalition of parties formed in 1944 through which the communists seized power although, given the later plot allegations surrounding the NSF, the most interesting precedent involving the use of a similar name was the Military Council of National Salvation, the vehicle by which General Jaruzelski declared martial law in Poland on 13 December 1981.

On their return to the television station, the new leaders established their headquarters on the XI floor of the building before, at 23.35, Iliescu once more appeared on the television to read the programme of NSF to the nation. This programme is striking similar to the earlier declaration made by Mazilu from the Central Committee balcony and it must, therefore, be presumed to be largely his work, although a few additions were made by Brucan with the most significant emendation being the introduction of a passage on observing Romania's commitments to the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. Whilst still eschewing the word revolution, the scope of the changes envisaged in the programme were far wider than the vague pronouncements made earlier by Iliescu and, it is noticeable, that past misfortunes were no longer confined to the excesses of Ceaușescu but to the years of 'totalitarian tyranny'. After paying tribute to the spirit of sacrifice of the young 'who restored to us the sentiment of national dignity with their blood' Iliescu presented to the nation a vision which seemed to imply only limited change, as he spoke of all functions of the state passing in their entirety to the CNSF and all ministries and central bodies continuing to function for the time being in their current form. In a formulation which notably stressed abstract goals rather than process Iliescu announced that the aims of the Front were to establish democracy, liberty and the Romanian people's dignity and, to this end, the new body would encompass 'all' the country's 'healthy forces' and all groups who 'bravely rose to defend freedom and dignity in the years of totalitarian tyranny.' Strikingly, the address made virtually no mention of the security situation apart from stating that the Higher Military Council, which was charged with co-ordinating the activities of the army and Ministry of Interior forces, would be subordinated to the Council of the National Salvation Front. The main features of the programme were:

1) The abandonment of the leading role of a single party and the establishment of a democratic and pluralist system of government.

2) The organisation of free elections in April.
3) The separation of the legislative, executive and judicial powers of the state with the election of all political leaders being limited to one or two mandates, at the most.

4) The restructuring of the economy in accordance with the criteria of profitability and efficiency. The elimination of administrative–bureaucratic methods of centralised economic management and the promotion of free initiative and competence in the management of all economic sectors.

5) The restructuring of agriculture with assistance to small–scale peasant production. The halting of the destruction of villages.

6) The reorganisation of Romanian education in accordance with current requirements on a democratic and humanist basis eliminating ideological dogmas. The elimination of lies and imposture and the establishment of criteria of competence and justice in all areas of activity. The development of national culture to be based on a new foundation and the press, radio and television to be removed from the hands of a despotic family and placed in the hands of the people.

7) The assuring of the rights and freedoms of national minorities and their full equality with those of Romanians.

8) The reorganisation of the country’s trade with the prime aim of satisfying the need of the domestic population. To this end the export of agricultural foodstuffs was to be halted and the export of oil products reduced so as to allow the diversion of resources to meet the energy requirements of the population.

9) Foreign policy was to be based on the principles of good–neighbourliness, friendship and peace with the integration of Romania into the process of building a united Europe and a common home for all the people of the continent. All Romania’s international commitments were to be met, especially, those to the Warsaw Treaty.

10) All domestic and foreign policy was to be subordinated to the needs and interests of developing the ‘human being’ ensuring the complete observance of human rights and freedoms, including the right to free movement.

11) By organising themselves into the Front, the new leaders underlined their commitment to do their utmost to re-establish a civil society in Romania and to guarantee the triumph of democracy, freedom and dignity for all citizens of the country.64

After the reading of the manifesto Iliescu read out the composition of the new Council of the National Salvation Front (Table 2.3). The first names heard were a number of prominent dissidents including Doina Cornea, Ana Blandiana, Dan
Deşlui and Mircea Dinescu, several of whom had, as yet, not been contacted by the Front. At the time Iliescu declared the list was still open and that the names included well-known figures who had demonstrated a spirit of sacrifice during the years of tyranny, but later accusations were to be made that these names were added as window-dressing to cover the real leadership of the regime who lurked below. Because beside a group of serving military officers who had openly sided with the revolution: Gușe, Stânculescu, Voinea, Chițac and Lupoi the core of the new leadership was made up of a group of former senior RCP members who had fallen foul of Ceaușescu together with a number of their younger associates: Iliescu, Brucan, Mazilu, Militaru, Birlădeanu, Dumitrescu, Mârtian, Roman, Voiculescu and Cazimir Ionescu. By the evening of 22 December the bounds of the new leadership had been largely set. Names were to be added and subtracted but many of the men who were to rule Romania for the coming years were already in place.
By and large, with the noticeable exception of Sibiu, it seems that the post-Ceauşescu era in Romania began in peace. The exertions of the military leadership were largely successful and in most cities all their units started to withdraw to barracks. However, as the afternoon of 22 December wore on it became clear that the revolution had unleashed passions and forces beyond the expectations of many of the more senior participants, as charged by adrenalin and freed from traditional constraints on their behaviour after years of numbing tedium, many ordinary people began to play an active role in the events. Each was driven by different needs but, for many, motivation probably lay no deeper than pure curiosity and a desire to participate in the action, however underlying this there was also a sense in which the nation both collectively and as individuals sought to expunge past humiliations through revolutionary glory — as Iliescu termed it ‘the restoration of national dignity’. Whilst for a minority less edifying motives were paramount as they looked to cover past misdeeds by establishing themselves as part of the new political process. The most obvious sign of revolutionary commitment was the building of barricades and the establishment of checkpoints. These appeared at first in Bucharest but, as news of the revolution spread, they exploded in profusion through towns and villages all across the country. Thus, within hours of Ceauşescu’s departure a barricade of lorries and cars had been thrown across Calea Dorobântilor on the approach to the TV station and, by the early evening, four such obstacles spanned the same road. Manned by improvised guards fielding a motley assortment of weapons, as the revolution progressed and the ‘terrorist’ threat heightened, the number of checkpoints grew doubling and then tripling; checking and checking again they only served to magnify the climate of suspicion on which they were founded. In places cars were searched three or four times in the space of 200 metres and the whole exercise often held an air of total unreality, as a journalist from the The Times found in a town outside Bucharest:

In Slatina, as in many other towns, a faintly surreal situation is emerging out of the initial chaos. Young, self-appointed guardians of the revolution, hand-written ‘badges’ pinned to the lapel, tear around checking the papers of people they have known all their life and diligently search the shopping bag of a former teacher. They work alongside but not exactly under the orders of a handful of conscripts — perhaps a year older than them — who sometimes find them a source of irritation. For like all revolutions the Romanian Revolution as well as its undoubted heroism and bravery also had its darker side — the sound of breaking glass, looting and unwarranted attacks by armed vigilantes were never far from the surface. And
most alarming for the new leadership there were also reports of crowds breaking into government offices and buildings belonging to the Securitate seizing and sometimes burning official documents. Frequently blamed on Gypsies most of these incidents went unreported although the scale of the lawbreaking is evident from the constant appeals for calm and order broadcast on the television:

We appeal to the population to stop completely any individual actions, actions by individuals or groups of individuals, who have made use of weapons for absurd revenge . . . . These excesses have assumed alarming proportions. In order that the whole rebirth of Romania and the fate of the victory of our revolution are not put in jeopardy, it is absolutely necessary that all these isolated and criminal actions cease immediately. Only if there are no such individual and irresponsible actions will the Council of the National Salvation Front and the single military command be able to carry out their historic mission, namely to take Romania towards democracy and the unity of the people.

Revenge attacks seem to have become common and Western journalists began to report the shooting and lynching of suspected Securitate agents and their collaborators in areas outside the army's control. One journalist narrowly escaped being lynched himself and another saw a man shot through the head with his own revolver whilst others report seeing suspects dragged from their cars and beaten to death. In the face of this breakdown of order, as 22 December progressed, at first alongside and, then, superseding the call for a return to barracks came a new appeal for military units to be deployed together with the Patriotic Guard to defend strategic points. The order for the army to come and defend the TV seems to have been given around 15.00 with the soldiers taking up position as darkness began to fall between 17.00 and 18.00.

In considering the progress of the revolution after the fall of Ceaușescu the chaos and disorder, that is reflected time and again in eyewitness accounts, cannot be stressed too strongly, because the violence that shook Romania during these days can only be understood if it is firmly placed within the context of the prevailing heady atmosphere of elation mixed with fear, suspicion and rumour and a total breakdown of political and social control which saw the effective erosion of all constraints on behaviour. In this atmosphere of near anarchy the first task of the new leadership was the re-establishment of public order but, in this, they were severely hampered by the weaknesses of the bodies under their command. The army possessed neither the equipment nor the training for such a task and, moreover, seems to have been unwilling to undertake any action which would place in jeopardy its newly won position as the guardian of the people against the state; effectively precluding any possibility of it acting on behalf of the state against
'The most obscure problem'

the people. The forces of the Ministry of the Interior blackened by innuendo and
rumour had either been placed under army control or were so totally distrusted
by the general population as to be next to useless. The militia had long been held
in popular contempt, the butt of countless jokes about their stupidity, and now
they were put in the impossible situation of being commanded to keep order in
a situation in which, if they took any decisive action, they ran the risk of being
branded counter-revolutionaries and, in consequence, more than a few seem to
have felt the vengeance of the crowd.71

On the streets of Bucharest following the flight of Ceauşescu the feeling of
triumph was buoyed by the very density of the crowd, but, within its ebbs and
flows, there lurked abiding fears for the huge mass was also fickle and brittle in
mood swept by rumours. The extent of the victory was not yet clear Ceauşescu had
fled but to where? Could the fearsome Securitate accept his overthrow without
a fight? For how could such a mighty regime which had kept the whole nation
shackled in misery for so long not possess a powerful backlash? In this wild
mélange suspicions were easily stirred. To most Romanians the Securitate was
a blanket term, more than a physical entity it seemed to be the embodiment of
all the evils of the Ceauşescu regime. Its plethora of directorates and units gave
further grounds for confusion as few outside the ranks of the cognoscenti could
distinguish between the various branches, although the most fearsome in popular
perceptions, and, therefore, the most readily identified, seems to have been the
anti–terrorist unit, USLA. 72

Doubts that pro–Ceauşescu forces would not stand idly by in the face of his
ouster also seem to have come to the fore in the minds of some of the military
leaders who first came to the side of the revolution. Chiţac in one of the earliest
broadcasts on the TV warned the retreating military units to be vigilant and to be
prepared to give a decisive riposte in case any should challenge the new democratic
socialist political orientation of the country, and the next day Iliescu spoke of
‘...planned co-ordinated actions...’ by the ‘terrorists’.73 Likewise, when he set
off for the Ministry of Defence Kostyal speaks of ‘being certain that [Ceauşescu’s]
special troops would not stand idle.’74 However, the clearest early exposition that
the terrorists were operating on the basis of plan came from Brucan:

...they [the terrorists] were acting on the basis of a plan — that is, they
had places to meet, they had places to train with ammunition and weapons,
and they had well-functioning means of communication, they had well-
functioning means of transport and they had underground passages in
complete order. All these were, as a matter of fact, concentrated in a
whole plan, which in military terminology is called a contingency plan, a
plan for a certain eventuality, which they started implementing the moment
they received the signal. 75

Since the end of the revolution much has been made of the existence of various
plans frequently with abstruse code names such as ‘Plan Dnestr’, ‘Plan M’ and
‘Plan Z’. Most persistent has been Brucan’s advocacy of the idea that the Secu­
ritate were following Order 2600 drawn up following the Brașov riots in 1987.
However, as might be expected on closer inspection this plan turns out to be a
means of securing order over a restless population by the authorities in power.
It does not start from a premise of defeat and the need for isolated spoiling ac­
tions to hamper an incoming regime. 76 However, this is not to say that such a
strategy did not exist because such ideas do seem to have lain at the heart of the
prevailing ‘Entire Peoples War’ military doctrine which in the case of a foreign in­
vasion called for the mass mobilisation of nearly all the able bodied population to
wage a popular guerrilla war. Presumably due to the mass involvement envisaged
by Ceauşescu knowledge of such plans stretched well beyond the high command
with the rudiments at least being known by much of the population at large and,
thereby, allowing the idea of such a conflict to easily come to mind.

Just as Ceauşescu did not use tunnels to escape from the Central Committee
building so it has not yet been adequately proven that any of these plans became
operational. Their existence makes an interesting footnote and nothing more.
What is more important is that it seems that some members of the incoming regime
did believe they were going to have to meet an organised counter-attack from the
Securitate, although whether they were aware of any specific plan is less likely.
Certainly during the fighting Brucan for one appears to have given no indication
that he had any detailed knowledge that a plan existed although he may have
come to hear of something through his army contacts but, as most of these were no
longer serving officers, they perhaps had only the vaguest inklings of any possible
content. After the conflict Brucan in his continuing polemic with the leaders of
the Securitate has thought it necessary to stress the existence of a plan, largely it
seems, to legitimise the position he took at that time, particularly, in relation to
the meeting held on 24 December in which he came into open confrontation with
Iulian Vlad. In general, it seems that all too readily after the fall of Ceauşescu
the perceptions of the street fused with those of some of the incoming leadership
to forge the expectation of a military challenge and the image of an enemy before
it actually appeared. At this stage of the revolution nobody was clear about who
was on which side nor, indeed, what the sides really were because even the army,
despite the repeated chants of the ‘The army is with us!’ , remained an unknown
quantity and that night, as the bullets flew around them, many were reported as
saying that they remained on the streets because they wanted to make sure that it did not betray them and, once again, turn to Ceaușescu.77

In Bucharest the popular perception that the army was on the side of the people had been cemented by the speech of General Gheorghe Voinean from the Central Committee balcony. It was carried to the rest of the country through the early appearance on the television of, first, Lupoi and, then shortly afterwards, a host of senior officers including Voinean, Chițac, Tudor, Militaru, Dumitrescu and Gușe. The theme was relentlessly hammered home in speeches throughout the day from both the television centre and before the crowds in Piața Palatului, and by the time Gușe spoke alongside Iliescu on the balcony at 17.30, it was clear, when he declared that ‘The Army will always be with us and with you’, that the army had become an important force in the new revolutionary leadership.78 The appearance of the army commanders on the balcony meant that the popular refrain of the streets ‘The army is with us’ had, at last, been given official imprimatur — the army had become the bastion of the revolution and any opponents to the new order, if they did exist, would have to lie outside its ranks, in the forces of the Ministry of the Interior. However, Militaru had been followed on the television by General Cimpeanu, Deputy Chief of the General Inspectorate of Militia, temporarily in command of the militia who in pledging his forces to the side of the revolution also stated that ‘I have ordered all troops to withdraw to their units, and no weapons or force to be used’.79

By deduction, if neither the army nor the militia posed any threat to the revolution, then any potential backlash from the old regime had to arise from the other major military force, the Securitate, which was already viewed with the deepest suspicion and closely identified in public perception with the fallen Ceaușescu. Now during the afternoon of 22 December these persisting doubts about the Securitate were further reinforced by the conspicuous absence of their leadership from the TV, especially, when compared with the appearance of the senior officers from the militia. Two representatives of the Securitate, Lieutenant-Colonel Gheorghe Stan and Colonel Apostolescu, did appear shortly after the more senior army commanders, but their low ranks, semi-apologetic nature and half hearted declarations appealing to Vlad and fellow officers to put down their arms and work with the people were in sharp contrast to the confident assertion of the army that they were with the people.80 It was not until the next morning at 6.03 that the head of the Securitate General Vlad finally appeared on the radio to reassure the nation that his forces were fully on the side of the revolution.81
When Iliescu appeared on the Central Committee balcony he told the crowd that he had placed the Securitate under the jurisdiction of the army. This move matched public expectations and was probably determined by both a desire to pander to popular demands and genuine doubts about the loyalty of some units. It may also have been a quid pro quo for army support and a sop to the festering antagonism between them and the Securitate. Over the longer-term, although the move presumably made sense from a political-operational standpoint, by drawing Securitate officers into the ranks of the army it not only accorded them some protection from revenge attacks but also sufficiently blurred the lines of demarcation to make it very difficult for them later to be brought to trial.

At the time though it seems to have been widely perceived that the Securitate had been integrated into the army command structure because it was potentially hostile to the new regime, and these ideas were reinforced by continuous reports on the radio and television that army and Ministry of Interior forces were locked in fierce battle in Sibiu. Indeed, stories from the television merely seem to have exacerbated the growing nervousness as when an attempt to forestall the spread of rumours ended with the totally counter-productive warning that tall stories would only be manipulated by the Securitate. Soon the tale, already familiar from Timișoara, arose that it was really Securitate officers dressed in civilian clothes who were staging the looting of shops as agent provocateurs. As the afternoon of the 22 December progressed the news became wilder and wilder; the Securitate had blown up a blood bank in Bucharest to hinder the treatment of those wounded in the fighting the night before and they had poisoned the water in Timișoara and Sibiu and possibly even in Bucharest.®® The culmination of these stories came at 16.10 when Brateș made the dramatic announcement that a column of ‘terrorists’, which confusingly were in fact anti-terrorist troops, by which he meant USLA, were headed towards the television station. A few minutes later the news was hysterically repeated by a revolutionary, Costin 'Jugui, who desperately cried for the population to come to their rescue ‘... help us, help us, defend us army, defend us someone!’®® The danger was imaginary, the USLA troops never arrived and it may be that jittery nerves mistook the army detachments coming to defend the television station as hostile forces.®® Whatever, taunt nerves were tightened further and, when immediately after this statement the screen went blank for the best part of an hour, apparently, due to the overheating of some equipment, the tension reached an almost unbearable level. The television had both fed on and, in turn, fed popular prejudices as caught centre stage in the excitement and drama of the events it came to reflect the chaos and fears of the streets below. Throughout the day all manner of rumours
and stories had been broadcast just as they were received without the slightest attempt at verification. But the medium transformed the message because the television, like the army, had now become the television of the people, as before their very eyes it had been magically transformed from the grey reminder of the Ceaușescu era to the bearer of the news of his downfall. In the process it had been freed from its legacy of lies and became a repository of the revolutionary truth given the power to transform fiction into fact. The popular expectation was that there would be an enemy and now during the hours of darkness that foe was to come into being.

When the TV returned on the air it soon passed to a live transmission from Piața Palatului, presumably, so as to be able to catch the moment when Iliescu made his address from the balcony. The crowd, already restless from news of the fighting in Sibiu and the impending attack on the television station, were further alarmed by warnings to be watchful as amongst them there were 'enemies... who smuggle arms... who fire'. The exact time of the first shots is unknown but reports of isolated gunfire appear during the broadcast from the Central Committee building beginning around 17.00. Gradually the shooting became heavier and more pronounced and the TV began to show images of bullet holes in windows. The source of these shots remains unknown perhaps with guns already falling into the hands of the demonstrators they were merely the product of revolutionary bravado or possibly they were fired in an attempt to control the crowd and dissuade looters. Those on the balcony in making constant calls for the crowd to keep calm tried to explain them away as blanks designed to scare or attempts by soldiers loyal to the revolution to blow open the locks on steel doors for which they lacked the keys. In one instance it was even stated that a sudden shot was the result of a captured rifle still loaded falling to the ground by accident. However, as night fell and the situation began to worsen with the firing commencing in earnest, an announcement that 'bandits' had been captured in the basement of the Central Committee building suggested that the opponents of the new regime were beginning to take on a more tangible form.

Most of the shooting seem initially to have focused on the former Royal Palace on the other side of Piața Palatului from the Central Committee building, which some of the crowd became convinced had been infiltrated by hostile forces, and now, despite desperate appeals from the balcony and loudspeakers in the square to cease fire because those in the building were really on the side of the revolution, the gunfire continued and even grew in intensity. The live television broadcast relayed both the drama but also the absurdity of the situation as the revolution was
publicly fought out before watching crowds to the exhortations of the loudspeakers. At one point, a crazy duet broke out with one loudspeaker appealing for a cease-fire whilst another hysterically pointed out the locations from which the ‘terrorists’ were firing. As midnight approached Ion Caramitru reappeared and tried vainly to re-establish order by making constant appeals to those in the square to stop firing and for all civilians with arms to come and deposit them safely at the Central Committee building. But his pleas only seem to have fallen on deaf ears and, as the firing continued and waves of panic passed through the crowd, speakers on the balcony above — feeling as exposed as their compatriots had in Timișoara earlier — implored them not to leave the scene. Many seem to have responded and stayed as foreign journalists paint a vivid picture of knots of people standing and refusing to run for cover, as they watched tracer bullets criss-cross the night sky, or cheering and laughing applauded, as the soldiers amongst them directed heavy machine-gun fire onto the windows where the enemy was perceived to lie. As the fighting intensified tanks once more rolled into the centre of Bucharest and Piața Universității again echoed to the roar of gunfire with the shooting not abating until the dawn of the next day.

As the evening progressed the news relayed via the television became more and more alarming and the situation at the radio station was reported as being particularly critical with frantic appeals being broadcast for crowds to gather for its defence. A host of other targets were also announced as being under attack including the Ministry of Defence and the telephone exchanges in Drumul Taberei, Dorobanți and Rahova. However, almost as soon as the news was broadcast, retractions and corrections began to appear, the nest of ‘terrorists’ in the basement of Casa Scinteia turned out to be a civil defence command post and the telephone exchange at Dorobanți was in fact not under threat. Such false alarms only sowed deeper the seeds of confusion increasing the sense of confrontation as the rumours became wilder and wilder. Soon it seemed all Bucharest was covered by a multilayered network of secret bunkers and tunnels through which the ‘terrorists’ could pass with ease to escape and move from target to target. This underground labyrinth was held to have enormous dimensions as tunnels were reported everywhere...linking the Central Committee with other important buildings in the centre, connecting the Izvor metro station to Casei Republicii, at the IMGB works..., they sprang like mushrooms after the rain and appeals were made for anybody who knew of their exact layout to come forward and inform the new regime of their design.

Later the television centre itself came under attack although this was initially not reflected in the broadcasts. The first bullets seem to have been fired around
21.00, although these were isolated, and the size of the complex together with the constant coming and going means that the various accounts give differing times. The battle that followed at the television was long and bloody claiming at least sixty-two lives, the vast majority of whom were civilians. For the best part of three days the area resounded with gunfire — the conflict only, finally, abating on Christmas Day. However, during this time the fighting was never continuous, being essentially sporadic in nature, reaching several crescendos and, then, subsiding into a bitty warfare of occasional isolated shots. The vast majority of the casualties occurred between the evening of 22 December and the dawn of 24 December. On 23 December alone one unit, U.M.01210, which was heavily involved in the fighting throughout the period, suffered 38% of all the casualties it sustained during the whole revolution at the television station.®^®

The soldiers dispatched to defend the television were faced on their arrival with utter pandemonium. Many of them were poorly trained young conscripts with only a few months of instruction and totally unprepared psychologically for the situation which confronted them, never having trained under fire. Now these soldiers together with their heavy armour, better suited to the open battlefield than guerrilla street warfare, were deployed in a heavily populated urban environment and expected to meet an, at first, unknown threat — on 22 and 23 December the outcome of the revolution was still in doubt and nobody knew how many forces remained loyal to Ceauşescu — which was only afterwards partly clarified as coming from unidentified specialist killers. Indeed, highlighting the confusion existing within the ranks of the army are stories of some soldiers not realising they were a part of a mass revolution and thinking they were participating in some exclusively military operation until Patriotic Guards or other civilians appeared.®® Furthermore, units like U.M.01210, who had only the day before been involved in the thick of the fighting at Piaţa Universităţii, now found themselves defending the very people with whom in the previous night they had been locked in a bloody confrontation. This abrupt volte-face required them to legitimise themselves in their new position and, perhaps, fuelled their enthusiasm to meet the ‘terrorist’ threat. The BBC journalist, John Simpson, found himself remonstrating with a tank commander in Piaţa Palatului whose only motive for firing at the cupola of the University Library seemed to be because he found it a ‘tempting target’. Simpson concluded that:

The soldiers were hot and nervous, with no clear orders about what they should be doing. The Army, weak and poorly trained, was anxious to demonstrate the extent of its new allegiance to the people. And so it used its overwhelming strength to hammer away at the grand buildings in the
centre of the city, regardless of the damage it was doing. The noise and
the damage were an end in themselves, the outward and visible sign of
an inward and guilty desire to make up for its failure to side with the
popular cause earlier. The Army was demonstrating its fitness to carry on
serving the people. A few buildings destroyed were less important than
the construction of a new public trust in its loyalty.\textsuperscript{96}

Now, as the army moved back onto the streets of Bucharest, around these young
conscripts thrust into the middle of the conflict jostled the crowd regaling them
with wild and frequently conflicting stories and exposing them to the full gamut
of rumours buzzing through its midst. On the outside of the television centre a
loudspeaker system was rigged up and as in Piata Palatului this also came to act as
a potent source of rumour. Valiantly it tried to bring some order to the situation
and protect the civilian revolutionaries caught in the field of fire between the army
and the ‘terrorists’ — indeed, many pictures that were later captioned as showing
surrendering ‘terrorists’ in fact depict frightened volunteers raising their hands in
the air so as to gain entry into the television centre. Nevertheless, accidents do
seem to have occurred and many people, including foreign journalists, still recall
the dangers involved in having to run the gauntlet of trigger–happy troops in order
to reach the building.\textsuperscript{97}

As the soldiers of the army moved to defend strategic points across Bucharest
they were joined by contingents from other branches of the security forces includ­
ing members of the militia, \textit{Securitate} and USLA troops, and even naval officers.
However, at the same time, enormous numbers of less disciplined forces were also
drawn onto the streets to defend the revolution. Some of these, such as the Patri­
otic Guard units, were semi–organised but the vast bulk were enthusiastic civilians
responding to the desperate pleas heard on the television and radio. Most of these
civilians were ‘armed’ with nothing more than stones or Molotov cocktails, but a
surprisingly large amount, perhaps because they could prove they had undergone
military service or were actual reservists, were given guns and effectively became
armed irregulars.\textsuperscript{98} For these armed civilians there were no formal structures of
command and frequently the only marks of distinction which proclaimed they were
loyal to the revolution were makeshift armbands. It was a true recipe for chaos
and it bred bloody mayhem. At the forefront of this confusion seems to have been
the various Patriotic Guard units which responded to the many appeals on the
television calling for their mobilisation to guard strategic points throughout the
country. Whether the central command structure of the Patriotic Guard contin­
ued to function throughout the revolution remains unclear, but, even if it did so,
it might be questioned whether in the prevailing chaos it made much difference.
A few Patriotic Guard units seem to have been mobilised on the initiative of individual army officers and, whilst it seems likely that some of those who came to the defence of the TV did so obeying orders, others probably came on their own initiative spurred by the broadcast appeals. In the resultant confusion fed by rumour and the lack of any firm knowledge as to who was loyal to the revolution and who was not many tragic accidents seem to have taken place. Thus, the army records one incident were three civilians 'pretending' that they were from a Patriotic Guard unit slipped into the compound of the TV behind a tank before they opened fire killing five paratroopers and seriously wounding three more. Similarly, a worker at a first aid point established to the side of the TV station records how, shortly after a group of Patriotic Guard from the 'Aversa' enterprise arrived and took up guard positions within the house at about 17.00 on 23 December, shooting broke out from an upper storey drawing return fire from the soldiers at the television station and causing a small fire to break out on the first floor of the building. The first aid point workers took shelter in the basement until the firing ended when the members of the Patriotic Guard unit appeared denying they had been the first to fire. This is not to suggest that any of the many Patriotic Guard units, which were mobilised across Romania during these days, actively took up a position against the revolution because there is no serious evidence to support such a view. However, it can be suggested that the enthusiasm of these units as they rushed to support the revolution was frequently tragically misplaced since their presence in the firing-line often only seems to have induced further confusion and, in consequence, many of those arrested during the revolution as suspected 'terrorists' do seem to have been members of the Patriotic Guard.

Besides, the Patriotic Guard units, the repetitive calls for crowds to come and support the revolution also drew huge numbers of other civilians to the public spaces. At the television these seem to have included a number of reservists ex-paratroops and these together with others who could show the appropriate papers, presumably demonstrating previous military service, seem to have received arms from the military units. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the Romanian Revolution is the large number of guns which seem to have been in fairly free circulation. The doctrine of mass defence seems to have led to the establishment of Patriotic Guard armouries in many workplaces and these were now broken open and their contents distributed. The armouries of the V Directorate of the Securitate also seem to have fallen into the hands of the demonstrators during the afternoon of 22 December, whilst other civilians just grabbed old hunting rifles from home or took guns from dead or wounded soldiers. The presence of such a large number of weapons lies at the root of the problem of identifying the 'terrorists', and indicative
of the experience of many at this time is the story of a member of the militia, who armed only with a pistol and, it seems, quite unauthorised by anybody in authority, set out together with a youth of nineteen to search some buildings in the vicinity of the television centre. Moving from one expensively furnished flat to another they smelt gunpowder in the air but on breaking down the door of an apartment only a hunting rifle with its barrel apparently still warm was to be found; then, as they ventured outside to hoist a flag to show the flat was 'clear' they came under fire. Quickly leaving the building the militiaman managed to enter the TV compound but was immediately arrested and had his pistol and papers confiscated only to be released three hours later and handed back his belongings. Exactly who was firing on whom is not clear from the account, but it seems probable that the militiaman like many of the other brave young revolutionaries, who armed only with Molotov cocktails crawled through the houses adjoining the TV looking for 'terrorists', actually came under fire from the occupants of the tower of the television centre who also believed, mistakenly, that they were firing on 'terrorists'.

The television station lies in one of the most exclusive areas of Bucharest next to the richly verdant Primăverii suburb, home to the sprawling villas of the nomenclatura. Also in the vicinity was Ceauşescu's Primăverii Palace and this appears to have been entered and looted during the afternoon and evening of 22 December. Thus, alongside those who came to defend the television station the area also seems to have drawn others of a more mercenary inclination and some of the shadows passing through the district that night, unbeknown to the defenders of the TV station, were neither 'terrorists' nor revolutionaries, but rather those set on personal gain. Since they were the homes of the Ceauşescu élite, many of these villas were readily invested with a malign aura often, it seems, transformed into terrorist havens purely by virtue of the identity of their owners; for instance, the residence of Valentin Ceauşescu was reported to be the source of much shooting, and, consequently, these houses drew heavy fire from the tanks and other weapons defending the TV, leaving many of them destroyed or heavily damaged, whilst the television centre itself emerged relatively unscathed. That the television station came under fire is undeniable but the identity of the attackers remains unknown and, as no major attack by an identifiable organised force was ever launched, in the continuing absence of any serious evidence to the contrary it must be presumed that, if they did exist, the 'terrorists' were indeed very few in numbers and the direct threat that they posed to the new regime was extremely limited. Instead of the received view of hard pressed defenders fending off concerted attacks from fanatical opponents of the new regime, the picture that emerges is of a plethora of military forces — army, units of the Securitate, Patriotic Guard and militia...
— together with armed and unarmed individuals congregating in a completely uncoordinated fashion in the environs of the television centre and around other strategic buildings throughout Bucharest. Some were under orders but many were not and in such circumstances it was almost impossible to identify friend from foe. In this atmosphere and in the absence of adequate communications rumour and innuendo seem to have all too easily triumphed over a level-headed appreciation of reality, and in the chaos and uncertainty that reigned the inescapable conclusion is that many of the brave young men and women who fell in the defence of the revolution were the tragic victims of what has now come to be known euphemistically as ‘friendly fire’. This is the most harrowing and unacceptable of deaths in warfare and the difficulties of admitting the truth about such incidents may lie at the heart of many of the revolution’s dilemmas. An assessment of the fighting at the television centre by the Romanian army concludes with the following words which, in hindsight, must be judged to hold the kernel of the truth: ‘We are not able to omit that among the causes [of death] listed are accidents or mistakes of leadership generated by the specific conditions of action.’ A report from the Military Prosecutor’s Office was to admit that the army had been responsible for the deaths of 333 and the wounding of 648 during the fighting, with the forces of the Ministry of Interior killing a further sixty-three and wounding forty-six more and, when it is finally released, the report of the Senatorial Commission of Inquiry into the events of the revolution seems likely to reach a similar conclusion, because in an interview with a Western journalist, Valentin Gabrielescu of the NPP, the chairman of the Commission has confirmed that most of those killed were ‘innocents, caught in the crossfire between panic-stricken soldiers and civilians firing at imaginary “terrorists”’. This interpretation that many of the deaths of the second phase of the revolution were tragic mistakes appears to be borne out by the circumstances surrounding the greatest loss of life in a single incident at this time. This occurred at Otopeni Airport during the morning of 23 December and, as with most incidents in the revolution, it continues to be surrounded by controversy and conflicting claims but the broad details seem to be as follow: following the flight of Ceauşescu — by a helicopter stationed at Otopeni — requests were made for the dispatch of reinforcements to the airport. In response to these pleas in the early hours of the morning of 23 December a detachment of troops from the Training School for Non-Commissioned Officers of the Securitate Troops at Câmpina, temporarily quartered at the Securitate school in Băneasa, was ordered to proceed to the airport. Three lorries full of young conscripts arrived at Otopeni shortly after 5.00 having apparently passed through a series of checkpoints, which verified the
legitimacy of their mission on the way, and at the last of which the army officer on
duty climbed into the cab of the leading lorry in order to escort the convey to the
airport buildings. As they travelled along the approach road and were on the verge
of reaching the main complex they came under intense fire from military positions
lining the route. The shooting continued for some time and, when it ceased, at
least fifty lay dead and thirteen injured. At the same time a following bus carrying
civilian workers to the airport travelling on the same route also came under fire
leaving four dead and seventeen wounded. The surviving officers and men of
the Câmpina unit were immediately rounded up placed under armed guard and
paraded as captured 'terrorists' on the television. A macabre photograph taken at
the time show a forklift truck used to carry the bodies of the dead with the word
'terrorists' daubed on the side. The incident has been subject to a detailed inves­tigation by the Military Prosecutors Office, which has produced a report, and on
17 December 1993 legal action was initiated against two officers held responsible
for defences at Otopeni in 1989, Major-General Dumitru Drăghin and Captain
Ionel Zorila, as well as the former head of the Securitate troops, Major-General
Grigorie Ghița. They faced trial in the Military Section of the Supreme Court of
Justice for 'murder and grave wounding' and the 'dereliction of duty as concerns
the organisation and permanent co-ordination of the activity of the groups under
their command... bad decision making and bad transmission of orders'.

Much of the the blame for the confusion during the first twenty-four hours
after the flight of Ceaușescu can probably be laid at the general lack of coordination
between military forces and, in particular, the diversity of command structures.
There was no unified command and, instead, three different command posts came
into being each of which seems to have been attempting to determine the course of
the revolution. Generals Gușe and Vlad, the nominal heads of the security forces,
were based at the Central Committee building — Gușe staying until the morning
of 23 December and Vlad until the same evening. Meanwhile, the political
leadership of the NSF and some of the reserve generals were stationed at the
television centre — leaving the building in the morning of 23 December — whilst
a number of other important generals, including Stănulescu and Chițac, seem to
have remained at the Ministry of Defence throughout this period. Only when these
three groups came together at the Ministry of Defence during 23 December and
some coordination was established between the various strands of the leadership
was the military situation gradually brought under control. By the evening of 24
December the fighting began to visibly subside and indicative of the subsequent
easing of tension was the decision of the political leadership to move from the
Ministry of Defence to the building of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 25 December.

At that time, two important steps were taken to consolidate the position of the new regime. The decision was taken to place on trial and execute the Ceauşescus and the process of isolating the leadership of the Securitate was begun as a prelude to more widespread dismissals which were later extended to include several senior army commanders. The official explanation for the decision to execute the two Ceauşescus is that it was warranted by the military situation since only through their deaths could the 'fanatical terrorists' be persuaded to abandon their murderous campaign, allowing victory to be, finally, assured. The units guarding the Ceauşescus in Tîrgovişte were also said to have been particularly weak and, if the barracks came under sustained attack, it was feared that the couple might be freed and the country plunged into civil war. This official line of reasoning seems to suffer from two weaknesses. Firstly, to sustain credibility, it is necessary to prove that a counter-attack by the 'terrorists' was liable on the 24 or 25 December, but all the available evidence suggests that on the contrary the fighting began to decline from 24 December and certainly Bucharest was peaceful enough on Christmas Day — the day of the executions — to encourage large numbers to venture outside to attend church services. Secondly, the obvious recourse, if the position of the Ceauşescus in Tîrgovişte was felt to be vulnerable, would have been to move them elsewhere.

However, although in the clarity of hindsight such reasons seem to hold little water, if allowances are made for the context of the time in which bursts of gunfire still echoed from the streets — the 24 December may have seen some shooting around the Ministry of Defence where the decisions were made — in the all pervading climate of rumour and suspicion the decision becomes more understandable. Certainly if the performance of the prosecution and judges is any guide, then those involved in the actual trial do seem to have believed that there were fanatical foreign mercenaries fighting on the streets of Romania. At the time the decision was taken the leaders of the Front still seem to have felt far from secure of their own position continuing to harbour suspicion as to the loyalties of many of the military chiefs who had switched to support the new regime. Brucan has especially pointed the finger of suspicion at Vlad, and there have been persistent rumours that he and Guse plotted to topple the NSF during the night the two military commanders spent at the Central Committee building. Whether true or not such doubts culminated in the removal of both in the next few days and the infusion of a large number of more trusted reserve generals into the military. The NSF's control of the situation was also undermined by rumours circulating that it had been unseated.
and was no longer in power, and to counter these reports Iliescu began his speech on the radio and television on 26 December with the words: ‘...we wanted to be in the studio also on a personal reason as there are rumours saying that we might no longer exist,...’.\(^{115}\)

During the late 1980s from their vantage point outside the regime Brucan and presumably some of the other leaders of the Front had become convinced that the policies pursued by Ceauşescu were primarily designed to enhance his powers and those of the Securitate at the expense of the Party: ‘It was a personal monarchy, the Party was atomised, and the Securitate controlled everything, monitored everyone, including the present and past Party officials’.\(^{116}\) On the basis of this analysis it is, therefore, perhaps not entirely coincidental that on the evening of 24 December the new regime simultaneously moved to dismantle the twin pillars on which they saw the neo-Stalinist regime resting: the Ceauşescus and the Securitate. Although, perversely, the decision to adopt such a strategy seems to have been taken on the basis of two rather contradictory pressures. On the one hand, continuing chaos and political weakness demanded the removal of any potential alternative foci of power whilst, on the other hand, an improving military situation and growing confidence in the armed forces allowed the NSF more latitude in which to act since it no longer had any need to buy the loyalty of the more discredited commanders by allowing them to remain in office. Personal animosities may also have played a role, as many of the incoming regime had suffered much at the hands of Ceauşescu, and Brucan, in particular, seems to have harboured a deep hatred of Vlad stemming from his investigation by the Securitate after the ‘Letter of the Six’. Roman was to state that it was only Brucan who was fully aware of the power of the Securitate and certainly he seems to have taken the lead in the denouncement of Vlad.\(^{117}\) In a meeting held in the evening of 24 December the two came into open confrontation when Brucan challenged Vlad over the contents of his radio broadcast asking why he had made no specific order for his troops to cease fire.\(^{118}\) Brucan also charged that the ‘terrorists’ — who he seems to have implied were members of the Securitate — were operating on the basis of a plan which Vlad, although he had intimate knowledge of its contents, had so far not revealed to the revolutionary high command and this was greatly hampering the fight against the enemy. According to Brucan these revelations sowed the seeds of so many doubts as to Vlad’s loyalty in the minds of those assembled that they were to directly lead to his later dismissal.\(^{119}\) Brucan’s story offers a highly personalised account of events but, given the subsequent dismissal of most of the Securitate’s high command, it would seem to carry the flavour of what turned out
to be a concerted strategy to remove most of the upper echelons of this powerful body.\textsuperscript{120}

The decision to place the Ceaușescus on trial was taken in the evening of 24 December. Accounts vary but, according to Brucan, the decision was taken at a stormy three hour meeting of the Executive Bureau of the NSF where the main argument was between those who wanted an immediate military trial and those who wanted a civil trial several weeks later.\textsuperscript{121} A highly coloured version of the events is given by Galloway and Wylie, who place the onus for the decision on the personal intervention of Gelu–Voican Voiculescu and Stânculescu, who are said to have persuaded a reluctant and ‘idealistic’ Iliescu to overcome his initial inhibitions.\textsuperscript{122} Whether Iliescu was so unwilling to sanction such an action may be questioned, since already at the time of the arrest of the Ceaușescus he had declared: ‘The time for their just and harsh judgement by the people will come, as well as for those guilty of the national tragedy’.\textsuperscript{123} However, Brucan does suggest that Stânculescu had made some preliminary preparations for the trial beforehand and all accounts agree that the final arrangements for the Military Tribunal were made by him and Voiculescu who were both present as representatives of the regime alongside Măgureanu.\textsuperscript{124}

The trial took place before a Military Tribunal in a shabby lecture hall at Tîrgoviște barracks where the Ceaușescus had been held since their apprehension; part of the time in an armoured personnel carrier.\textsuperscript{125} On the evidence of the videotape it seems to have lasted no more than fifty–five minutes and made no serious efforts to investigate the charges against the Ceaușescus.\textsuperscript{126} Nearly all independent observers have agreed it was little more than a kangaroo court with Edward Behr stating ‘the proceedings were farcical....its purpose was not to bring the Ceaușescus to justice but to provide a legal pretext for executing them as soon as possible’.\textsuperscript{127} Even the very legality of the proceedings are in doubt. According to Voiculescu, under the state of emergency still held to be in force, there was a legal basis for the summary trial of civilians under military conditions, but Behr argues, that under Romanian law, a stay of execution for ten days is stipulated after the passing of a death sentence whether or not there had been an appeal.\textsuperscript{128} However, in the Ceaușescus’ case such legal niceties were irrelevant as the die had been cast long before and no appeal was to be forthcoming. Indeed, one of the features of the trial was the ineffective defence council who barely spoke and in his summing up speech embarked on a thinly veiled denunciation of his client.\textsuperscript{129} In the most part the Ceaușescus answered for themselves, if only for Nicolae Ceaușescu to repeat endlessly that as President of the Republic and
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Supreme Commander of the Army he refused to accept the legality of this court and would only answer to the Grand National Assembly.

The trial was a shouting match of mutual incomprehension — a dialogue between the deaf — but it is noticeable that Ceaușescu was not the totally bemused onlooker that is sometimes suggested apparently being careful not to give hostages to fortune, as when instead of denying all shootings in the capital, he chose to state that nobody had been shot in Piața Palatului — a situation which still held true at the time he departed. Ceaușescu's position consistent with his previous utterances remained centred on a self-induced belief in his own popularity which led him at one point to robustly ask the court 'Have you not seen how the people cheered when I went to the factories?'. He proudly declared that conditions had never been better in Romania displaying his own poverty of conception by pointing to the 200 kg of wheat each person was supposedly to receive each year as if peasant subsistence was sufficient to assuage the demands of the growing urban population. The deposed leader seems to have been aware of the conflict raging outside the walls of his prison but not of its exact nature, and his steadfast belief in his own popularity could lead him to confidently assert that 'The people will fight against this gang of traitors, who with foreign help, succeeded in this coup'. Underlying all was his assumption that his overthrow had been brought about by foreign agency for when questioned 'What are these people fighting for throughout the country?' he replied 'For their existence, independence and sovereignty'. It was the same closed mentality seen at the earlier PEC meetings nowhere more pitifully expressed than in Elena's plea 'I have fought since I was fourteen-years old. How can we betray the people?'

The charges of the prosecution were little more than generalities: genocide of more than 60,000 victims; undermining of the power of the state by the organising of armed actions against the people; destruction of public assets with the demolition of public buildings, explosions in towns and so forth; sabotaging of the national economy and attempting to flee the country with funds in excess of one billion dollars deposited in foreign banks. The huge casualty figure according to Voiculescu was arrived at by estimating 60,000 had died in recent years of cold and hunger added to the 4,000 said to have died at Timișoara on Yugoslav radio broadcasts. Within the trial it was explicitly stated that 'This is not genocide against the people in Timișoara and Bucharest, but genocide carried out for more than twenty years against the Romanian people, against innocent children' but earlier broadcasts of the charges without the accompaniment of the full recording of the trial allowed this number to be taken out of context as the death toll for the revolution alone and, as this grossly exaggerated figure was flashed around
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the world, the incoming NSF seems to have been painfully slow to clear up the confusion. No detailed charges were pressed and little supporting evidence was produced with interestingly no reference being made to the PEC transcript which according to at least one source was available at this time. Once the trial began, it soon degenerated into a series of personalised attacks with Elena being brought to task for her taste in luxurious clothes, her false qualifications and the gold scales said to have been found in her daughter Zoia's apartment. Other questions reflected the full gamut of rumours then sweeping Romania with references being made to shootings in hospitals, mercenaries on the streets, Securitate officers dressing in the clothes of soldiers, and supposed fortunes lying in Swiss bank accounts.

The uncontested verdict was 'guilty' and the sentence carried out almost immediately was execution by firing squad. The charges and verdict were publicly announced in the evening of Christmas Day and a recording of the trial was shown on Romanian television at midnight the next day. Officially the death of Ceaușescu was one of the key moments of the revolution. Brucan asserted '... as of Monday evening, after people learned about the execution of the two, the situation changed radically. That was the turning point...', giving as an example 'Two of those who had been caught said that they would not consider themselves free of this oath [to defend the Ceaușescus to the end] until they had seen film or pictures in which it is clear that they are dead'. At the time most outside observers seem to have accepted the NSF's explanations for the necessity of a rapid trial and execution, but in hindsight, it can be seen as marking an important step in the puncturing of much of the romantic euphoria surrounding the revolution and the beginning of the end of the NSF's honeymoon with the outside world. Even now, as harbingers of future differences, the United States expressed 'regret' that the trial had not been a public and open affair and Amnesty International amongst others issued a critical statement. Within Romania such was the force of long pent up venom against the Ceaușescu regime that few voices initially spoke against the trial and an early opinion poll after the fall of Ceaușescu recorded 84% in favour of the executions. However, it was not an auspicious start for the new regime as, instead of justice being seen to be done, the trial smacked of old communist practices and even Iliescu was afterwards to admit that it may have been a 'mistake'. Later the noted Romanian dissident, Paul Goma, was to write that the rushed execution 'stole Ceaușescu from those who suffered because of him' and, indeed, it can be seen as drawing something of a veil across the communist era, a process accentuated by the new regime's not entirely successfully attempts to equate the passing of Ceaușescu with the cleansing of the Romanian body politic.
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Goma presciently also suggested that the trial ‘accomplished the extraordinary, the unheard and undeserved feat of turning the Ceauşescus into human beings’, and it did, indeed, leave the door open for a later partial political rehabilitation of the Ceauşescus and their erstwhile supporters. Moreover, by focussing only on unprovable genocide and not on the details of their misrule the Ceauşescus’ trial was to set an unhealthy precedent for the future court appearances of other RCP leaders, which resulted in a series of judgements of such dubious legality that the defendants were all released after serving only relatively short sentences.

By the time of the execution of the Ceauşescus life was already more or less returning to normal in Bucharest, although passers-by in the streets still had to occasionally run for cover at the sound of gunfire for several days afterwards. The army continued to search for ‘terrorists’ and, occasionally, when they thought some were cornered, heavier weaponry was brought into play to flush them out, as on 26 December when the main telephone exchange was reported as coming under heavy bombardment. Shooting was also said to have occurred elsewhere in Bucharest that day and, as late as the night of 28 December, a fierce gunfight lasting twenty minutes was reported near the TV station with isolated shots also being heard during the same evening near the Central Committee building. However, by this time official pronouncements were beginning to record the end of the conflict. On 28 December Chirac stated that ‘There are no more strong points of reconnaissance—diversion groups in Bucharest. Last night there were only scattered shots fired in the Băneasa area, to which our fighters gave prompt riposte. The situation is similar in the country’s other towns. There still are isolated groups but they no longer make a force to pose major problems to the population.’, and the next day the Higher Military Command ‘...noted that the Army was in full control of the situation in all areas of Romania’. There had, however, been ‘very isolated hostile acts’ by ‘irresponsible terrorist elements who had not yet responded to the deadline...of the NSF...dated 26 December.’ And this feeling that the long days of conflict were at last over was caught in Western newspapers reports of the next, day which quoted Cazimir Ionescu as saying that the danger of a counter-coup had passed and that the fighting in central Bucharest had ended. Nevertheless, as late as 4 January 1990, casualties were still being registered in unknown circumstances at the TV station.

The image of the ‘terrorists’

Through the transcript of the television broadcast it has been possible to see how, immediately after the flight of Ceauşescu, public distrust of the Securitate fused with the fears some of the army’s commanders held of a counter-attack
to produce the idea of a potential enemy. Against the background of reports of fighting in Sibiu between the army and the Securitate unconfirmed rumours and exaggerated fears gave increasing substance to these shadowy fears until they crystallised in outbreaks of shooting as night began to fall. The exact bounds of the ensuing conflict remain unclear but all the available evidence suggests that none of the larger Securitate units came into open conflict with the forces of the revolution during this period, although the absence of detailed information makes it impossible to discount the possibility that some members of the Securitate, acting as individuals or as small groups, did take up arms against the incoming regime.

The Securitate rather than being a single entity was constructed from a confusing plethora of bodies, as well as the Securitate troops, six directorates and local organisations there were also a host of units and subunits. Initially, the whole Securitate was viewed as a force potentially hostile to the revolution with early scares particularly focusing on the feared USLA. However, as it became clear that some of the Ministry of Interior forces at least were on the side of the revolution, the enemy was subtly redefined to include only a few members of the Securitate. This occurred in a short address made by Reserve General Nicolae Tudor on the television immediately after the transmission from the Central Committee building when Iliescu and Gâ populate had appeared on the balcony together. Speaking on behalf of the National Salvation Committee Tudor defined the enemy:

... troops of the Securitate led by General Ghîrea are at this actual hour, all, loyal to the people. They have orders and discharge orders on behalf of the National Salvation Committee. What is said, that troops of the Securitate act against the people is legitimate through some special units. They are anti-terrorist troops and other troops of the former dictator, few, small in number, but embittered, who act from different points. These points are in the course of liquidation by army forces.

Although, subsequently, there was still to be moments of confusion, as when a signed declaration by Tudor Postelnicu was broadcast on 23 December asking Colonel Pavelescu and his men of the Securitate troops to: 'Cease all actions of a terroristic nature and establish effective means of surrendering... ', by and large, Tudor's narrow definition of the enemy as special units of the Securitate lasted for the course of the revolution and amongst many of the protagonists has persisted even until today. However, the words terrorists was not yet openly used — the enemy were still confusingly termed 'anti-terrorists' — and Tudor's statement, thus, naturally flows from other scares involving USLA earlier in the afternoon. Tudor spoke around 18.45 probably after the outbreak of shooting in Piaţa Palatului, but before firing was heard at the television, and it remains
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unclear from where he received his information or if he had been in contact with those at the Central Committee before speaking.

Tudor's definition of the enemy was to be further fine-tuned by Iliescu in the afternoon of the next day, 23 December, when mimicking the term used by Ceausescu to describe the 'hooligans' of Timisoara, the word 'terrorist', already in widespread use in popular parlance, entered official circulation to describe the opponents of the regime. Like Tudor before him Iliescu also stressed the small number of 'terrorists' but, whilst seeming to accept they were Ministry of Interior forces, he specified no particular units and, indeed, blurred the lines of distinction still further by noting that they were in fact wearing civilian dress:

[There are] ... certain bands of terrorists, specially trained to fight against the people's masses and defend the dictator ... certain fanatical individuals operating with unprecedented cruelty, firing on buildings and citizens, and claiming victims amongst the military ... We want to say that all military units, and the great majority of militia and interior ministry units, are acting jointly against the terrorists ... Actually, I must tell you that we are not dealing with a large number of terrorist elements, but rather they are specially trained and equipped for this kind of actions ... the terrorists are not wearing uniforms. They are in civilian dress. Often, they try to create confusion and are even wearing arm bands, so as to be taken as people belonging to civic groups. They want to create confusion. They shoot from any position. Therefore, it is important for the armed citizens of our groups to refrain from acting, because they may be taken for terrorists and fall victim to clashes with military units.\(^{148}\)

Subsequent to the fighting the identity of the 'terrorists' has received fullest expression in the revelations of Brucan and Militaru. They also maintained that they mostly came from the Ministry of Interior forces, but added spice was given by the apparent confirmation of rumours that Arabs had also participated. Also following Iliescu and seemingly borrowing freely from popular mythology the 'terrorists' were raised in status to a well equipped élite especially trained for urban guerrilla warfare:

All of them were snipers trained in the techniques of guerilla-type urban warfare and equipped with the most modern machine guns (infra red etc.) ... Some officers held two identity cards and passports, keys to two apartments stocked with food in freezers, civilian and military clothes, etc. They were called terrorists, because starting in the evening of December 22 they occupied positions in the buildings surrounding the TV and radio stations, the Ministry of Defence, the Central Committee of the Party and so on and began shooting soldiers and civilians indiscriminately.\(^{149}\)

From the onset, the 'terrorists' were, thus, readily identified as coming from special forces of the Ministry of the Interior, however, it soon became clear to the evident
confusion of all, including the Western media, that there was no consensus as to which were the units involved. Indeed, long after the fighting had ceased their identity remained as much a mystery as ever as the question became to a certain extent subsumed under a narrower debate over the guilt of certain key individuals jailed after the event — most notably Vlad who engaged in a public polemic on the subject with Brucan. The prevailing tendency has been for former Securitate officers to build on the continuing ambiguity of official statements recording the lack of culpability of the vast majority of the Ministry of Interior forces to include all known Securitate forces within the ambit of the revolution and, thus, proclaim their own innocence of any crimes committed then or previously.

Meanwhile Brucan has resolutely held to his story that there were terrorists and that they came from the Ministry of Interior forces although he has rather weakened his case by changing his mind over the units involved. In his combined interview with Militaru the finger of suspicion was pointed at four special units. a) The Military Academy for Officers of the Ministry of the Interior at Băneasa, headed by General Nicolae Andruța Ceaușescu, with a strength of about 2,000 officers. b) USLA, headed by Colonel Gheorghe Ardeleanu, with a strength of 795, c) Directorate V, Ceaușescu's personal bodyguard, headed by General Marin Neagoe, comprising 484 men, d) Bucharest Securitate forces, headed by Colonel Gheorghe Goran with about 600 personnel. However, in a later rendition, whilst maintaining his insistence on the involvement of USLA and the Ministry of Interior Military Academy, Brucan drops references to Directorate V and the Bucharest Securitate apparatus replacing them with the Military Finishing School for Officers of the Militia in Bucharest and the catch-all phrase 'other special units'.

It seems that all the above named units played some role in the events of the night of 21 December, but no evidence has yet been produced to conclusively prove that any of them took up positions against the revolution after the flight of Ceaușescu. Indeed, the evidence, if anything, points in the opposite direction. At the time of the revolution the popular perception was that Directorate V had been the source of the violence and stories to this effect appeared in the Western media. During the fighting their headquarters to the side of the Central Committee building was virtually razed to the ground such was the intensity of fire poured upon it and, indeed, for a time after the revolution the whole unit was placed under arrest, and this fact probably lies at the heart of Cazimir Ionescu's assertion at the beginning of January that several thousand 'terrorists' were detained. However, an investigation by the respected opposition journalist, Petre Mihai Băcanu, in România Liberă found no evidence that Directorate V had been involved in the fighting and, later, this was confirmed by
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Colonel Mugurel Florescu, head of the Military Procuracy Directorate. The commander of another much suspected unit, USLA, Colonel Gheorghe Ardeleanu, appeared at the shoulder of Iliescu during the meeting held to formally constitute the NSF at the Central Committee building suggesting that this unit also rapidly came onto the side of the new regime and this supposition is sustained by all available circumstantial evidence. Depositions made to the Senatorial Commission of Inquiry state quite clearly that troops from the Officers School of the Ministry of Interior at Băneasa returned to barracks on 22 December and were confined there from thence onwards and, from the available evidence concerning events at Otopeni, the troops of the School for Non-Commissioned Officers of the Securitate troops were also deployed on behalf of the revolution as were the Securitate troops and other Securitate units in general. Further evidence suggesting the bulk, if not all of the Securitate, immediately aligned themselves with the revolution also comes from the night of 22/23 December when Iliescu appears to have spoken with a number of Securitate commanders including Major-General Ovidiu Diaconescu, head of the Technical and Transmission Command, and Major-General Alexandru Tencu, head of surveillance operations.

Uncertainty as to which units might have been involved was reflected in the continuing confusion over the number of ‘terrorists’. Brucan speaking on 28 December mirrored Iliescu by suggesting they were few in number when he said that perhaps no more than ninety Securitate men were still loose in the capital; however, on the next day, 29 December, Cazimir Ionescu suggested that far greater numbers were involved saying that although ‘several thousand security policemen’ had surrendered, several thousand were still estimated to be at large. After the end of the fighting Colonel-General Vasile Ionel, although admitting that the exact number of ‘terrorists’ was still unknown, suggested that several thousand had been involved in the fighting and, indeed, there was an immediate post-Ceauşescu tendency for army sources to play-up the number of ‘terrorists’ and their capabilities largely, it seems, to legitimate their own position and to ‘explain’ the high levels of material damage and destruction.

At first sight, firmer evidence for the existence of ‘terrorists’ comes from the incontrovertible fact that large numbers of suspects were arrested during the revolution with countless reports speaking of dubious characters being held, and the new political leadership reassuring an anxious population that thousands were under detention. Indeed, Brucan in his efforts to prove the existence of the ‘terrorists’ has produced detailed Ministry of Defence breakdowns of the number of arrests. One of these purports to show that on 4 January 1990 the army held
608 suspects. The vast majority of these were detained in four cities: Bucharest where 179 were held; Sibiu, 171; Brăila, 134 and Timișoara, eighty-nine with the remainder spread across a few other centres: Alba Iulia where three were held; Arad, one; Brașov, seven; Caransebes, one; Curtea de Argeș, seventeen; Focșani, three and Galați, three. However, by August 1990, the picture was fast becoming extremely clouded with the vast majority of cases not being brought to trial. By that date proceedings had started against 147 defendants, 134 of whom were under arrest including nine Securitate generals, thirty-four Securitate officers, forty-seven officers of the militia together with six other ranks, three army officers together with three other ranks and thirty-five senior Party officials. Of the seventy-nine cases already judged thirty had been convicted whilst investigations were continuing into a further 638 cases twenty-two for acts of terrorism.

Contemporary accounts of the revolution give a vivid picture of an atmosphere of all pervading paranoia in which the level of mutual fear and suspicion reached such a pitch that it sparked off an apparently never ending cycle of arrest and release. This comes over particularly strongly in the accounts contained in Revoluția Română în direct where it seems that, at one time or another, nearly every civilian in the TV centre was detained as a suspect 'terrorist'. With the mushrooming of checkpoints and barricades, both official and unofficial, across the country vast numbers of people were detained if only temporarily. The Military Procurator's office from 26 December 1989 began to investigate the case of some 200 of those held in Bucharest. Of these they discovered that some were held for specific crimes relating to stealing from the Central Committee building, RCP offices or other state owned premises, whilst others were armed civilians who had participated in the events and been detained for intemperate behaviour. A few others seem to have taken advantage of the situation to settle long-standing scores by denouncing enemies to the authorities, although these of course may have sometimes been members of the Securitate. However, most arrests seem to have been related to the general climate of suspicion. Often on the flimsiest of excuses men lying wounded in hospitals were detained for wearing different clothes, whilst others were held for being in a different zone from where they lived, or perhaps because without any valid reason they were near a building from which gunshots had been heard. More controversial were those who had been released after being held for fighting with supporters of the revolution — Florescu is not specific what is implied here but presumably these disputes were at the level of public arguments and fisticuffs rather than counter-revolutionary activity — and most contentious of all were those detained because they belonged to the Securitate even though they professed to support the revolution. The latter arrests lie at
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the crux of the problem, because the accusation is that many of those who were guilty of crimes were surreptitiously released by their own comrades-in-arms once they were transferred to militia stations and other places of detention. Following this line, Brucan and Militaru have charged that in this way many of the 'terrorists' were allowed to escape through Hungary and Turkey. Certainly, at the TV General Tudor seems to have either released those held or sent them to local militia stations where they were freed by others. At that time and since, Tudor received much criticism for this but a prosecutor's report says that of those released by him and subsequently investigated none were found to have committed acts of a terrorist nature, and the many eyewitness accounts from the TV also seem to suggest that the vast majority of those detained were the victims of revolutionary enthusiasm.

The passage of time has rendered the 'terrorists' little more visible than they were during the darkest hours of the revolution. Although, not all of the many units of the Securitate have been fully accounted for and the circumstances probably varied in each city, the picture that emerges from Bucharest is of no organised opposition to the incoming NSF from any of the Ministry of Interior forces. A more apt scenario may be that from the flight of Ceaușescu members of the Securitate, like many of those in positions of authority, waited with bated breath to see which way the tide would turn. In their various institutes and other places of work Securitate members broke open arms stores and took up guard positions, as they would say 'on behalf of the revolution', but, in reality, with as much a thought to securing their own protection as anything else, for they had much to fear having become so closely identified in the public mind with the sinking Ceaușescu regime. Adhering to neither one side nor the other they rested in an ambiguous void, and it is this very ambiguity that may have led to some of the violence as they were challenged by or, indeed, challenged the revolution. The behaviour of General Vlad, first staying close to the attempts to reform the faltering RCP and, only after this had failed, rather belatedly coming to the side of the Iliescu group mirrors this process. However, by the time Vlad and the other Securitate leaders had made full protestations of loyalty to the new regime both the public and the new leaders had embraced the idea of the Securitate 'terrorists' and once set in motion this idea proved impossible to halt, largely because the proffered image so closely matched popular mythology.

The image of the 'terrorists' as portrayed by the leaders of the NSF gained public acceptance because it fitted popular perceptions of the Securitate as a sinister shadowy organisation. The fact that the Securitate should be prepared to take
up arms in a last ditched desperate attempt to preserve the regime, of which they were the very embodiment, was accepted without question. The exaggerated myth of the Securitate had served to make them appear omnipotent within Ceaușescu's Romania and now, after his downfall, that same myth was to make them guilty not only of all the crimes of the past but also of the most horrific atrocities during the revolution as their actions were exaggerated to fantastical proportions. The Securitate were portrayed as behaving in the most extreme manner frequently storming hospitals and shooting pregnant women in cold blood or descending from lorries to randomly slaughter innocent civilians. In many cities they were said to have poisoned the local water supply and in Brașov they were alleged to have plans to blow up a nearby dam. A local Brașov journalist was quoted as describing them as being '...like H.G. Wells's Morlocks — they appear at night and kill us, and then disappear underground' and a similar motif was taken up in another report which said that Bucharest was witnessing a '...last ditch resistance by Securitate special black-shirt units who have orders to fight until the last moment and then commit suicide by biting on a cyanide pellet in their collars'. To help explain the barbarity of their actions it was reported that the 'terrorists' were high on drugs or zombie-like child orphans raised to obey without question the dictates of their beloved master — a story which has all the appearance of deriving from the the Ottoman practice of enslaving Christian children into state service through the devshirme. The wild story telling in one sense was just another reflection of the atmosphere of rumour and innuendo which surrounded the revolution and the colourful hyperbole of the oral popular culture certainly found eager ears amongst Western journalists. However, the savage imagery can also be said to have served another purpose since Codrescu has suggested that, when pushed far the Romanians instead of making physical recourse to action will use their imagination to make exemplary gestures. Thus, when he is told a story about Securitate men being impaled on a wheel he notes that they '...were neither more nor less dead for being impaled. But impaled, they were unforgettable. That was the point, whether any impalement had taken place or not.' Indeed, this was characteristic of the extent to which the ills of the past were heaped upon Ceaușescu, in what was seen at the time as an almost psychopathic hatred, although perhaps hiding behind this outpouring of venom and spleen there was also a lingering sense of shame and guilt, that Romania had continued to accept such an enfeebled old tyrant for so long. Richard Wagner has suggested that the term 'terrorist' was taken up so readily because it filled a need within the population to distance themselves from both the Securitate agents who, after all, were fellow Romanians living in their midst until the onset of the fighting, and from the worst excesses
of the Ceauşescu regime as a whole. By driving the Securitate so far outside the limits of acceptable behaviour, the Romanians emotionally were indulging in a collective self-cleansing, because by locating the evils of the Ceauşescu regime beyond the bounds of society they were effectively ostracising these demons from the national soul. Alongside such psychological imperatives there was also an understandable demand and expectation of recompense after years of fear and humiliating subjugation.

A further step in this process of distancing society was achieved through the widespread rumour that it was not really Romanians but Arabs who were responsible for much of the fighting. By the 23 December such stories were appearing on Romanian TV and radio and in the local press, although it seems that they only received wider international circulation following broadcasts by Hungarian radio, which on 25 December reported that in Arad the Romanian army had captured some Libyan terrorists who possessed the latest long-range weapons and had fought alongside the Securitate. Vigorous denials from Syria and Libya that any of their citizens were involved soon appeared in the edition of Adevarul dated 25 December 1989 and on Bucharest radio from a PLO leader, Faruq Qaddumi, on 27 December. On the 30 December, after receiving a telephone call from the Libyan leader, Mu'ammar Quadhafi, Petre Roman denied that any Arabs had participated in the conflict and said that such ‘rumours’ were being spread by those who wished to destabilise ‘the popular revolution’. However, the matter refused to die away and continued to rumble on through the next year with the most sensational allegations being made by Brucan and Militaru:

...they [the Ministry of Interior special units] were joined by about 30 Arab students, mostly Palestinians, who had been trained at Andruţa’s [Ceauşescu] Military Academy. One of them was killed and many wounded but the corpse disappeared from the Morgue, and the wounded, after undergoing surgery or being bandaged at the hospital, were taken away by their comrades and all left by air.

Prior to the revolution Romania had a considerable population of Arab students who in general seem to have been despised by most of the locals because of their perceived arrogance and sometimes lavish display amongst such overwhelming poverty — due to their colouring the Arabs also seem to have become associated in popular perception with the much reviled gypsies. Some of these latent tensions seem to have boiled over during the revolution leaving some Arabs in an unenviable position. In one tragicomic incident in Iaşi an attempt by Yemeni students to declare their support for the new regime was reported as nearly sparking off a gunfight and, willingly or not, it seems quite conceivable that a number of Arabs may well have been caught up in the fighting. Whether any of these
were military trainees will probably forever remain unknown, although there long
had been strong rumours that certain training camps did exist in Romania. What
seems more certain is that, even if a few Arabs did participate in some unknown
way, they would have had no appreciable effect on the conflict. Indeed, all the
reports of Arab ‘terrorists’ are best put into perspective through the experiences
of Philip Jacobson, a reporter from *The Times*, who entered Romania with two
South Korean journalists. When their car was stopped by the Romanian army the
two Koreans were roughly manhandled out and nearly executed on the spot by
excited soldiers before an officer appeared and explained that ‘“Libyan and Syrian
terrorists” had shot and killed two of his men near Arad on Saturday night’ and
that: ‘...his troops were naturally angry about this, and anyway, how could they
be expected to distinguish between Libyans and Syrians and Koreans since they
had never laid eyes on any of them?’

Perhaps not surprisingly the Koreans, by
now thoroughly unnerved, elected to return to Hungary.

*Plots and subplots*

Initially, there was near unanimity both within Romania and abroad that the
events had been a spontaneous explosion of popular anger with 90% agreeing with
this description in an early poll. However, before long within certain circles
this version of the events began to be questioned and in its place two alternative
views arose both of which cast doubts on the authenticity of the revolutionary
experience. Broadly, the first of these held that the events had been hijacked by
a group of former Party members who had staged an internal *coup d'état* and the
second that they had been subject to gross manipulation by external forces, the
two categories not being mutually exclusive as a certain amount of overlap existed
between them — normally on the lines that the protagonists in the internal coup
were backed by the Soviet Union. After a string of revelations from senior
former members of the regime it is now widely accepted that there was some
degree of pre-revolutionary planning by certain groups, and so the emphasis in
this account will not be so much on discerning the existence of any conspiracies
but rather on their relationship with the actual outcome of events.

The initial idea that the revolution was not spontaneous but a planned con-
sspiracy appears to have been a last gasp poisoned chalice from Ceauşescu, who at
his trial raged against ‘this group of traitors, who with foreign help, succeeded in
this coup’. Largely a recapitulation of his earlier allegations, that the revolution
was the work of ‘reactionary, imperialist, irredentist, chauvinist circles and foreign
espionage services in various countries’, this charge of the events being nothing
more than a coup was given added spice by the presence of several leading army
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officers, including General Stănculescu at the trial. Indeed, somewhat ironically, Ceaușescu's allegations that the revolution was the work of foreign agents were later repeated by the selfsame general to justify his behaviour when he was called upon to give evidence at the trial of those implicated in the massacre at Timișoara, and, in general, since then it has become a prominent feature in the literature of those who wish to further a partial rehabilitation of the old regime. In their view any internal conspirators were the mere puppets of outside forces who plotted to illegally remove a flawed, but truly Romanian, regime.

The public broadcast of the Ceaușescus' trial seems to have stirred speculation as to the origins of the revolution with more fuel quickly being thrown on the fire, largely in relation to stories of an internal coup, by the broadcast on French TV of the video recording of the Central Committee building meeting in which Militaru declared that the NSF has been in existence for six months. Soon the foreign media, often abetted by the statements of prominent revolutionaries such as Cazimir Ionescu and Mihai Lupoi, was full of stories relating to plots and via short wave radio broadcast and other means these stories rapidly filtered back into Romania. Senior foreign politicians also began to suggest that all was not as it had first appeared, with the French Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas, in a radio interview stating that he also had known of the plot since the summer because the French Ambassador in Bucharest “had done his job” further adding that, in his opinion, the Soviet Union “Undoubtedly knew it too”.

The response of the new regime to such allegations was firm and rapid. As early as the 26 December, just after the trial of Ceaușescu had been broadcast, Iliescu felt constrained to publicly deny the revolution was ‘...a coup performed by some organised force supported even by abroad...’. And following the broadcast of the videotape of the Central Committee building meeting Roman in an interview with a French television channel tried to cast doubts on the reliability of the recording by saying it was a composite of three different shots taken in two locations. The first in the afternoon at the Central Committee building, the second and third at the TV station later that day. However, the apotheosis of this creed of the revolution as a popular uprising came with the definitive statement of Silviu Brucan, made on 4 January 1990, which includes the disingenuous suggestion that, if they really had been planning a coup, the leaders of the Front would not have hidden such events but freely boasted about them:

I must tell you frankly how amazed I was that serious newspapers in the West are taken in by the fantastic story of the ploy supposedly set up six months ago to overthrow Ceaușescu. I have never thought that [the] Western media are so vulnerable to such a grossly fabricated story, such
a monumental fake. The first thing that should have occurred to them is that if the six-months' ploy involving the Front and the Army were to be true, we the leaders of the Front would have boasted about it from the beginning. To be able to tell the Romanian people that Ceaușescu has been overthrown as the result of a well-thought-out conspiracy that we planned a long time ago could have constituted a formidable asset and a great historical merit deserving the warmest congratulations of the Romanian people.

In fact..., the truth is that it [sic] has never been such a plan. The truth is that the making of such a plan in Ceaușescu's totalitarian police state was simply impossible. The repression and surveillance in Romania were so effective that no political grouping could possibly take shape either within the party or outside the party. Even less one involving the military, the army. The historical truth is that the massive social explosion of 22nd December was one hundred per cent spontaneous and it was only during the powerful attack on the former Central Committee building that the leaders of the Front were for the first time together.¹⁰⁰

As early as the beginning of January these continuous and vehement declarations by the leaders of the Front that the revolution was truly an unsullied popular insurrection, not tainted in any way by the vaguest hint of premeditated planning, already gave the appearance of being increasingly threadbare as growing evidence amassed to the contrary. The apparent refusal of the Front's leaders to tell the truth about the origins of their own movement seriously undermined international trust in the new regime, but their rigid attachment to the mantra of the spontaneous revolution was largely driven by the domestic political agenda, for, by this time, the very legitimacy of the NSF had come to hinge on it being seen as the embodiment of the popular revolution it claimed to head and not the holder of power seized as the result of a conspiracy or through the assistance of the Soviet Union. At a press conference on 8 January 1990, Aurel Dragoș Munteanu, the spokesman for the NSF, unambiguously underlined the link when he stated 'The National Salvation Front is...an outcome of the revolution. It only has the legitimacy endowed by the revolution'.¹⁰¹

In response, the emerging opposition, which as the NSF usurped sole title to the event increasingly became pushed outside the bounds of the revolution, began to charge that the Front far from being a revolutionary group were just a bunch of former communists who had gained power through a planned putsch. This Romanian opposition rapidly formed a somewhat symbiotic relationship with the foreign, and, especially, the French media which began to feature heavy coverage of speculation that all in Romania was not as it had first seemed. Initially, voiced by some of the foreign journalists present during the revolution — Castex was head of the Agence France Presse team which arrived in Bucharest on the 25
December 1989 — these ideas were expanded in a series of books and articles, primarily produced in France during 1990 by journalists, émigrés and observers of the Romanian scene, which were often reprinted in the Romanian press. At the same time as these growing doubts about the revolution were raised by the foreign press they began to find some degree of conformation in Romania, as in a series of articles and interviews a number of figures, formerly associated with the new regime, began to indicate that there had, indeed, been some form of pre-revolutionary plotting. These revelations concerning plots have to be taken seriously, but with considerable caution, as they appear highly selective and often come from the ‘plotters’ themselves, many of whom were discarded after the revolution and had obvious political axes to grind. Indeed, it can be argued that they have basked under so much attention and notoriety largely because they were seen as a means by which to delegitimate the Iliescu regime. The chief source of information which is usually cited for such stories is a celebrated interview given by Brucan and Militaru to *Adevărul* in August 1990. However, much of what Brucan and Militaru ‘revealed’ in this was already known or suspected from a number of earlier articles, and the significance of the *Adevărul* interview lies more in the fact that their positions at the centre of the revolution gave an ‘official’ stamp to stories then circulating from less influential sources. Although, as well as eroding the legitimacy of the regime, following his earlier ringing denouncements of anything but a spontaneous revolution, this abrupt volte-face also seems to have stripped away the last vestiges of Brucan’s already tattered political credibility. The interview given by Brucan and Militaru raises as many questions as it answers, and in the continuing absence of any definitive statement from Iliescu much still remains subject to speculation. Indeed, such was the surreptitious manner in which the details came to light that the revelations have only helped feed ever wilder speculations. Partly the problem lies in the fact that there is a fine line in distinguishing between serious planning for a coup and disgruntled scheming. To be accepted as a dissident, it seems, one must speak openly, but successful plots by their very nature are hidden until sprung. The failings of the Ceauşescu regime were not hidden from many members of the *nomenclatura* but, when does private dissension and complaint turn to open plotting and how many of the elaborate imbroglios involving submarines and the like stretched much further than idle dreams?

The idea that Ceauşescu was toppled by a coup fell on fertile ground in Romania. Years of Marxist-Leninist instruction had imbued minds with the idea that revolution came about through the actions of a vanguard grouping which was often a hidden and clandestine organisation, and there was also a venerable Romanian
domestic tradition of political intrigue stretching back to the Phanariot period and beyond. Under communism, where there was no legitimate mechanism for promotion other than favour from on high, conspiracy against one's rivals seems to have been the norm, as is graphically illustrated in Petru Dumitriu's informed novel *Incognito* set amongst the higher echelons of the Romanian Communist Party and redolent with intrigue, suspicion and chicanery.\(^{195}\) However, the longest shadow in 1989 seems to have been cast by the most famous Romanian plot of all, the coup of 1944, which had removed Marshal Antonescu from power and heralded the abrupt change of sides from the Axis to the Allied cause. Indeed, some of the participants in 1989, such as Brucan, were old enough to have participated on the fringes of this conspiracy, which seems to have served as something of an inspiration for the latter-day plotters. Within Romania, following the downfall of the RCP regime, which had long usurped the events of 1944 for its own political ends, a whole spate of books and articles have appeared about the events of that year, and these seem to have helped, perhaps largely subconsciously, consolidate the 'culture of conspiracy'. Indeed the similarities between 1944 and 1989, in some regards, are quite striking as can be seen from the observations of two eyewitnesses to the events of 1944: '...there were so many plotters plotting, conspirators conspiring, traitors committing treason and cheaters cheating, including the very Sigurantza [Security Police]..., that nobody knew who was who and what was what. We traced nine separate plots all striving for the same goal.' However, before succumbing to a complete sense of *déjà vu*, it should be noted that the coup of 1944 proceeded so smoothly that '...it lacked the dramatic punch and the shooting and shouting without which political upheavals in Bucharest were considered impossible.'\(^{196}\)

There certainly were conspiracies against Ceauşescu, as had been rumoured for many years, but because plots by their very nature are extremely secret undertakings normally working on a need to know basis, only a highly fragmented view of their extent has become available.\(^{197}\) The variations on a theme that emerge are of several groups of malcontents, each quite small and self-centred, but with somewhat ambiguous boundaries giving them a surprisingly fluid membership, especially, at the periphery. These groups seem to have drawn their membership from the former and current members of the army, Securitate and Party apparatus, but, although Brucan speaks of a deliberate three pronged strategy of infiltrating each group in turn, to mixed results, such an organised structure may have been more the product of hopes rather than reality. Indeed, the picture painted, perhaps in hindsight, is that the level of disgruntlement with Ceauşescu's policies was enough to fuel a score of coups, let alone one. Some of these groups were in contact but others were not, and the links that were made appear to have been
frequently nebulous and racked with mutual suspicion. The most significant plot
for which details have so far come to light, and the one which seems to have the
greatest bearing on the events of 1989, was an abortive coup set for October 15-17
1984, when the Ceaușescus were making an official visit to West Germany. Al­
though the plot seems to have failed because it was betrayed, with the military
units due to be involved being sent to perform agricultural work, its mechanics
are interesting, not so much as to gauge their potential feasibility, but because
they appear to configure important elements of the 1989 revolution. According
to Brucan the 1984 plot had three main strands: a) The detention of Ceaușescu's
chief aides and the transmission of power within the existing Party structure. b)
The support of the army. In 1984 this was to be through the Bucharest garrison
with the support of a mechanized division led by General Dumitriu Pletos and a
division of tanks under General Paul Cheler, both stationed near Bucharest, who
were supposed to intervene in order to counter any possible challenge from the
forces of the Securitate. Access to a large ammunition depot in Tirgoviște was to
be secured by Lieutenant-Colonel Ion Suceava, its commander. c) The securing
of key strategic objectives including the national radio and television stations to
call on the people to rise against the leadership so as to ensure the success of the
military operation. Brucan stressed that the linkage of the military coup with a
popular uprising was the central idea of the scenario. Thus, according to Bru­
can, and in the light of his previous record of bending history to his own needs,
his remarks must be taken with caution, in 1984 plans for the coup were centred
on the army and included an assumption that they might meet opposition from
the Securitate. It also called for the seizing of key objectives by the plotters and
the mass mobilisation of the people against Ceaușescu.

Since the revelations about conspiracies have mostly come from former army
generals, this service has perhaps unjustifiably tended to predominate, offering an
interpretation of the events which has suggested that the other Securitate based
groups were less committed in their actions being content to privately air their
dissention rather than actively participate in the planning of a coup. The army
figures most frequently mentioned in the accounts of plots are Generals Ion Ionița,
Ștefan Kostyal, Nicolae Militaru and Vasile Ionel. The first was dead by 1989,
but the others three did play roles in the revolution, as probably did two of the
figures from the 1984 plot, Pletos and Cheler, since they were both recalled to
active service after the events. The various accounts also mention several other
figures from the Ministry of Interior and even some from the ranks of the Party, but
these are less in number, and only Colonel Dumitru Penciuc and Virgil Măgureanu
are known to have featured in 1989. More problematic is the relationship of
Silviu Brucan and, especially, Ion Iliescu to these groups. The general consensus seems to be that both were involved at one time or another with Brucan being associated with a group of conspirators drawn from the army and Iliescu with those coming from the ranks of Securitate, but the weight ascribed to their role seems to vary depending on the source consulted.

Whilst bearing the past in mind, questions still remain as to the degree of planning that existed for a coup in 1989 and, more pertinently, the extent to which these plans influenced the course of the revolution. Subsequent to the events Militaru has said that a coup was planned for February 1990 and that the plotters were taken by surprise by the revolution. How serious such plans were remains unknown, since Militaru has remained strangely reticent on the subject, but Brucan, Militaru and Kostyal have all spoken of a 'Military Resistance Committee' which, at the time of the revolution, they say comprised at least 20 senior officers. The exact composition of the committee is unknown but it seems likely, as Shafir following Radu has suggested, that the generals reactivated from the reserve during the revolution were at its core and, indeed, Cheler, Ionel and Pletos all named in previous plots are to be found in this list. However, not included are several of the reserve generals who were clearly privy to some conspiracy and subsequently participated in the revolution, such as General Nicolae Tudor, First-Rank Captain Emil Dumitrescu and Major-General Ştefan Kostyal, nor are others who from the statements they made on television may be presumed to have had some inkling of developments, including Reserve Colonel-General Nicolae Doicaru and Reserve Colonel-General Stelian Țîrăcă. It may well be that some of the generals were recalled to active service because of the need to place trusted confidants in positions of authority and that not all necessarily had knowledge of any plot.

What level of contact there was between the conspirators and serving army officers is still not clear. The first priority in 1984 seems to have been to secure the support of the Bucharest garrison, and it seems probable that the same held true for 1989. Indeed, the commanders of the capital's garrison seem to have been a permanent thorn in the flesh for Ceaușescu, since two of the previous occupants of the post, Generals Șerb and Militaru, are both rumoured to have fallen in disgrace because of contacts with Soviet intelligence. In 1989 the position was held by General Mihai Chițac and, whilst making due allowance for the fact that he never seems to have publicly spoken on the matter, his still unexplained early arrival at the television station, where he declared himself for the revolution and spoke confidently of the 'new democratic socialist orientation of the country' well before the arrival of Iliescu, together with his subsequent meteoric rise to the
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post of Minister of the Interior, certainly, needs further clarification.\(^{208}\) Of the other senior army officers the available evidence does not seem to point to any serious involvement in pre-revolutionary plotting until perhaps the last possible moment, when, it seems, within the realms of probability, that some may have been contacted by the conspirators in order to try and ascertain their inclinations once the demonstrations had begun in Timișoara. Generally, the army does seem to have remained loyal to Ceaușescu until mid-morning on 22 December. Militaru has said that he was a close friend of Milea but that he was not a party to any conspiracy, and Kostyal and Radu have said the same for Stănculescu, although admittedly his participation in Ceaușescu's execution and subsequent high profile political career would seem to suggest otherwise.\(^{207}\) No serious allegations seem to have ever been made that Gușe, Voineanu or Eftimescu were implicated in any conspiracy. Although little information is available, the same may also more or less hold for the \textit{Securitate} apart perhaps from the above mentioned Colonel Dumitru Penciuc and an intriguing appeal by an unidentified former Ministry of Interior General on the television on 22 December to a certain Colonel Bucur who 'knows how we feel.'\(^{208}\)

If the plotting military officers were mostly reserve generals, it raises the question as to how effective they were when they returned to duty. How many passed back into service during the revolution is unknown, but on 22 December Tudor quickly arrived at the TV closely followed by Militaru and Dumitrescu whilst Kostyal went to the Ministry of Defence. Their initial lack of communication with the regular army is evident at the TV when Militaru called for Voineanu and Gușe to come to the television station even though Voineanu had already appeared. At that time given, the fact that to all intents and purposes most of the army and the Ministry of Interior forces had already come to the side of the revolution, the scope for them to play any major military role seemed to be extremely limited. Anyway, most of them were old, in their seventies or late sixties — Kostyal was seventy-nine and Militaru sixty-five — and later claims that they were the decisive factor in determining the fate of revolution, as when Brucan and Militaru declared '...— once General Militaru took over as Minister of Defence — the whole chain of command shifted into the hands of generals devoted to the revolution.', would seem to bear more than a little trace of hyperbolical egotism.\(^{209}\)

The generals who were reactivated during this period proved an insurance at a time when the new regime could be absolutely sure of the loyalty of only a few army and Ministry of Interior officers. Placed within the higher levels of the security forces whilst the NSF consolidated its hold on power they were soon once more returned to the reserve when it became clear that there was no effective
challenge to be faced and rumblings of discontent were heard from the regular army over blocked channels of promotion. The speed with which they were then removed from office suggests that they held little political strength and certainly not the prestige which would have been accorded to them if they truly were the very bastions of the revolution. At an operational level their importance during the events is not entirely clear. Militaru who took over as Minister of Defence during the revolution was obviously the most important of these figures and, presumably, he did have considerable influence on the unfolding events from the early afternoon on 22 December but, judging from his forced resignation shortly afterwards, his relationship with serving military officers had proved turbulent. Of the others, on his own admission, Kostyal played little active role. He went to the Ministry of Defence, apparently on the basis of memories of the 1984 plan, but after meeting Stănculescu he was left there apparently with no real role. When he later made his way to the Central Committee building he was excluded from any important meetings and, eventually, made his way to the Băneasa airbase where he remained until 26 December assisting General Muceanu, head of the anti-aircraft batteries. The overall defence of the TV seems had been placed in the hands of Tudor, assisted by Emil (Cico) Dumitrescu, although actual troop dispositions appear to have remained in the hands of the unit commanders. In the pages of Revoluția Română în direct the contributors from the army waste no opportunity to pour scorn on Tudor, painting a picture of a crazed old man suffering from cerebral arteriosclerosis and prone to wander around in his stockinged feet. Independent witnesses also point to disagreements between the regular army and the reserve general but, how much this is hindsight and how much it marks real tensions in the military leadership at the time, is unknown. The deliberate downplaying of the role played by Tudor and Lupoi at the time must also be seen in terms of later conflicts within the army and a continuing reluctance by both them and Iliescu to recognise the existence of pre-coup plotting, partly it seems because it might impair the revolutionary credentials of senior figures current serving in the military.

Accusations that foreign powers were behind the revolution surfaced at the time and have regularly appeared since. Many of these occupy the wilder fringes of the various conspiracy theories with stories abounding of foreign masked men bursting forth to wreak death and havoc on the streets of tranquil Romanian towns. But in comparison with the information about internal conspiracies any solid evidence for foreign involvement in the Romanian revolution remains thin on the ground. Many of the foreign power conspiracy theories have their roots
in the December 1988 Bush–Gorbachev summit in Malta — conspiracy theorists inevitably point out that, but for a single letter, the name is the same as Yalta — and, indeed, their argument is that the summit saw a carve up of Eastern Europe similar to the infamous had been executed, but according to Pacepa this Percentage Agreement between Stalin and Churchill — still very much a running sore on the Romanian body politic — with the only variation being that, this time, it was the US President George Bush who was selling out Romania and consigning it to remain in the Soviet orbit.

However, so fertile was the soil on which these rumours relating to foreign involvement fell, particularly, as it had been well tilled by Ceauşescu in recent years that they have come to be believed by large sections of the Romanian population. In part, this is a natural response to history. Romania as a medium sized country has always fallen under the ambit of countries more powerful than itself, principally, the Ottoman, Habsburg and Russian Empires and the legacy of this experience has been the cementation of a widespread belief that its destiny to a great extent lies in the hands of larger foreign powers. It is not surprising that a generation that, first, saw the Soviet Union swallow Bessarabia and North Bucovina and, then, experienced the brutal imposition of an alien political system on Romania itself, should once again discern the hand of Moscow behind events. It was also an accepted commonplace within Romania that Ceauşescu's idiosyncratic foreign policy riled Moscow and that the Russians would be happy to see him deposed and Romania once more brought to heel. When Ceauşescu's fall was announced in the Soviet Union to the Congress of People's Deputies then in session, it was met with loud applause with Gorbachev calling it a victory for Romania and, intriguingly, an 'example' of Soviet reforms.

Indeed, it does seem as if many of the plotters did have a more positive view of the Soviet Union than Ceauşescu. Kostyal was unabashed in his denunciation of Ceauşescu's errant foreign policy and Militaru also seems to have cultivated links with Moscow. Reference is also often made to the fact that many of the most senior leaders of the NSF, such as Iliescu, Marţian and Király as well as several of the military officers associated with the Front, such as Penciuc, had all received postgraduate education in the USSR. However, the only member of the NSF leadership, who certainly had contact with Soviet officials at the highest level immediately prior to the revolution, was Brucan who in November 1988 had a meeting with Gorbachev. But according to Brucan, whilst he did express support for any well organised plan that might secure Ceauşescu's removal, Gorbachev specifically ruled out any Soviet intervention to aid such a scheme. It is also perhaps significant that it was Brucan who inserted a passage into the
NSF programme about the need to adhere to the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and references to the Gorbachevian phrase ‘Common European Home’, and at the Central Committee building meeting another elder statesman of the Front, Alexandru Birlădeanu, also expressed concern that the Soviet Union be reassured as to their loyalties.  

Establishing the level of contact that existed between the Soviet Union and the incoming NSF regime at the time of the revolution is as difficult as attempting to trace previous exchanges, largely because neither side has been particularly forthcoming, with each displaying a marked sensitivity to the matter. Iliescu does seem to have made contact with the Russian Embassy in Bucharest on 22 December, because, late that afternoon, during the meeting at the Central Committee building he was recorded as stating he had already been in touch with the Soviet Embassy to say ‘who we were and what we want’, so that they might then contact Moscow. A statement that would seem to indicate the Russians had no forewarning of the takeover and had to be reassured about who had taken power.  

Later that night, as the fighting raged outside the TV station, the question of whether to ask for Soviet military intervention in support of the revolution appears to have been raised and some request for military help passed to the Russians. They, in turn, seem to have contacted Guse to see if assistance was required, but he declined the offer, and later the Russians themselves were to state that anyhow they had flatly rejected all requests for military intervention. However, on the next day between 10.00 and 11.00 Bucharest radio reported ‘that the help of the Soviet Army was requested through the Embassy of the USSR’ and, although neither the facts nor the chronology are yet fully apparent, it would seem that this announcement may be connected with an incident of the night before, when at least one building housing Soviet Embassy staff had come under heavy attack leaving casualties and the building gutted by fire. The crisis would seem to have passed during 23 December, perhaps with the Romanian army giving assurances that they were able to protect Soviet personnel, and after that date Soviet sources were adamant that military intervention was unnecessary. Indeed, parallels were made with past and present invasions, when the Prime Minister, Nicolae Ryzhkov, stated that in the month the Soviet Union had admitted that the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia had been an error it would hardly make the same mistake twice, and Andrei Grachev, deputy head of the Central Committee International Department, contrasted the behaviour of the two superpowers when he stated that ‘He [Gorbachev] is certainly not going to intervene [in Romania] as Bush intervened in Panama. However, as late as 24 December, there was still evident confusion over the matter and the Americans at least seemed to have
'The most obscure problem'

believed that intervention by Soviet troops was still a possibility, since on that day James Baker, United States Secretary of State, appeared on the NBC TV show 'Meet the Press' and stated that the Americans would be inclined to follow the lead of France and support any Warsaw Pact intervention in Romania 'on behalf of the opposition'.

Beyond the obvious fact that there is no sign of any concerted foreign involvement in the Romanian revolution, little evidence has so far come to light regarding relations between the embryonic NSF and the Soviet Union. Indeed, it may even be argued that it was the absence of Soviet forces from Romania — Red Army troops having been withdrawn in 1958 — that led to such a violent revolution in Romania, no external forces being available to moderate the scale of the explosion. However, Moscow does seem to have long been concerned with the possibility of economic collapse leading to political turmoil in Romania, an interest perhaps heightened because of the Moldova question, and Valentin Falin, head of the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, interviewed in 1990, hinted at their interest in pre-revolution plotting: '...we knew that a coup was inevitable because the regime was not only rotten but intransigent....When key critics of the regime, like Silviu Brucan came to Moscow in November [1988], we were asked to appreciate that Romania had no other way out. We, therefore, watched the developments within the armed forces of Romania and the growth of resistance to the regime from November through the end of the year very closely'.

The leaders of the Soviet Union would seem to have had a strong vested interest in securing the removal of Ceauşescu, who was the last great bastion of neo-Stalinism in the Eastern Bloc and, according to Brucan, when he met Gorbachev the year before, the Soviet leader expressed his support for any well organised plan to topple Ceauşescu providing 'it was carried out so as to maintain the Communist Party as the main political force in the country.' Gorbachev might, thus, be presumed to have done all he could to hasten the downfall of Ceauşescu, and during the revolution the Russians were quick to supply shipments of aid and it seems ammunition as well, although they noticeably stopped short of sending combat troops. Earlier, before the flight of Ceauşescu, direct pressure appears to have been put by the Soviet Union on the Romanian army High Command to stop the killing on the streets and, at this time, a considerable amount of hearsay evidence also suggests the presence of larger than normal numbers of Russians in Romania. Presuming there is some basis to these allegations, their presence can probably be explained by the need to gather intelligence and perhaps even occasionally attempt to influence the outcome of events — as does seem to have
occurred in 1968 in Czechoslovakia and in 1981 in Poland — but whether they had any real impact must remain doubtful as, in general, the tide was running so strongly that little could be done to divert or stem the flood of revolution. Instead their presence, if it is true, serves to demonstrate more than anything else that the Soviet Union had a far greater awareness of the weakness of the Ceauşescu regime than most commentators in the West.

Amongst those who took power during the revolution there were a core of former senior Party officials who looked favourably on the Soviet Union. Some of these were conservatives of the old school, such as Kostyal and Militaru, whilst others, such as Brucan and Iliescu, were more reform minded and so, naturally, looked to Gorbachev and perestroika for a lead. However, they were not alone in this, since prior to the revolution many Romanians appear to have invested their hopes in the new Soviet leader — for instance, Mircea Dinescu was reported as referring to Gorbachev's reforms as 'the miracle of restructuring'. In reality, Soviet influence in Romania was at a lower ebb than in any other Warsaw Pact country and the absence of Russian troops from the country gave it no effective leverage. It might, therefore, when considering the influence of the Soviet Union on the Romanian Revolution be more useful to question what type of relationship the new leaders of the NSF desired with their Russian neighbours — for instance Iliescu, for one, seems to have placed the highest priority on keeping them informed at all times.

In general, it seems that the importance of any conspiracies should not be overemphasised. That there was deep dissatisfaction within the ranks of the army, Ministry of Interior and Party is undeniable, and this does seem to have given rise to a certain amount of conspiring against Ceauşescu during the 1980s, but the Securitate always seems to have kept one step ahead of these plans and, even amongst the prospective plotters, there appears to have been considerable doubts as to the feasibility of any projected coup. By 1989 most of the plotters had been retired from active military service and with few serving officers within their ranks their plans largely seemed to have been a rehash of the earlier coup model of 1984. However, the coup planned for that year had been an abject failure and, although circumstances were greatly changed in 1989, there seems to be no intrinsic reason why such a project would necessarily have been any more successful in that year, or 1990 for that matter, given Ceauşescu's apparent awareness of the possibility of a coup and the probability of the plotters meeting opposition from the Securitate or even army units loyal to the regime. On the other hand, a popular uprising such as the one that engulfed Romania after 15 December 1989 would have been
very difficult to suppress at any time whether or not it was backed by any kind of military plot. In fact, prior to the flight of Ceauşescu the plotters seem to have had a minimal influence on the unfolding developments and subsequent to that event their efforts were largely centred on establishing control over the situation and presenting themselves as the only credible alternative leadership. Placing the conspiracies in perspective it would seem true to say that, whilst a popular uprising would probably have succeeded without any plotting beforehand, the same does not necessarily hold for any military coup which was launched without popular support.

Indeed, the effectiveness of any conspiracies has to be open to doubt with the limits perhaps being shown by the apparent absence of any collective position prepared beforehand. Iliescu in his first speech on the television fulminates against the misrule of Ceauşescu, but conspicuously, fails to announce a credible alternative political programme and certainly not one sufficient to satiate the desires of the crowd outside increasingly intoxicated with the idea of revolution. It was the programme presented by Mazilu that was to fill this need, but this manifesto was broad enough to be open to multiple interpretations, specifically it could be read as endorsing both some form of 'democratic socialism' as well as a more liberal western model of democracy. Faced with the collapse of the RCP and a popular revolution of such great proportions, the National Salvation Front had little alternative than to secure legitimacy by placing itself at the head of the revolution as the voice of the people. The acceptance by the NSF that the events were a revolution marked a victory for the crowd and those who hoped for greater change and, although during the coming months elements within the Front would try to control their still largely unarticulated voices, the attachment to the ideals of a radical revolution ran so deep amongst some of the more politically active segments of the population that they were able to render attempts by the more conservative of the new leaders to fit 'democratic socialism' into a democratic framework, ultimately, impossible.
Notes

1. The official figures given by the army are for 1,104 deaths during the revolution, 162 before 22 December and 942 afterwards. At the same time 3,352 were wounded, 1,107 before the 22 December and 2,245 afterwards. Nicolae Militaru, ‘Dupa 5 ani, Parchetul Militar se pronunta: diversiunea a facut mai multe victime decat represiunea’, Adevărul, 22 December 1994, p. 1.

2. Codrescu, The hole in the flag, p. 70.

3. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 64.


5. BBC EE/0690, B/6:20, 16 February 1990, Rompres in English, 1009 gmt, 14 February 1990.


10. The sample size was 1,215 in twenty-three urban and twenty-four rural localities in thirty counties plus Bucharest.


12. Of the fifteen largest cities the following, in diminishing size, saw fighting: Bucharest,Constanța, Timișoara, Cluj, Brașov, Craiova, Ploiești, Brăila, Oradea, Bacău, Arad and Sibiu. Iași appears to have witnessed no violence whilst Pitești seems to have seen no more than a few isolated shots. The situation in Galați is not yet clear. There also appears to have been shooting in several other towns including Tîrgu Mureș, Buzău, Tîrgoviște and Giurgiu. For Giurgiu see Trevor Fishlock, ‘Crowd intoxicated by taste of freedom’, The Daily Telegraph, 27 December 1990, p. 3. For some details of the revolution around Buzău see ‘Cu inima indurerată, țara își cînstegî eroii care i-au redat demnitatea’, Adevărul, 13 January 1990, p. 3. This report that a number of people lost their life in Buzău, Mărcinemi and Rimnicu Sărat where a member of the local Council of the NSF was wounded and the II Army seems to have had a base. For a report saying there was no violence in Galați see Octavian Dicu, ‘Un caz din care se pot trage invătăminte’, România Liberă, 11 January 1990, p. 2.
13. This also seems to have been the case in Jiu Valley. Here there are no reports of violence only of meetings in Petroșani and barricades being placed on main roads. See C. Moraru, ‘În abataje – minerii își fac datoria; la suprafața – oameni de bine și oameni de râu’, *Adevărul*, 9 January 1990, p. 2.


17. BBC EE/0920, B/9, 13 November 1990, Budapest Home Service, 0640 gmt, 11 November 1990. Afterwards these events were subject to a parliamentary commission of inquiry and four Hungarians were tried and jailed. Five murders also seem to have occurred in nearby Odorheiu-Secuiesc.


20. From 157 obituary notices of victims of the revolution mostly in Bucharest mentioning time of death that appeared in *România Liberă* during the period January to April 1990 the following pattern is revealed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>December 1989</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date: 21 22 23 24 25 26 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths: 19 27 77 21 4 6 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Broadly, the same patterns were recorded in most other cities apart from Timișoara and Cluj where the greatest number of casualties fell before the flight of Ceaușescu. In Sibiu most deaths occurred on 22 and 23 December. See also note 94.

21. Simpson, *The darkness crumbles*, p. 247, carries a description of fierce fighting as the demonstrators burst into the building but this comes from a single probably unreliable source.

22. Every time the television tried to link up for a direct transmission from Piața Palatului the results were notably chaotic. See *Revoluția Română în direct*, pp. 19–130, for a transcript of the television broadcast of that day. This transcript is a valuable historical source and is extensively quoted below. When checked with transcriptions of some of the more important pronouncements made by the BBC it appears to be accurate. However, it is not entirely complete and in places has been reconstructed from a variety of apparently overlapping video recordings — note, particularly, the identical language on p. 69 and p. 89. This makes it difficult to establish an exact chronology for the events, a situation exacerbated by the absence from the book of any indications of the time at which statements were broadcast (all timings derive from BBC transcripts).


24. Following Voinea’s declaration from the balcony that the army was with the people, he went with Roman to the internal TV studio of the Central Committee building in the hope of relaying the same message to the rest of the country. This proved to be technically impossible, so, instead, a video recording was made and taken for broadcast at the main television station. However, once the group arrived there, Voinea read the communiqué direct to the cameras. See *Revoluția*
25. This is another particularly controversial point in the revolution as it has often been suggested that broadcasts by the loud speaker vans present in Piața Palatului that day were used to manipulate the crowd in Iliescu’s favour. The chants in support of Mănescu, heard at various times throughout the afternoon, without him ever having apparently appeared in person on the balcony or at the television station might give some slight backing to these suspicions since, it appears, at least according to the Russians, that Mănescu was the first choice to head the NSF, but was forced to refuse the offer because of bad health. The assumption being that some unknown forces, perhaps on the basis of outdated or incomplete information, began to prepare the ground for a Mănescu takeover by inciting the crowd to chant his name without knowing that he was unable to ascend to office. Whether this is true or not, and, if it is true, when his refusal to take the proffered post occurred, is so far unknown; as is the exact relationship between this possibility and persistent reporting within the Western media during 22 and 23 December that Mănescu had taken power. At the time this confusion within the Western press was ascribed to a case of mistaken identity between Mănescu and Nicolaescu, but how believable this explanation is, given the position that Mănescu was apparently scheduled to fill in the new regime, must remain, at the moment, open to question. The statement that Mănescu was the first choice to head the Front was made at the beginning of 1990 by Valentin Falin, at that time head of the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. See Valentin Falin, ‘The collapse of Eastern Europe: Moscow’s view’, New Perspectives Quarterly, 7:2 (1990), p. 22. For an example of Western press reports that Mănescu had taken power see Andrew McEwen, ‘Three key figures emerge in bid to form leadership’, The Times, 23 December 1989, p. 6. This suggests that the stories that Mănescu had assumed power originated from Western diplomatic sources although it is also reported that the East German news agency ADN had carried the same news as had the Yugoslav agency Tanjug at 13.41 local time just ninety minutes after Ceaușescu’s departure. See ‘How collapse of a reviled regime was flashed around the world’, The Times, 23 December 1989, p. 7.

26. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 45–46; Patrice Claude & Georges Marion, ‘Un entretien avec le premier ministre roumain’, Le Monde, 5 January 1990, pp. 1, 4; Revoluția Română în direct, pp. 34–36, 234–5; Galloway & Wylie, Downfall, pp. 148–50. On the television Roman was followed shortly afterwards by Boris Zingler, a mathematician, who with his colleagues at the Centre of Mathematical Statistics had drawn up an appeal in the name of the Romanian Democratic Movement and, later in the day, the spokesman of another grouping, the Social Action Front, Florin Filipoiu, also succeeded in reading their more detailed manifesto. For Zingler see Revoluția Română în direct, pp. 36–37, and for Filipoiu see Revoluția Română în direct, pp. 53–54, and BBC EE/0648, B/7, 28 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 1610 gmt, 22 December 1989.

27. Liviu Viorel Craciun an early ‘Minister of the Interior’ quoted in Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 46. It was the residue from these ‘governments’ that Simpson discovered several days later. By then, the revolution had long since left them behind like jetsam stranded in the wake of a receding tide, but in Simpson’s opinion the government he found of a taxi driver, soldier, cinema
stunt man, sociologist, paranoiac sculptor and 'hostess' from the Intercontinental Hotel still bore the air of the wild and slightly crazed dawn of the revolution and remained its conscience. Simpson, The darkness crumbles, pp. 271-274.

For similar encounters in the Central Committee building see also Jan Krcmar, 'Bellboys rule Bucharest's Party palace', The Independent, 27 December 1989, p. 8.

28. Ilie Verdet had had a long career in the RCP during which he had held a number of senior positions. In 1955 he had been appointed a candidate member of the Central Committee becoming a full member in 1960 and, later, a candidate member of the PEC Committee in 1965. He was a former head of the State Planning Council and had also been Prime Minister. By 1989 he seems to have fallen out with Ceausescu for some unknown reason and remained only a section head in the Central Committee. For an analysis of Verdet's demotion see Anneli Maier, 'Growing job insecurity for Romanian nomenklatura?', Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/10, 11 September 1986, pp. 13-18, especially pp. 16-17.

29. It also seems that the committee sought to ensure that the army stopped firing and to move towards the disarmament of the Securitate, which Verdet's stressed had received an order not to fire.


The semantic difference between a 'committee' and a 'government' has allowed Verdet to truthfully declare he made no attempt to be Prime Minister at this time. The fire was stoked further by Silviu Brucan, who has since alleged that Iliescu was prepared to accept Verdet as Prime Minister and it was only his own intervention which secured the proposal of Petre Roman, although he has noticeably failed to clarify the circumstances in which this occurred. See Ovidiu Dărmănuţ, 'In 1989, Verdet ar fi putut fi prim–ministrul F.S.N.', Eexpres, 9–15 February 1993, p. 6.

At his trial Nicu Ceaușescu said that during the day Ana Muresan, a member of the PEC, had rung him and asked him to take power, Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 46–47. However, Muresan later refuted the transcript of her telephone conversation, BBC EE/0920, B/8:28, 13 November 1990, Rompres in English, 1122 gmt, 10 November 1990.

31. Dinescu was first approached and informed of developments by the Dutch Ambassador Coen Stork, see Coen Stork in dialog cu Gabriel Andreeescu, Cel mai iubit dintre ambasadori (Bucharest: Editura ALL, 1993), pp. 70–71. Dinescu's account of his arrival at the television station can be found in Victoria Clark, 'Romanian poet pins his faith on a free press', The Independent, 6 January 1990, p. 15.

32. Revoluția Română în direct, p. 21.

33. ibid. p. 25.

34. Sergiu Nicolaescu's role in the revolution has attracted some controversy especially these calls for crowds to come to the television station which have been ascribed to some nefarious motive. However, on 22 December thousands were already on the streets and needed no further encouragement to come to the station and Nicolaescu's calls for the population not to forsake the public spaces, echoing those already sounded in Timișoara, were also heard all night long from the microphone in Piața Palatului from those who nobody considers to be part of
any conspiracy. But note also the importance ascribed to mobilising the civilian population in the plots discussed later in this chapter.

35. According to Nicolaescu’s own account when he first spoke on television he did not know that Ceauşescu had fled. Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 238.

36. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 52; Rady, Romania in turmoil, p. 107, quoting from an interview in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

37. Brateş’ memories of the day can be found in Teodor Brateş, Explozia unei clipe: 22 decembrie 1989 — o zi în studiol 4 (Bucharest: Editura Scripta, 1992).

38. Reports of the time speak of the nation being glued to their screens for the duration of the conflict. See John Kifner, ‘Studio 4 videocrats orchestrated despot’s downfall’, The Times, 29 December 1989, p. 11.

39. After the revolution even the role of the television seems to have been mythologised, with Aurel Dragoş Munteanu, then head of Free Romanian Television, quoted as saying that the television ‘put out the appeal for help which began the uprising’. Ed Vulliamy, ‘Freedoms to be enshrined’, The Guardian, 4 January 1990, p. 8.

40. The appeal was addressed to army Generals Guşe, Eftimescu, Topliceanu, Roşu, Voinea, Tintăreanu and Rusu also Vlad and Bucurescu of the Ministry of the Interior. Revoluţia Română în direct, pp. 38–39; BBC EE/0649, B/2, 29 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1213 gmt, 22 December 1989. By resorting to such a public forum Militaru may be inadvertently pointing to the limits of any military plot since it suggests he possessed no other means of communicating with serving officers. Later that day, Dumitrescu was to use the television to give orders on behalf of Guşe for units in nearby cities to come to Bucharest to defend key installations. Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 119.

41. An early opinion poll recorded an 89% approval rating for the TV higher than for the NSF. Television also gave the revolution an air of unreality with a teacher recording how people ‘saw the revolution on television, sitting comfortably in a chair eating all the special things they had made for Christmas..... It was as if it was happening in another country’. Quoted in Margurette Driscoll, ‘Romanian democracy put on ice’, The Sunday Times, 7 January 1990, p. A.14.

42. Codrescu, The hole in the flag, p. 85.


44. On the importance of Romanian émigrés in defining the international agenda see Michael Knipe, ‘Spy link fuels speculation on Soviet influence’, The Times, 28 December 1989, p. 6. Note also the early pronouncement by the deposed King Michael of Romania in the French language daily 24 Heures against the new regime who were ‘...true Communists who had collaborated with the deposed Ceauşescu’, Michael Knipe, ‘Exiles suspicious of interim leadership’, The Times, 29 December 1989, p. 10.

45. The relationship between the violence in Bucharest and in other parts of the country is a difficult issue. Certainly, news of fighting in Bucharest seems to have heightened expectations of conflict in other areas and there is some evidence from Braşov that it had a direct effect on triggering the conflict, as a participant in the revolution from that city declared in an interviewed with a journalist of the New York Times, that after seeing the images of the fighting in Bucharest on the television during the evening of 22 December ‘We thought the same thing could happen to us..... So we asked the army to come back and defend us’ and, subsequently, the army did hand out guns to the revolutionaries so they could

46. Although Nicolaescu’s testimony is full of self inflation he does seem to have been instrumental in calling for Iliescu to come to the TV and, indeed, his wife seems to have been in the rear of the car driven by Mihai Bujor Sion.


48. But see plot allegations below which suggest Iliescu was seen as a possible replacement leader well before Gorbachev ascended to power. Iliescu’s links with Gorbachev are usually traced to his sojourn in Moscow at the Institute of Energy from 1950–53 when he was Secretary of the Union of Romanian Students. It is frequently alleged that the two became acquainted at this time although Iliescu has consistently denied this. Rumours about Iliescu’s links with Gorbachev surfaced in the West during the revolution. See for instance Dan Morgan, ‘Reform-minded communists move to fill power vacancy’, *The Washington Post*, 23 December 1989, p. A.11. For an earlier example of the rumour concerning Iliescu’s leadership credentials see Anneli Ute Gabanyi, ‘Disgraced Romanian leader calls for changes’, *Radio Free Europe Research*, Romanian Situation Report/10, 21 September 1987, pp. 3–6. The first reference to such rumours in the Western press seems to have been in *Der Spiegel* on 6 November 1986. See Mark Almond ‘Romania since the revolution’, *Government and Opposition*, 25:4 (1990), p. 489. Also see the prescient entry for Iliescu in the pre-revolution Juliusz Stroynowski (ed.), *Who’s who in the socialist countries of Europe* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1989), vol. 2 p. 466, and Trond Gilberg, *Nationalism and communism in Romania: the rise and fall of Ceaușescu’s personal dictatorship* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1990), pp. 122–23. The historian Dinu Giurescu, whose sympathies may be considered to lie more with the opposition camp in contemporary Romanian politics records that following his article in *România Literară* in September 1987 Iliescu’s name was ‘the only one on people’s lips’, Galloway & Wylie, *Downfall*, p. 288, and this is borne out by my own research in Bucharest where such a feeling seems to have been generally shared by intellectuals of all political persuasions.


50. ibid. p. 46.

51. After Iliescu’s statement on the television his movements are veiled in some confusion, although the matter is chiefly of interest in that it stands at the centre of long-standing rumours that at this time he visited the Soviet Embassy. The official version is that most of the revolutionary leadership went to the Ministry of Defence, but confusion arises from the fact that nearly all the key figures of that day give differing accounts as to whom was present at the Ministry that afternoon. All that seems well attested is that after they appeared on the television Roman, Voiculescu, Montanu and Voinea next headed to the Ministry of Defence. Here they were shown into the office of Milea where they found Stânculescu and Ilie Ceaușescu. After ordering the arrest of the latter and conferring with Stânculescu this group seems to have returned to the TV before heading for the meeting convened by Iliescu at the Central Committee building at 17.00.

However, who else was in the building that afternoon is far less clear and, for what it is worth, the following list of whom several of the main characters consider were present indicates the extent of the potential pitfalls in trying to write a history of the revolution if nothing else. Note that only Kostyal mentions Iliescu. Militaru mentions: Roman, Voiculescu, Montanu, Kostyal and Silviu Brucan (who
Notes: 'The most obscure problem'
certainly was not present). Chițac: Voineas, Roman, Montanu, Militaru, Emil Dumitrescu, Gușe and Hortopan. Roman: Montanu and Voiculescu. Kostyal: Iliescu, Militaru, Vlad, Voiculescu and Roman. Adding to the confusion Bujor Sion only mentions Iliescu going directly from the TV to the Central Committee building without stating whether he had been to the Ministry of Defence in the meantime.

52. Revoluția Română în direct, pp. 43-44.
53. This followed a false announcement on the TV that Ceaușescu had been captured which had been relayed to the crowd earlier. Simpson, The darkness crumbles, p. 257.
54. Dumitru Mazilu, a jurist and Romanian representative on the UN human rights subcommittee had been commissioned in 1988 to report on the human rights situation in Romania, but upon drawing up an unexpectedly critical report he had been detained by the Ceaușescu regime and prevented from leaving the country. According to his own account Mazilu was taken during the night of 21 December from Bucharest to the nearby town of Alexandria on the orders of Major-General Aurelian Mortoiu of the Securitate. He had been freed from his place of detention around 14.00 in the afternoon and brought back by his guards to Bucharest arriving at the Central Committee building between 17.30 and 18.00. For Mazilu's version of events see Simpson, The darkness crumbles, p. 256. See also Petre Mihai Băcanu, 'Lunga detenție a d-lui Mazilu', România Liberă, 24 January 1990, p. 3; and for Mazilu's early career Michael Shafir, 'The Mazilu riddle: Romanian official fails to appear before UN body', Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/10, 23 August 1988, pp. 23-26.
55. Mazilu claimed an impeccable pedigree for his declaration stating that it was loosely based on Thomas Jefferson's 'Declaration of Independence' and the French Revolution's 'Declaration of Human and Civic Rights', Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 55-56. In reality, it bore many of the hallmarks of the reformist ideas championed by the young technocrats of Bucharest and, perhaps significantly, Mazilu seems to have been associated with ADIRI, one of the institutes at the centre of this movement (see chapter three).
56. Revoluția Română în direct, p. 89.
57. According to Brucan the meeting was filmed by Adrian Sirbu. Silviu Brucan interviewed by R. Caplescu, "Poporul român are dreptul să cunoască rolul Frontului în zilele Revoluției", Adevărul, 16 January 1990, pp. 1, 5. The video tape was broadcast on New Year's Day on the French television channel FR3 with the transcript appearing in Liberation on 2 January 1990. This was later reproduced under the rubric 'Stenograma „Marelui Consens“', in România Liberă, 10 May 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 11 May 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 12 May 1990, pp. 1-2. These dates were presumably chosen to coincide with the election but, given the intensity of the political conflict during the period after the revolution, it is difficult to understand why it was not published earlier.
58. Later Apostol was accused by Brucan of cooperating with the Securitate after the publication of the 'Letter of the Six'. Brucan, The wasted generation, pp. 162-63. See also chapter four.
59. ‘Stenograma „Marelui Consens“’, România Liberă, 11 May 1990, p. 3. Iliescu's form of words had been similar in his short speech from the balcony of the Central Committee building a few minutes earlier. See BBC EE/0648, B/7, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1530 gmt, 22 December 1989.
60. Iliescu later explained that the name was chosen 'because he liked it and thought it most appropriate for the body that took power in a moment of grave crisis'. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 91.


62. Note that both Iliescu and Tudor used the term National Salvation Committee during the afternoon of 22 December. After 1989 the name National Salvation Front gained considerable infamy when it was chosen by a group of Russian military officers, former communists and extreme nationalists as the name for their organisation before it was banned by President Boris Yeltsin in October 1992. Tony Barber, 'Yeltsin at war with hardline critics', The Independent, 28 October 1992, p. 10. Some commentators in the West had considered whether a Polish-style military coup might be feasible in Romania, but the general consensus seems to have been that it was extremely unlikely. See, for instance, Crowther, 'Ceaugescuism' and civil-military relations', pp. 207-25 and the discussion in Steven L. Sampson, 'Is Romania the next Poland?' Critique, 16 (1983) pp. 139-44.

63. According to Brukan he made some changes to points five, eight and nine of the programme. For details see Brukan, The wasted generation, pp. 173-74.


65. Revoluția Română în direct, pp. 134, 153, 173. By 20.00 there were reported to be between six and eight barricades between Piața Victoriei and the TV station.


67. Sometimes this seems to have led to Securitate files falling into the hands of the local population as in Focșani. See Alan Cowell, 'Romanian finds his file: 12 years of being watched', New York Times, 2 January 1990, pp. A.1, A.12.

68. BBC EE/0649, B/3, 29 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 0627 gmt, 24 December 1989. The same day a communiqué of the CNSF read by Măgureanu reminded the listeners that '... any acts of vandalism and of destruction and also personal revenge, are illegal, as they stain the noble nature of our revolution.' BBC EE/0648, B/13, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1052 gmt, 24 December 1989. In a similar vein, a day earlier Gueș had also appealed for calm and a return to normality as soon as possible adding: 'Act against those who are trying to destabilise us and who break into shops.' BBC EE/0648, B/10, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 0323 gmt, 23 December 1989. Iliescu made reference to the destruction of shops in his first broadcast on the television and for an early appeal on the same subject see Revoluția Română în direct, p. 44. As late as 27 December a Western correspondent could still write: '... such is the state of anarchy in the capital that looters are still able to break into the now abandoned government buildings despite the presence of the army only yards away'. Marcus Tanner, 'Doubts follow joy at the end of the Ceaugescu era', The Independent, 27 December 1989, p. 1. And at the beginning of January Mazilu
was still making front page appeals in România Libertă for an end to vendettas and anonymous denunciations. Dumitru Mazilu, ‘Calm, luciditate, echilibru’, România Libertă, 6 January 1990, p. 1.

69. For such stories see Michael Sheridan, ‘Dreams and death in Bucharest’, The Independent, 27 December 1989, p. 21; Michael Hornsby & Dessa Trevisan, ‘Ceauşescu “are tried and shot” ’, The Times, 26 December 1989, p. 1; Michael Simmons, ‘Treading on eggshells’, The Guardian, 12 January 1990, p. 23. Con Coughlin, ‘Tens of thousands feared massacred’, The Sunday Telegraph, 24 December 1989, p. 1, describes how he saw a member of the Securitate denounced by an angry crowd who ignoring his pleas of innocence chanted for his death. He was summarily executed by two shots to the head. Nicolas Miletitch, ‘War devastates Nicu’s fiefdom’, The Independent, 29 December 1989, p. 8, carries a report that a dozen Securitate officers ‘worse than monsters’ had been lynched in Sibiu. Celestin Bohlen, ‘Romania disbands rebellious force’, New York Times, 2 January 1990, p. A12, reports that since the end of the fighting two local Securitate chiefs had been killed outside Bucharest with others being severely beaten and that Brucan had admitted that the public pleas to eschew revenge attacks were a result of vigilante violence against Securitate officers. Simpson, The darkness crumbles, pp. 260–61, also gives an eyewitness account of an unlawful killing of a suspected ‘terrorist’ when it was discovered that he held Securitate documents. Philip Jacobson, ‘Symbols of peace in a bloodstained landscape’, The Times, 26 December 1989, p. 6, carries a report from a local Romanian journalist of a village idiot casually shot in cold blood. There were also reports of people being shot at roadblocks, see Blaine Harden, ‘Romanian broadcast shows dead dictator’, The Washington Post, 27 December 1989, p. A14.

A trial, long after the revolution, revealed some of the details of one of these incidents. Following information broadcast on the television that there were ‘terrorists’ shooting at the chemical combine in Brâila members of the army and the Patriotic Guard were dispatched to the scene. Following the directions of an alarmed crowd they approached a suspect building and summoned the occupants to come out peacefully. When they received no response they opened fire at the lock wounding a man who was stood behind the door. He was dragged out by the crowd and accused of being a ‘terrorist’ promptly lynched. Ana Nîta, ‘Teroriztii din Brâila’, Adevăratul, 19 November 1993, p. 2.

The radio broadcast calls to eschew revenge attacks on 28 December and a final appeal was made as late as 8 January 1990. See BBC EE/0650, B/11, 30 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1445 gmt, 28 December 1989; and BBC EE/0658, B/11, 10 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 2000 gmt, 8 January 1990. For continuing reports of revenge attacks see also Christopher Walker, ‘Romanians “face Communist danger” ’, The Times, 10 January 1989, p. 6.

70. Iliescu spoke of it as a ‘vacuum of power’ which in his view was created by a combination of the overthrow of the previous regime and the negative effects of the ‘terrorist’ attacks.

71. See, for instance, Revoluția Română în direct, p. 51, where there are persistent reports that the militia station on Boulevard Ana Ipătescu in central Bucharest came under attack during the afternoon of 22 December.

72. Amongst other tasks USLA seems to have been charged with the guarding of certain foreign embassies and Otopeni and Băneasa airports.

73. BBC EE/0648, B/11, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1616 gmt, 23 December 1989. After the events Chițac was to say: ‘Since the counter-revolutionary acts of terrorism started right after the winning of power, we
can only conclude that the reaction’s counter-strike had been prepared in advance . . . . that they broke out on signal.’ BBC EE/0651, B/7, 1 January 1990, Agerpres in English, 2230 gmt, 29 December 1989.


76. Note that in ‘Was there a coup?’, East European Reporter, 4:3, 1990, pp. 74–77, Brucan and Militaru date the plan to 1985 before the Brașov disturbances. References to ‘Plan M’, apparently originating from Pacepa, can be found in a report from AP under the byline of Jan Krcmar, ‘New leadership grants amnesty to political prisoners’, The Independent, 7 January 1990, p. 15. During an interview after the revolution, when it was suggested to the Deputy Procurator General, Major–General Gheorghe Diaconescu, that the true nature of the ‘terrorist’ threat was only revealed after the discovery of a full list of the units and their targets, he denied this was so and said that a real understanding of the situation only came when they pieced together all the available information received on a very detailed plan of Bucharest and correlated it with details of all units deployed together with their numerical strengths. Major–General Gheorghe Diaconescu interviewed by Sergiu Andon, ‘Uluitoarea tehniciă a teroriștilor’, Adevărul, 20 January 1990, p. 2.


78. Emphasis added. BBC EE/0648, B/7, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1530 gmt, 22 December 1989; Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 84. After this statement Iliescu took the microphone and said ‘You swear!’ before handing it back to Gușe who replied ‘We swear! We swear! We swear!’


80. Apostolescu was head of the Information Service of the Securitate. Stan was a neighbour of Militaru and an officer in Directorate II. Revoluţia Română în direct, pp. 52, 63, 209.


82. BBC EE/0648, B/7, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1530 gmt, 22 December 1989; Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 84. This move was later legally enacted in a decree broadcast on 26 December. See BBC EE/0649, B/5, 29 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1600 gmt, 26 December 1989.

83. See chapter five for a discussion of relations between the army and the Securitate.

84. For the origins of the conflict in Sibiu see chapter one.

85. Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 51.

86. Revoluţia Română în direct, pp. 64–65; BBC EE/0647, i, 23 December 1989.

87. There is some indication of this in Revoluţia Română în direct, pp. 144, 146.

88. Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 82, When Gușe addressed the crowd in Piaţa Palatului at 17.30 after he had declared that the army was on the side of the people he was greeted by repetitive chants of ‘Sibiu!’ ibid. p. 84.

89. Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 126.


91. For some of the first foreign news reports see: Michael Sheridan, ‘Bitter fighting in Romania after Ceauşescu is toppled’, The Independent, 23 December 1989,
Notes: 'The most obscure problem'


93. As examples of newspaper coverage emphasising the extent of the tunnel network see Associated Press, ‘Romanian tunnels found to be vast’, The Washington Post, 25 December 1989, p. 38; Tom Giles, ‘Soldiers open up the security police tunnels of terror’, The Times, 26 December 1989, p. 7. The question of the tunnels is difficult to unravel. Firstly, it seems there were a series of bunkers under the Central Committee building and tunnels did exist. Indeed, any tunnel from that building to the Royal Palace would probably date from the time of King Carol II as construction of the former, as a new Ministry of the Interior, began during his reign. It also seems true that Ceauşescu drew up elaborate plans for escape from the centre based on tunnels and, particularly, Bucharest's sewers. Indeed, the juncture at which a tunnel becomes a sewer, or vice versa, seems a moot point. Rumours about the tunnels seem to have been circulating since before the revolution and to have even reached the West. See, for instance, Richard Ellis, ‘No light shed on a new dark age’, The Sunday Times, 19 November 1989, p. A.19, where he writes of Ceauşescu's palace having escape tunnels linked to the city's underground system. In the imagination the underground tunnels merely served to hide the hidden ‘terrorists’ even further and, through this, they assumed a metaphorical quality as Codrescu reveals: ‘The underground labyrinth below our feet was a fit image for the nightmare the dictator had built for his people on earth. We stood on top of it, but inside our heads we were still looking for ways out.’ Still, the truest appreciation, perhaps, came from a poet who in reply to Codrescu's assertion that he could think of nothing comparable to these tunnels in the modern world added ‘I can... the Romanian mind after forty-five years of dictatorship.’’ Codrescu, The hole in the flag, pp. 20–21. For Ceauşescu's plans see Mirel Curea, ‘Ceauşescu ştia de planul „Dnestr” încă din 1976’, Evenimentul Zilei, 10 July 1993, p. 3.

94. From shortly after the flight of Ceauşescu until the end of 23 December the television station was guarded by soldiers from a unit of paratroopers, U.M.01842 Boteni and Caracal, and by U.M.01210 Bucharest. Of the thirty-four casualties recorded by the latter unit during the period of the revolution, twenty-one were sustained between late afternoon on 22 December and 23 December with thirteen of these falling at the television station. The paratroop regiment suffered nine dead and six injured at the station during the same period. In the late evening of 23 December the defences were reinforced by the arrival of detachments from three other units: U.M.01248 Medgida U.M.01842 and U.M.01841, but from that time until 31 December there appear to have been very few if any casualties amongst the military at the TV. For details see Revoluţia Română în direct, pp. 309–28.

Throughout the revolution U.M.01210, which was at the heart of the action, suffered five dead and twenty-nine wounded. Of these casualties one occurred on 16 January when a soldier was shot in the left calf at the TV station. The dates of the other casualties are as follows:
Notes: ‘The most obscure problem’

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95. Viorel Domenico, *După execuție a nins*, p. 27. This state of affairs may have arisen because many barracks seem to have been placed under a virtual news blackout since the beginning of the demonstrations in Timișoara.


97. See, for instance, Simpson, *The darkness crumbles*, p. 264–65. Exemplifying the dangers to which bystanders were exposed at that time is the eyewitness account of Ionel Serea: ‘...towards the middle of the night, when there were still people next to and beyond the wall of the television, a tank officer located four ‘terrorists’ hidden in front of a tank in the courtyard. They hailed them and the four came out with raised hands, tracked by a searchlight. They advanced ten metres towards the door when, suddenly, they were cut down by a machine gun, at this time he [Ionel Serea] also saw three or four civilians fall next to the wall of the television.’ *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 157. By inference, as it is not identified, the machine gun is fired by the defenders of the TV. It may also be another description of this incident that can be found in *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 142.

98. For the account of how an ad hoc Patriotic Guard unit was formed at the radio station armed and some of its members positioned on the roof, where they came under sustained fire, see Ioana Ursu, Florentina Dolghin & Ioan Lăcustă (eds.), ‘Ei, tinerii, au făcut revoluția. Ei, tinerii, scriu istoria’, *Magazin Istoric*, New Series 24:3 (1990), p. 4. The chairman of the Senatorial Commission of Inquiry into the events of December 1989, Valentin Gabrielescu, is quoted as saying: ‘As well as the army and the police, thousands of civilians were armed, and under the pressure of false rumours and false dangers from inside and outside. Everyone shot at everyone else. Everybody was a “terrorist”. It was chaos. Everybody had a weapon in his hands. The army shot about five million rounds and the population as many as they could lay their hands upon — at first out of joy, then against the “terrorists”, then because they were drunk’. Patrick Bishop, ‘Romanian “revolution” exposed as an uprising that slid into chaos’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 13 December 1994, p. 10.

99. *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 156. For examples of appeals for the Patriotic Guard to mobilise see ibid. p. 30. An account of the actions of the Patriotic Guard from I.S.P.E. Bucharest at the television can be found in see ibid. pp. 169–70.

100. ibid. pp. 142, 305.


103. Sometimes it seems only an identity card had to be shown to receive a gun. Petre Mihai Băcăncu, ‘Direcția a V-a acuzată de trădare?’, România Liberă, 25 July 1990, pp. 1, 3, suggests that the armourey of Directorate V fell into the hands of the demonstrators at the Central Committee building and references to this
can also be found in Jan Krcmar, ‘Bellboys rule Bucharest’s Party palace’, The Independent, 27 December 1989, p. 8. Gabriel Matei, who was in the Central Committee building at the time the shooting began — he says around 16.30 — states that the young men present then demanded arms and were given them. See Petre Mihai Băcanu, ‘Fotografi in arestate’, România Liberă, 6 January 1990, p. 3. The same seems to have occurred at the television station and also the Gara de Nord, where an ad hoc guard of young men was formed. Ursu, Dolghin & Lăcătă (eds.), ‘Ei, tinerii, au făcut revoluţia’, p. 6.

The new leaders made determined efforts to recover arms with point two of the communiqué read by Măgureanu on 24 December stating: ‘All those who . . . have come into the possession of arms and ammunition, regardless of the circumstances, must urgently hand them in by Monday, 25 December, no later than 1500 gmt. Those who fail to respect these provisions will be guilty of seriously violating the law and will be punished most severely’. BBC EE/0648, B/13, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1052 gmt, 24 December 1989.


105. ibid. p. 139. Ardeleanu identified looting as a problem at the meeting in the Central Committee building. ‘Stenograma „Marelui Consens“’, România Liberă, 10 May 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 11 May 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 12 May 1990, pp. 1–2.

106. Fifty–four buildings were reported as being hit by bullets with seven totally destroyed and five partially. Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 173.

107. The recent acceptance by the United States that they were responsible for the accidental destruction of two British armoured personnel carriers during the Gulf War would seem to be something of a first in the public admittance of such mistakes. Previously, the tradition in all armed forces seems to have been to cover up all details sometimes to an extraordinary degree long after the event.


110. Patrick Bishop, ‘Romanian “revolution” exposed as an uprising that slid into chaos’, The Daily Telegraph, 12 December 1994, p. 10. This was also the impression I formed during conversations in Bucharest with those who might be expected to know the contents of the report of the Senatorial Commission.


112. BBC EE/1879, B/4, 23 December 1993, Rompres in English, 1714 gmt, 20 December 1993. Initially after the revolution General Ghiţă blamed the incident on unidentified ‘terrorists’. See Victor Dima, ‘O tragică eroare’, România Liberă, 5 January 1990, p. 2. It has been suggested to me by those who may be expected to know the contents of the Military Procurator’s report that this catastrophic incident was the result of a confusion in communications, with one body authorising the dispatch of the troops to the airport, whilst others telephoned to warn that ‘terrorists’ were approaching.

113. Gușă had arrived back in Bucharest from Timişoara around 14.00. He travelled to the TV and thence, via the Ministry of Defence, to the Central Committee building. Ceaușescu had made sure that the Central Committee building was well-endowed as a communication centre and, on the orders of Milea, extra equipment seems to have been installed on 21 December. ‘Raportul Comisiei Senatoriale Pentru Cercetarea Evenimentelor din Decembrie 1989: Secțiunea 3.1.’, Adevărul, ‘Ediție specială’, 25 May 1992, p. 2.
113. Roman explained the decision as follows: ‘The situation in Bucharest on the evening of Sunday 24 December was very difficult from the military point of view. There were many casualties. The country’s population was subjected to intimidation. The place where the dictatorial couple were under arrest could have been subjected to an attack. We received information about a possible airborne landing raid by a group of special units devoted to the dictator. The possibility of the dictators being released and heading a terrorist group could not be fully ruled out: tens and hundreds more people would then have died’. BBC EE/0658, B/12:22, 10 January 1990, Soviet Television, 1440 gmt, 6 January 1990. For similar views from Iliescu see Revoluţia Română în direct, p. 225; Ion Iliescu interviewed by Nicolae Manolescu, ‘Preşedintele Ion Iliescu răspunde la întrebările României Literare’, România Literară, 5 July 1990, p. 14; and for Brucan see BBC EE/0654, B/11, 5 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1753 gmt, 2 January 1990. Under the rubric Roger Boyes, ‘Inside the nerve centre of the thought police’, The Times, 4 January 1990, p. 8, appears a Reuter report that quotes Colonel Corneliu Diamandescu as saying that the barracks where the Ceauşescus were held came under sustained ground and air attack for two days. Fănică Voineanu Ene, “În numele poporului... FOC!”, Adevărul, 24 January 1990, p. 1, also gives an account of the situation in Târgovişte during the time the Ceauşescus were held at the barracks which suggests that in the night of 24/25 December there was shooting in the area which left one soldier dead and many others wounded. The ‘terrorists’ were said to have disembarked from helicopters before being transported by cars to positions around the barracks. They also received reports that three plane loads of ‘terrorists’ were approaching and that they would be attacked by anti-tank guns. Although all these stories proved to be false alarms, when they were relayed to Bucharest, they seem to have created additional tension. For Mazilu’s view on the legitimacy of the execution see Marcus Tanner, ‘Freedom promised in Romania’, The Independent, 28 December 1989, p. 1.

114. These seem to be largely based on allegations that at various times during the night the two withdrew for secret consultations in an adjoining room. Later, Iliescu was to say that Guşă was relieved from duty for making ‘mistakes impermissible for a military commander’, and he does seem to have been the only one of the top brass of the army to be removed from his post, although no serious charges were ever laid against him. Quoted in Michael Shafir, ‘The revolution: an initial assessment’, Report on Eastern Europe, 1:4, 26 January 1990, p. 40. As mentioned earlier, Vlad seems to have been involved in Verdeş’s attempt to secure power earlier in the day. For a trenchant rebuttal of the allegations against Guşă by a civilian in the Central Committee building that night see under the rubric ‘Ce mai aveţi de spus?’ Mihai Gheorghe Popa, ‘Mărturia insurecţionarului de rind’, Adevărul, 6 July 1991, p. 1.


118. The text of Vlad’s broadcast was as follows: ‘In these historic times the Ministry of Interior and all its units are fighting shoulder–shoulder with the Romanian Army for the survival of the national being of the Romanian people. The Ministry of Interior has rid itself of elements loyal to the Ceauşescu clan. Romanian
brothers, in these decisive moments, let us be united, have trust in us. The people should help us and we will not betray their trust’. BBC EE/0648, B/10, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 0403 gmt, 23 December 1989. Most charitably, it might be presumed that Vlad did not call upon Securitate units to cease fire because he believed they were all on the side of the revolution and, anyway, at this late stage in the proceedings if he had done so it would have been tantamount to an admission that his forces had been responsible for the night’s conflict.


120. On 31 December 1989 it was announced that Vlad, Lieutenant-General Aristotel Stamatoiu and Major-General Gianu Bucurescu, former Deputy Ministers of the Interior, and Lieutenant-General Gheorghe Vasile, head of Directorate IV, had all been removed from active service and detained BBC EE/0652, B/12:17, 3 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1410 gmt, 31 December 1989. They were later officially placed in the reserve alongside many other generals from the former Securitate including: Major-Generals Marin Neagoe, head of Directorate V; Gheorghe Bucur; Emil Macri, head of Directorate II; Ioan Moț, head of CIE counterintelligence; Alexandru Țencu, head of telephone surveillance and video monitoring; Vasile Moise; Ștefan Alexie, Secretary of State for the DSS; Ioan Marcu, head of the Political Council of the DSS; Aurelian Mortoiu, head of Directorate III; Victor Neculicioiu; Alecse Olteanu and Gheorghe Radu head of the UM.0525 cipher section also Lieutenant-Generals Istifie Gearta and Epifanie Amohnoaie, see *Monitorul Oficial al României*, 2:4, 8 January 1990, p. 7; ibid. 2:5, 9 January 1990, p. 3; ibid. 2:6, 10 January 1990, p. 3; ibid. 2:12, 19 January 1990, p. 6. There were also dismissals at lower levels with Stănculescu later announcing that 4,194 Securitate officers had been transferred to what he termed ‘reserve functions’. On the basis of the declared official manning levels this amounts to some 29% of the total personnel. Mihai Sturdza, ‘How dead is Ceaușescu’s secret police force?’, *Report on Eastern Europe*, 1:15, 13 April 1990, p. 33. Iliescu suggested that 4,000 Securitate officers from Bucharest had been transferred to other posts and in Dolj it was claimed 181 had been removed. For Iliescu’s statement see Ion Iliescu interviewed by Nicolae Manolescu, ‘Președintele Ion Iliescu răspunde la întrebările României Literare’, *România Literară*, 5 July 1990, p. 14, and for Dolj BBC EE/0698, B/12, 26 February 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1600 gmt, 24 February 1990.

121. Silviu Brucan by John Lloyd and Judy Dempsey, ‘The voice of the new Romania’, *Financial Times*, 29 December 1989, p. 11; Brucan, *The wasted generation*, p. 181. Clearly it was not just the Executive Bureau because Roman, who was not a member of this body, seems to have been present. Dinescu in an interview at the time was to say that the decision was taken by a small group centred on Iliescu, Brucan, Mazilu and Militaru. Shafir, ‘The revolution: an initial assessment’, p. 41 n. 26.


124. Why Stânculescu played such a prominent role is unknown and remains an intriguing question. He might well have feared revelations from the Ceaușescu but was he set the task as a test of his loyalty to the new regime?

125. For the trial see Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 73–77; Behr, Kiss the hand you cannot bite, pp. 13–23; Galloway & Wylie, Downfall, pp. 181–203; Brucan, The wasted generation, pp. 181–83; Rady, Romania in turmoil, pp. 114–21; Almond, The rise and fall of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, pp. 231–36; Sweeny, The life and evil times of Nicolae Ceaușescu, pp. 221–24. A reasonably full transcript can be found in BBC EE/0648, B/15–17, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 2200 gmt, 26 December 1989, and this is the source used for the quotations below. See also ‘Transcript of the closed trial of Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu’, The Washington Post, 29 December 1990, p. A.26. For the conditions in which the Ceaușescus were held see ‘Ceaușescu spent final days a prisoner in armoured car’, The Times, 30 December 1989, p. 10.

126. Other accounts suggest it was more protracted with Michael Shafir, for instance, citing a duration of three hours. See Shafir, ‘The revolution: an initial assessment’, p. 37.

127. Behr, Kiss the hand you cannot bite, p. 18.

128. Galloway & Wylie, Downfall, p. 179; Behr, Kiss the hand you cannot bite, p. 21.

129. Defence council was a civilian lawyer, Nicolae Teodorescu, assisted by Constantin Lucescu. Also present were the Prosecutor Colonel Gica Popa supported by Colonel Ion Nistor. Chairman of the Tribunal was Lieutenant-Colonel Dan Voinea sitting alongside him were Major Mugurel Florea and Sergeant-Major Trifan Matencuic. The proceedings were filmed by Colonel Ion Baiu. See also Nicu Teodorescu interviewed by Paul Martin, ‘In defence of the Ceaușescus’, The Times, 24 January 1990, p. 12.

130. Ceaușescu’s thinking can be compared with the head of the East German Stasi, Erich Mielke, who during the crisis in that country likewise seems to have been totally unable to grasp the need to improve the supply of goods declaring: “Socialism is so good, but they demand more and more. That’s the way things are. I always think about what we lived through. I couldn’t eat and buy bananas, not because there weren’t any, but because we hadn’t got any money to buy them with.” Popplewell, ‘The Stasi and the East German Revolution of 1989’, p. 57.


132. The Financial Times, carried an extract of the trial from the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug which stated that ‘There are today more than 64,000 dead in all cities’. Whether this statement originated from a mistranslation by the news agency or an error within the newspaper is unknown. ‘Ceaușescu defiant to the end’, Financial Times, 28 December 1989, p. 4. The same wording can also be found in ‘Dictator remained defiant even in face of death’, The Independent, 28 December 1989, p. 9.

133. See Revoluția Română in direct, p. 162, where it is suggested that there had been a debate within the NSF about whether the transcript should be read on the television.

134. Generally, at this time, the new regime spared no effort to paint the Ceaușescus as lavish spendthrifts. For the gold scales see Clyde Haberman, ‘Gold scales and fat accounts measure tyrant’s riches’, The Times, 28 December 1989, p. 6. Also note the similarity with the tactics employed by the United States to justify their intervention in Panama against Noreiga at the same time. See, for instance, Martin Fletcher, ‘High–living Noreiga denigrated by US’, The Times, 28 December 1989, p. 8.
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Rumours of fabled millions in Swiss bank accounts have continued to circulate since the revolution. However, until now no money seems to have appeared. Immediately after the fall of Ceauşescu the Swiss put a freeze on any assets that he may have held in the country, apparently pre-empting a request from the NSF. Reuter, 'Switzerland puts freeze on assets of Ceauşescu', The Washington Post, 25 December 1989, p. A.40. It appears that Bucharest made little effort to follow up these moves and, by the middle of January, it was being reported that no trace could be found of the deposited money. William Dullforce, 'No trace of Ceauşescu millions', Financial Times, 16 January 1990, p. 2. Later in August 1990, a commission of inquiry was established under the chairmanship of Mugur Isarescu and, according to a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation television programme broadcast on 5 November 1991, earlier in March 1990 the Romanian government had enlisted the help of the international accountancy firm, Peat Marwick, to assist in the search. They apparently drew up a report but its contents remain unknown although leaks suggest it confirmed rumours that up to $1 billion might still be held in foreign bank accounts. For details see William McPherson, 'Who “won” Romania's mysterious revolution?', The Washington Post, 17 November 1991, pp. C.1–2.

135. The Ceauşescus probably met their death immediately, although even this has been the subject of debate due to fact that the actual execution does not appear to have been filmed. The official version is that the two died in a hail of bullets before an ill-disciplined firing squad, but suggestions have been made that they were summarily executed with a single shot to the head. Even in death the Ceauşescus attracted a ghoulish fascination and such is the level of distrust in the revolution that no detail seems to be able to be acknowledged by all sides, even though pictures of the bullet riddled corpses were later produced. For full discussions of the controversy see Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 73–77; Matei Calinescu & Vladimir Tismaneanu, 'The 1989 revolution and Romania’s future', Problems of Communism, 60 (January–April 1991), p. 46 n. 14, and for the 'official' version of the execution Galloway & Wylie, Downfall, pp. 196–202. The Ceauşescus were buried on 30 December in military graves in the Ghencea Cemetery in Bucharest. Rumours continue to circulate in Romania and elsewhere in the Balkans that Ceauşescu is not really dead and that his place during the execution and trial was taken by a fanatical Securitate doppelgänger.


137. BBC EE/0654, B/12, 5 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1753 gmt, 2 January 1990.

138. See David Hoffman, 'Diplomatic relations established: U.S. 'regrets' method of Ceauşescu trial', The Washington Post, 26 December 1989, p. A.26; Ronald Linden, 'Reaction to the revolution, part II: the Ceauşescu’s overthrow and execution', Report on Eastern Europe, 1:5, 2 February 1990, pp. 36–40. The decision was also publicly regretted by prominent East Europeans including Lech Walesa. Michael Hornsby, 'Deadline fails to halt the death squads', The Times, 29 December 1989, p. 1. The leaders of the Soviet Union may also not have viewed the execution favourably since the Foreign Minister of the time, Edward Shevardnadze, has subsequently admitted that the execution 'left a really bad impression on me'. Edward Shevardnadze interviewed by John Simpson on Newsnight, (BBC2, 16 December 1994).
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139. Philip Jacobson, 'Executions win mass support in Bucharest poll', _The Times_, 18 January 1990, p. 6. Speaking on behalf of the new authorities in Timişoara Valentin Virtan expressed the feeling that the trial whilst just had been hurried and that it should have been broadcast live on television. Mary Battiata, 'Dazed calm in revolt’s birthplace', _The Washington Post_, 27 December 1989, pp. A.1, A.14. Note also the query in C. Vrânceanu, 'De ce nu proces public? ' [Why no public trial?], _România Liberă_, 29 December 1989, pp. 1, 2. Octavian Paler amongst others was later to lament the missed opportunity of staging a Romanian Nürnberg, Octavian Paler, 'Întrebări, după', _România Liberă_, 14 January 1990, p. 2. See also Dan Ionescu, 'Old practices persist in Romanian justice', _Report on Eastern Europe_, 1:10, 9 March 1990, p. 45. However, other Romanian observers have persisted with their initial judgement that a proper trial could not have been organised in the chaos. See, for instance, Pavel Câmpeanu & Ștefana Steriade, 'The revolution: the beginning of the transition', _Social Research_, 60:4 (1993), p. 918.


146. _Revoluția Română în direct_, p. 97.


148. BBC EE/0648, B/11, 28 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1616 gmt, 23 December 1989. Later he repeated 'There was even a time when tension had come to a head, when the armed forces were a little concerned about the actions of the individuals in the former repressive machinery — well organised, highly efficient and pretty well informed, and above all capable to maintain the city and its residents tense. Perhaps they were not numerous, but they were professionals, they were well trained.' BBC EE/0650, B/10, 30 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 0912 gmt, 28 December 1989.

149. An English translation of the interview is to be found in 'Was there a coup?', _East European Reporter_, 4:3, 1990, pp. 74–77.

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153. See, for instance, Judy Dempsey, ‘Home of Romania’s secret police’, *Financial Times*, 2 January 1990, p. 3. At a press conference given by Vasile Ionel on 3 January 1990 he stated ‘All those belonging to the bodyguard of the Ceaușescu family have been arrested. They no longer have any weapons and no longer have the possibility to use them. They will be tried and punished according to their deeds.’ Michael Hornsby, ‘Kremlin reluctantly “backed uprising”’, *The Times*, 4 January 1990, p. 8. Rady, *Romania in turmoil*, p. 109, also points the finger of blame at Directorate V as does Blaine Harden, ‘Doors unlocked on Romania’s secret police’, *The Washington Post*, 30 December 1989, pp. A.1, A.14.


155. Petre Mihai Băcanu, ‘Directia a V-a acuzată de trădare?’, *România Liberă*, 25 July 1990, pp. 1, 3. Băcanu found that the Directorate had passed immediately under the command of the Ministry of Defence and that only one member of the unit had died in the fighting — having fallen as a hero of the revolution defending the TV station. Initially, confined to barracks the whole unit was placed under arrest before later being released without charge. For Florescu’s statement see Colonel Mugurel Floresco interviewed by Aurel Papadiuc, ‘Ce mai aveți de spus?’, *Adevârul*, 8 February 1991, p. 2. Also note that in his trial after the revolution the head of the force, General Marin Neagoe, was sentenced to seven years in prison for ‘abuse of his office’ and not for any offence specifically relating to the revolution. BBC EE/1086 B/18, 31 May 1991.

156. A series of articles by Horia Alexandrescu under the rubric ‘Adevârul despre USLA’ appeared in *Tineretul Liber*, 4 March 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 6 March 1990, pp. 1, 2; ibid. 7 March 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 13 March 1990, p. 4; ibid. 14 March, p. 4; ibid. 15 March 1990, p. 3. Whilst undoubtedly trying to paint the unit in the best possible light, these articles would seem to hold a kernel of truth about the part played by USLA in the revolution, particularly, as regards the incident outside the Ministry of Defence in Drumul Taberei on the night of 23/24 December. At that time, it seems that three armoured vehicles of the unit were summoned by the occupants of the building to help in its defence, but one of the vehicles broke down en route and when the other two arrived outside the Ministry, they were fired upon by units defending the building. Seven were killed including the Chief of Staff of USLA, Lieutenant-Colonel Gheorghe Trosca, and four more wounded. The USLA troops were immediately proclaimed ‘terrorists’ with this word being daubed across their wrecked vehicles whilst the dead bodies were left on public display in the street for several days. The dismissal of Colonel Gheorghe Ardeleanu as head of USLA, despite his apparent early adherence to the revolution, also seems to have been directly related to this incident. For a view of the same incident less favourable to USLA see the article by members of the army ‘Adevârul, numai adevârul: eroi, victime sau terorişti?’ *Adevârul*, 29 August 1990, pp 1, 2, which, in turn, was a response to an open letter by the widows of the dead ‘Scrisori către directorului ziarului: dacă toţi au fost eroi, terorişti cine au fost?’, *Adevârul*, 26 August 1990, p. 3. See also Galloway & Wylie, *Downfall*, p. 201, and the photograph of one of the wrecked vehicles in Eugen Dichiseanu, ‘Vii şi morţi, ciracii ucigaşi’, *Adevârul*, 26 December 1989, p. 2. Iliescu subsequently admitted that this incident was an unfortunate accident,
Ion Iliescu interviewed by Nicolae Manolescu, ‘Președintele Ion Iliescu răspunde la întrebările României Literare’, România Literară, 5 July 1990, p. 14. USLA troops also seem to have participated in a number of other actions on the side of the revolution including mounting searches of the basement of the television station on 25 December, other houses in the vicinity of that building, as well as the ‘tunnels’ under Bucharest. In one incident, they were reported to have killed three ‘terrorists’ dressed in Patriotic Guard uniforms, but, elsewhere, there are stories of a number of USLA troops being accidently killed whilst in the service of the revolution. See Jean-Paul Mari, ‘Roumanie: les fonctionnaires de la terreur’, Le nouvel observateur, 15-21 February 1990, pp. 4-10. For USLA units at the TV see Revoluția Română în direct, p. 337. As regards general perceptions of the unit, note Guse’s evident shock when confronted with Ardeleanu at the meeting to convene the Front in the Central Committee building, when even he seems unable to contemplate that such a man should be connected with the NSF.

157. ‘Raportul Comisiei Senatoare pentru Cercetarea Evenimentelor din Decembrie 1989: Secțiunea 3. Evenimentele desfășurate în perioada 16-22.12.1989 în municipiul București. 3. Acțiunile forțelor aparținând M.I. în municipiul București în perioada 16-22.12.1989.’, Adevărul, ‘Editie specială’, 25 May 1992 p. 4. For Otopeni see earlier in this chapter and for the Securitate troops see Tudor’s statement above and a declaration made by their commander General Ghiță in Adevărul which was partially made in reaction to an earlier article by Brucan casting aspersions on the loyalty of this unit during the revolution. In his article Ghiță stressed that his men were on the side of the revolution from the beginning and that none were under investigation by the Procurator. Grigore Ghiță, ‘Să se cunoască adevărul’, Adevărul, 19 January 1990, p. 2.

158. Revoluția Română în direct, p. 168.


160. BBC EE/0654, B/9:19, 5 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1800 gmt, 3 January 1990. As an example of the same tendencies note Chită’s statement in a TV interview that: ‘... the enemy reconnaissance–diversion teams employed a number of highly efficient fighting means: sophisticated automatic weapons equipped with night sighting devices and gun sighting telescopes. Furthermore, in some parts of the country the terrorists were aided by choppers and even light armoured cars’. BBC EE/0651, B/7:15, 1 January 1990, Agerpres in English, 2230 gmt, 29 December 1989.

161. On the 14 February it was reported that out of 522 suspects under arrest in Sibiu, 389 were former members of the Ministry of Interior forces and 133 were civilians. BBC EE/0690, B/6:20, 16 February 1990, Rompres in English, 1009 gmt, 14 February 1990. The doubts and uncertainties of the time as to who was and who was not arrested are caught in a contemporary interview with the Public Procurator, Gheorghe Robu. Ștefan Andrei, the former Foreign Minister, for instance, was rumoured to be still free when in fact he was detained. The main focus of interest seems to have been on Ceaușescu’s children, Zoia and Valentin, who had both been arrested along with all the PEC, but interestingly, given the allegations discussed above, the net had not yet been widened to include Ceaușescu’s brother Andruța. Gheorghe Robu interviewed by Sergiu Andon, ‘Câință și sfidare’, Adevărul, 19 January 1990, pp. 1, 3.

162. The table is reproduced in Silviu Brucan ‘Ce mai aveți de spus?: cine și de ce nu vrea „să-l supere pe Generalul Vlad”’, Adevărul, 29 January 1991, p. 2.
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See also another table in Silviu Brucan, 'Ce mai aveți de spus?: Teroriștii au existat numai dacă nu se dorescțe nu se poate afla adevarul despre ei', Adenurul, 30 January 1991, p. 2, which is not so clear but appears to show a somewhat similar picture except that Sibiu is excluded. It also appears to show that the majority of those held in Bucharest were arrested after 27 December.

163. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 61; Eugen Dichiseanu, 'Conferința de presă la Procuratura Generală a României', România Liberă, 25 August 1990, p. 2; BBC EE/0856, B/10:30, 30 August 1990, Rompres in English, 0743 gmt, 27 August 1990. Two of the first trials of 'terrorists' related to incidents at Sibiu. They were partially televised in Romania and received much publicity in the Western media. Major Ion Bundea of the militia was found guilty of shooting at five army officers and wounding another in Sibiu on 22 December 1989. The details between the different reports vary somewhat, but it seems that Major Bundea had been sent from Bragov to Sibiu to help quell the revolt and according to the Prosecution, whilst he had been shutting down a military telephone switchboard, he had run into a group of five army officers, shooting one before he was subdued. He was sentenced to nine years in prison together with four years deprivation of civic rights for attempted murder. Slightly differing accounts of the trial can be found in: Christopher Walker, 'Terrorists made to face public trials', The Times, 9 January 1990, p. 8; 'Trial of Ceausescu supporters begin in Romania', Financial Times, 9 January 1990 p. 18; Helen Womak, 'Nine years for first Securitate man tried', The Independent, 9 January 1990, p. 8; Reuter, 'Secret police officer given prison sentence in Romania', The Washington Post, 9 January 1990, p. A.15. On 9 January 1990 also at Sibiu, Liviu Vanga, the militia chief at Cisnădie near Sibiu and Aurel Marcu from Sibiu were convicted of firing their submachine guns at demonstrators at Cisnădie on 21 December 1989, killing two and wounding eleven others. For this they were sentenced to twelve and a half years in prison, with nine years deprivation of civic rights. The court also authorised the relatives of the victims to sue for damages. It is possible that these sentences were increased on appeal. See 'End of the line for Ceausescu's men', The Times, 10 January 1990, p. 24; BBC EE/0690, B/6:20, 16 February 1990, Rompres in English, 1009 gmt, 14 February 1990. Shortly afterwards, Ioan Botarel, an officer in the Securitate was also tried for opening fire on the crowd from a window of the Militia-Securitate headquarters in Sibiu on the afternoon of the 22 December. He was sentenced to nineteen years in prison with deprivation of civic rights for a further seven years. See Virgil Lasăr, 'Sibiu: un nou terorist condamnat', România Liberă, 13 January 1990, p. 2.

164. The account of Dan Martjan, a leading light of the Front, effectively conveys the suspicions of the time, and, at one point, even he was detained. Revoluția Română în direct, pp. 225-29.

165. See Colonel Mugurel Florescu interviewed by Aurel Papadiuc, 'Ce mai aveți de spus?', Adenurul, 8 February 1991, p. 2. Indeed, one of the most famous photographs of the revolution that of a young 'terrorist' under guard in a hospital bed in fact showed Cristian Lupu, a young man, who had gone to help defend the television station. Apparently wounded on 23 December he had been taken to the emergency hospital where, for some reason, he was declared a suspect terrorist before he died on 25 December. His good name was subsequently established through the effort of Colonel Ghircoiaș of the militia and the testimony of his employers at the Ministry of Resources and Industry. For the full story see Revoluția Română în direct, pp. 157-62 and for an example of the picture see the album of photographs of the revolution Cronica învingeràta a
Bucureștiului în revoluție (Bucharest: Tineretul Liber, 1990). In another case, a young revolutionary, Gabriel Mihai, after being wounded in the Central Committee building on 25 December, was taken to hospital where he was arrested as a suspected terrorist before being later released. His story can be found in Petre Mihai Băcanu, ‘Fotografiile arestate’, România Libera, 6 January 1990, p. 3.

Perhaps the most emotionally charged picture of a falsely accused man came in Robert Dornhelm’s film ‘Requiem for Dominic’ made in memory of his childhood friend Dominic Paraschiv. According to Dornhelm’s research Paraschiv, a deeply religious and essentially peaceable man, on 24 December 1989 after participating as a member of a search-party looking for ‘terrorists’ at the Solventul factory in Timișoara seems to have suffered a mental breakdown and forced his colleagues at gunpoint to kneel in prayer. He was then shot by a guard and taken to hospital where the situation seems somehow to have got out of hand, ending up with the bleeding and naked Paraschiv secured in a net being paraded before foreign journalists as a ‘terrorist’ accused of eighty murders, before he was apparently allowed to bleed to death. He was declared innocent of all charges in May 1990 and was, subsequently, listed as a victim of the revolution. The film was first shown on British Television on 26 December 1990. See the interview with Robert Dornhelm by Sheila Johnston, ‘New take on a snap revolution’, The Independent, 20 December 1990, p. 13.

166. ‘Was there a coup?’, East European Reporter, 4:3, 1990, pp. 74–77. No further information is produced to substantiate these claims. Before 1 January 1990 ten of the 179 Romanians who fled to Yugoslavia during or immediately after the fighting were arrested as being suspected Securitate agents. Dessa Trevisan, ‘Securitate agents seek Yugoslavia sanctuary’, The Times, 1 January 1990 p. 5. There does appear to be some evidence of poachers turned gamekeepers. It seems possible that the Colonel Ghircoiaș of the militia mentioned above is one and the same as the Colonel Ghircoiaș later implicated in the removal of the bodies from Timișoara as described in the previous chapter.

167. Revoluția Românească în direct, p. 332.

168. The imagery used is reminiscent of the wildest of war atrocity stories and bears comparison with many of the claims emerging from the war in Bosnia. See, for instance, the revelation that the ‘Muslims cut peoples’ eyes out and bake their bodies.’ in Marcus Tanner, ‘Serbian women again halt UN aid convoy’, The Independent, 28 November 1992, p. 11. Thus, ‘In Arad . . . , they [the Securitate] stormed the maternity section of the main hospital. There they riddled pregnant women and babies with bullets.’ Whilst ‘In Bucharest they attacked the main emergency hospital . . . ’ and ‘In Cluj, . . . , they descended from a lorry and fired into a small group of demonstrators. More than thirty people were shot dead.’ Judy Dempsey, ‘Home of Romania’s secret police’, Financial Times, 2 January 1990, p. 3. Michael Sheridan, ‘Bitter fighting in Romania after Ceaușescu is toppled’, The Independent, 23 December 1989, p. 1, carries reports of Securitate officers killing thirty children in Timișoara.

169. Simpson makes an interesting comparison with the Iranian revolution of 1979, where he also heard the same rumours concerning poisoned water, and this leads him to suggest that ‘certain ideas seem to appeal forcibly to the self-dramatizing mind of the revolutionary,’ Simpson, The darkness crumbles, p. 252. There is also a little unsubstantiated evidence in support of these rumours. Following reports of nausea and four people lapsing into a coma, samples of the water supply from Sibiu were analysed at Cluj University and, apparently, on the basis of these results obtained from the Romanian laboratory Professor Aubin Heydrick
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... of the University of Ghent in Belgium was reported as suggesting that nerve agents, including Sarin, had been present, the substances having apparently being introduced into a water tower on 21 December. James Adams, ‘Securitate’s poison secret discovered’, The Sunday Times, 4 February 1990, p. A.15.


171. Bucharest radio’s first ‘free transmission for the army’ on the 28 December alleged that captured ‘enemy elements’ were drugged. BBC EE/0649, i, 29 December 1989. These stories were relayed on Hungarian radio ‘... a few securitate agents were captured and heroin was found on them. At the moment of their capture they were under the influence of drugs, and this probably explains the fact they shot at unarmed peaceful demonstrators.’ BBC EE/0652, B/12:20, 3 January 1990, Budapest Home Service, 1100 gmt, 31 December 1989. They also appeared in the Western press as in an interview with Drs Gabriel Tatu and Andrei Fircă who were responsible for treating fifteen suspected ‘terrorists’ mostly in their early twenties. The two doctors contended that their patients were: ‘... really high on drugs and alcohol.... We had to use large doses of tranquilisers to calm them down. That took two days until last Friday [29 December], when the Army took them away, they remained absolutely silent.’ Judy Dempsey, ‘Home of Romania’s secret police’, Financial Times, 2 January 1990, p. 3. See also Blaire Harden, ‘Elite unit of Romanian secret police seen battling to death’, The Washington Post, 30 December 1989, p. A.14. Through the devshirme male Christian children from the age of eight onwards were enslaved into Ottoman service with many later becoming the backbone of the élite janissary corp of the Ottoman army. The orphan myth was raised by the prosecutor during the trial of the Ceauşescus when he stated ‘They [the Ceauşescus] used to fetch people from orphan’s homes or from abroad who they trained in special institutions to become murderers of their own people’, ‘Transcript of the closed trial of Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu’, The Washington Post, 29 December 1989, p. A.26. For examples of the usage of this myth in the Western press see Blaire Harden, ‘Romanian rebels claim capture of Ceauşescu’, The Washington Post, 24 December 1989, pp. A.1, A.24; Harvey Morris & Imre Karacs, ‘Romanian leaders living in fear’, The Independent, 30 December 1989, p. 1. See also Chris Stephens, ‘Romania puts ban to vote’, The Sunday Times, 14 January 1990, p. A.17.

172. Emphasis in the original and note the allusion to the Dracula myth in the reference to impalement. Codrescu, The hole in the flag, p. 93. A more visual symbol was a grotesque effigy of Ceauşescu reported as still hanging by a rope from a tree in the centre of Bucharest several weeks after the fighting had ceased. Christopher Walker, ‘Romanians “face Communist danger”’, The Times, 10 January 1989, p. 6.

173. Michael Simmons, ‘Treading on eggshells’, The Guardian, 12 December 1990, p. 23. Whilst travelling in Romania in 1988 amidst talk of Gorbachev and his hope of change an old man bluntly castigated his own nation as cowards, as he confided in me that in his opinion the root of the problem lay in the resigned acceptance of the Romanians, who allowed such an intolerable situation to continue. Such sentiments are also voiced in the bitter message of Petru Creția broadcast on the BBC Romanian Service, prior to the revolution, and addressed to his fellow Romanians in general but, especially, the members of the Writer’s Union: ‘Why can’t his [Eminescu’s] example be a correction to our humiliating
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cowardice?...It pleased us instead to believe in the efficiency of petty strategies'.


The stories circulating prompted the Syrian chargé d'affaires in Budapest to request that the Hungarian people be informed that the Syrian army was not taking part in the fighting. However, in reporting this statement Hungarian radio noted that he did not specifically deny that Syrian citizens were involved.

Subsequently, on 26 December, the Hungarians came under heavy criticism from the Federation of Arab News Agencies in Budapest for persisting with reports that people of Middle Eastern origin were involved in the conflict. BBC EE/0649, B/8-9, 29 December 1989, MTI in English, 1159 gmt, 24 December 1989; BBC EE/0649, B/8-9, 29 December 1989, MTI in English, 1605 gmt, 26 December 1989.

The stories circulating prompted the Syrian chargé d'affaires in Budapest to request that the Hungarian people be informed that the Syrian army was not taking part in the fighting. However, in reporting this statement Hungarian radio noted that he did not specifically deny that Syrian citizens were involved.

Subsequently, on 26 December, the Hungarians came under heavy criticism from the Federation of Arab News Agencies in Budapest for persisting with reports that people of Middle Eastern origin were involved in the conflict. BBC EE/0649, B/8-9, 29 December 1989, MTI in English, 1159 gmt, 24 December 1989; BBC EE/0649, B/8-9, 29 December 1989, MTI in English, 1605 gmt, 26 December 1989.

For details of reports originating from Middle Eastern sources that Arabs and Iranians were involved in the fighting see Safa Haeri, 'Iran defends visit in name of defence deal', The Independent, 3 January 1990, p. 10.


178. 'Was there a coup?', East European Reporter, 4:3, 1990, p. 76. For an example of a denial of these charges see Roman's interview in the Romanian language Israeli daily Viaţa Noastră in which he said "no Arab terrorist had been captured" and added that "the alleged training base for Palestinians terrorists" did not exist'. Quoted in Shafir, 'Preparing for the future by revising the past', p. 37. Shortly before this interview, in August 1990, there appeared an anonymous interview in the journal Baricada which, Ratesh argues, bears all the hallmarks of coming from Brucan and Militaru. In this it is stated that: 'It is not by chance that on 25 December 1989 the first plane that arrived with foreign aid was from Libya. It went back to Libya with a human load. In the total chaos of that time, the new power did not know of the load carried to Libya by that particular plane [that took off from Otopeni at a time when the airport was still closed to traffic].'
Quoted in Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 65. The credibility of the interview is somewhat lost by the next revelation that: 'Several wounded terrorists, some of them only slightly wounded, were quickly finished off by their own comrades.' Official reports do state that on 25 December both Otopeni and Băneasa were declared open and that two aid aircraft landed but their origins are not revealed. BBC EE/0648, B/18, 28 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 1940 gmt, 25 December 1989. Certainly by 26 December the airport was in full use because it received at least sixteen aid flights on that day alone. See
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Nicolae Plopeanu & Cristina Prioteasa, 'Pe aeroportul Otopeni sosesc ajutoare',  
_Adevărul_, 27 December 1989, p. 3.

179. In Iaşi, Doru Tigau, a forty-three-year old Philosophy Professor, had been proclaimed head of the local branch of the NSF. However, Tigau began to display increasingly eccentric behaviour and during an interview with the American journalist David Binder, after stating that a 'revolutionary has to know how to drive and use arms .... I thought I was apolitical. I suddenly discovered I was a highly political person', on hearing about the Yemeni students he declared that Arab 'terrorists' were at the local Post Office and promptly drew a pistol and ordered the army to open fire. Today the eccentricity of the former leader seems to be a source of some embarrassment in Iaşi. David Binder, 'Requiem for a dictatorship, sung slightly off-key', _New York Times_, 13 January 1990, p. 1.


181. Philip Jacobson, 'Executions win mass support in Bucharest poll', _The Times_, 18 January 1990, p. 6. The poll was carried out by a French organisation using Romanian interviewers. In an early editorial, 'An end to tyranny', _The Times_, 23 December 1989, p. 11, the events in Romania were described as a 'classic popular uprising' but by the following month in another editorial, 'A revolution betrayed?' _The Times_, 24 January 1990, p. 13, there was a marked change of tone as in another, rather hackneyed, reference to Shakespeare Iliescu and Roman were compared with Brutus and Cassius.

182. A succinct analysis of the origins of the debate can be found in Michael Shafir, 'Ceauşescu's overthrow: popular uprising or Moscow guided conspiracy?', _Report on Eastern Europe_, 1:3, 19 January 1990, pp. 15–19.


185. For an example of such argumentation see Teodorescu, _Un risc asumat_. In his testimony at the Timișoara trial Stânculescu said that he had been dispatched to Timișoara on the basis of information received by the Army Intelligence Department that certain states neighbouring Romania were planning to destabilise the situation at the border, and against this background trigger an anti-Ceauşescu revolt. He asserted that in Timișoara on the 17–18 December the dominant image had been one of 'foreign involvement and the Army and the Ministry of the Interior were therefore duty-bound to act jointly to defend the interests of the state.' Later Guţe adopted a similar line stating that those involved in the violence had not been residents of Timișoara. BBC EE/1150, B/3:11(a), 14 August 1991, Rompres in English, 1750 gmt, 6 August 1991.

Given the strict border controls in force at the time it is difficult to place any great faith in this statement and, on the contrary, the Romanians seem to have gone to considerable lengths to make sure no misunderstandings occurred with Hungary. particularly, as there had been considerable tension in Romanian–Hungarian relations throughout this period. When in the first half of December the Romanians became aware that the '... military information networks of the states situated to the west of the country moved closer to the Romanian border', Milea had ordered the Chief of Staff to establish direct telephone contact with his Hungarian counterpart and from these conversations it was decided that the Hungarians were in fact only engaged in routine exercises and that Romania was
therefore not under threat of a military attack. See the testimony of Reserve Vice-Admiral Ştefan Delumare at the Timișoara trial BBC EE/1150, B/3:11(b), 14 August 1991, Budapest Home Service, 2000 gmt, 2 August 1991. And in an effort to dispel continuing rumours the Hungarian Defence Ministry on 19 December 1989 again denied there were troop concentrations on the Romanian border, see BBC EE/0645, i, 21 December 1989. However, two days later on 21 December, it was the turn of the Hungarian Defence Minister, Ferenc Karpati, to calm Hungarian fears of a possible Romanian attack when, after a meeting with the Romanian Military Attaché in Budapest, he stated that he had been assured that the Romanian security forces in Timișoara had taken action “in the interests of restoring order”; ... [and that] very careful analysis of reports that the Romanian Army was preparing for action against Hungary would be needed before such reports could be believed.” EE/0646 ii 22 December 1989 and see also Imre Karacs, ‘Hungarian parties united in revulsion at carnage in Timișoara’, The Independent, 21 December 1989, p. 11.

186. ‘Stenograma „Marelui Consens”’, România Libera, 10 May 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 11 May 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 12 May 1990, pp. 1–2. Roger Boyes, ‘Hint of master plan for Romania uprising’, The Times, 3 January 1990, pp. 1, 6, quoted Cazimir Ionescu as saying on a foreign TV broadcast that: ‘We have been planning this for the past two years. We never thought we would get it off the ground — but we kept on with our meetings and followed Gorbachev very closely. We thought the only people, who could carry it out were retired people who had no job to lose, or Hungarians or Germans because Ceaușescu wouldn’t dare kill them.’

Mihai Lupoi in Le Figaro of 3 January said of the Front: ‘It had been set up a long time ago, but it had in fact come to life on the barricades, during the anti-Ceaușescu insurrection’. Quoted in Shafir, ‘Ceaușescu’s overthrow: popular uprising or Moscow-guided conspiracy?’, p. 19 n.7.

Brucan has stated that Militaru in making his comment was referring to a series of letters written under the name National Salvation Front and sent to Radio Free Europe; two of which were broadcast. Brucan, The wasted generation, p. 172; Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 89–90, and Militaru has, subsequently, confirmed this and stated that it was Iliescu who had the idea of writing a manifesto to a foreign radio station using the Front’s name, General Nicolae Militaru interviewed by John Simpson on Newsnight (BBC2, 16 December 1994).

The first letter read on air on 27 August 1989 criticised the situation in Romania and called upon delegates to the 14th Congress of the Romanian Communist Party not to re-elect Ceaușescu. The second broadcast on 8 November 1989 took the form of an open letter to Ceaușescu protesting at his mismanagement of the country’s affairs and abuse of power. The identity of the writer of these letters remains unclear, although after the fall of Ceaușescu, Alexandru Melian, a Bucharest University Professor, claimed he alone was responsible and that no real organisation lay behind the communique, Alexandru Melian, ‘Mărturii pentru istorie’, Adevarul, 30 March 1990, pp. 1, 3.

Radio Free Europe had been warned around July 1989 that a letter written by people connected with the RCP’s Stefan Gheorghiu Academy was being sent to the station and Măgureanu, one of the leading plotters, was a Professor at this institution. It may also not be entirely coincidental that the time span between July and December is the six months mentioned by Militaru. However, Radio Free Europe were also informed that the first letter had been smuggled out of Romania by a medical doctor, who was part of a larger organisation, and that
the same doctor had written the second letter whilst he was visiting relations in Germany, see Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, p. 90. And, although when the text of the first letter was published in *Liberation* on 22 September 1989, it was suggested that the writers may be important members of the nomenclatura, this was doubted by Shafir who after subjecting the letter to a careful textual analysis came to the conclusion that: ‘...the letters hardly contained the kind of language that a communist party activist would be likely to choose — especially when addressing a communist forum. The authors referred to Romania as a “God-forsaken country,” claimed that it was a “holy duty” to oppose Ceauşescu, and (in an accompanying letter) said that RFE was their “hope,” since it helped Romanians “break the wall of silence, chase away darkness, and restore” the Romanians’ belief that they were not alone in their struggle’. Shafir, *Ceauşescu’s overthrow: popular uprising or Moscow-guided conspiracy?*, p. 16.

187. Quoted in Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, 102; see also Michael Hornsby, ‘Kremlin reluctantly “backed uprising”’, *The Times*, 4 January 1990, p. 8. The latter part of this remark may have been prompted by, or it might confirm, an item on Radio Moscow’s Romanian service which at 18.00 on 22 December said that the existence of the National Salvation Front had been known since the autumn and that this organisation had called on the 14th RCP congress not to re-elect Ceauşescu. Shafir in this article appears to suggest that Radio Moscow’s information is drawn from Western dispatches, but it is not entirely clear whether in this he is referring to the statement or the misidentification of Nicolaescu with Mânescu, also discussed in the same passage. See Shafir, ‘Ceauşescu’s overthrow: popular uprising or Moscow-guided conspiracy?’, pp. 17, 19 n.6. When he visited Romania, shortly after the revolution, Dumas played down his remarks stating categorically that he did not believe there had been a coup. Chris Stephens, ‘France denies Ceauşescu plot’, *The Guardian*, 12 January 1990, p. 10.

188. BBC EE/0649, B/6, 29 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 2259 gmt, 26 December 1989.

189. BBC EE/0653, B/19:68, 4 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1832 gmt, 1 January 1990; Although note Roman does not directly state the NSF was not formed at an earlier time.

190. BBC EE/0655, B/9:36, 6 January 1990, Rompres in English, 2027 gmt, 4 January 1990. For a similar statement from Iliescu see Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, 87–88, such statements led Ratesh to talk of a conspiracy to cover up a conspiracy.


After apparently being dismissed from the Navy in 1970 for voicing criticism of Ceauşescu Nicolae Radu joined the merchant marine from which he retired in 1984. In 1987 the Securitate discovered anti-Ceauşescu leaflets at his home and he was sentenced to ten years in prison but released after less than one year through a general amnesty, Rateş, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 87. Currently he expresses disdain at the revolution and adheres to the most extreme Securitate based reading of events, ibid. pp. 97, 165 n.14.

194. Shafir has exhaustively analysed the background to the revelations of Brucan and Militaru. Shafir, ‘Preparing for the future by revising the past’, pp. 29–42.


196. Robert Bishop & E.S. Crayfield, Russia astride the Balkans (London: Evans Brothers, 1949), pp. 34, 36. It was also surely no coincidence that the Brucan and Militaru interview was published in Adevărul on 23 August 1990. For the strength of the ‘culture of conspiracy’ in Romania see Verdery & Kligman, ‘Romania after Ceauşescu’, p. 119, where amongst other factors to explain this phenomenon they point to the persisting ‘socialist–planning mindset’, an ‘internalized tendency to blame every problem on “plots” and “outside” forces’ and the all prevailing climate of suspicion.

197. Indeed, Militaru claims that in 1984 he, Kostyal and Ioniţa were spared further reprisals because those who had betrayed the plot were unaware of the full details ‘Was there a coup?’, East European Reporter, 4:3, 1990, p. 75. Although this is not the opinion of Kostyal who blame Magureanu and the ‘Securitate wing’ for betraying them. Indeed, he feels they were all pawns in an elaborate Securitate ‘sting’ operation. Behr, Kiss the hand you cannot bite, p. 223. For examples of the persistant rumours of an army coup attempt during the mid–1980s see: David Blow, ‘Romanian officers “executed after foiled military coup”’, The Times, 7 February 1983, p. 6; Anneli Maier, ‘Ceauşescu defends his military doctrine’, Radio Free Europe Research, Situation Report Romania/5, 17 March 1983, pp. 14–18. Anneli Maier, ‘The RCP on the eve of its 13th Congress’, Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/17, 17 November 1984, p. 2, where there are reports of rumours of one or two attempted military coups arising from protests at Ceauşescu’s economic policies and the status of the Romanian army both within the country and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation as a whole. Also see Anneli Maier, ‘Defence Minister replaced’, Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/1, 10 January 1986, pp. 7–10.
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Reports of these coup attempts surfaced during the revolution. See, for instance, Marcus Tanner & Imre Karacs, ‘Uprising in Bucharest’, The Independent, 22 December 1989, p. 1, where amidst the wildest of rumours concerning the size of the Securitate forces, a Professor of Law at the University of Bucharest who had just arrived in Hungary, Mircea Stoica, makes reference to the 1984 coup attempt.

198. Brucan, The wasted generation, pp. 133-34. According to Brucan and Radu the plotters were betrayed by two of their group on the fringes of the conspiracy: Lieutenant-Generals Gomoiu and Popa. The veracity of this statement has never been proven, and it seems that whatever occurred Gomoiu remained tinged with suspicion because he was removed as a candidate member of the Central Committee that year and received no further promotion. More surprising is the fact that Kostyal seems to have been the only conspirator punished, although Ioniţă did lose his Central Committee post during that year. According to Kostyal, Brucan and Ioniţă only received verbal warnings. It seems possible that the importance of the coup attempt of 1984 has been greatly inflated and Michael Shafir has aptly noted that a ‘conspiracy involving the military that has difficulty getting hold of guns can hardly be taken very seriously’. Shafir, ‘Preparing for the future by revising the past’, p. 32; see also Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 94. Kostyal’s outline of the 1984 plan broadly matches that of Brucan in detail. From a military perspective the key objectives of the plotters were the Ministry of Defence, the airfields around Bucharest and the television station. The seizure of the TV being deemed necessary to win the support of the population for the coup, which, it was foreseen, might trigger a wider popular uprising but Kostyal has stressed that the plot was not conditional on this occurring. See Shafir, ‘New revelations of the military’s role in Ceauşescu’s ouster’, pp. 25-26.

199. This comes over strongly in the account of Radu but may well be conditioned by his post-Ceauşescu anti-regime posture. See Shafir, ‘Preparing for the future by revising the past’, p. 35.

200. Ion Ioniţă during his career occupied many senior positions. As early as 1949 he was head of the Political Directorate of the Romanian Army with Ceauşescu and Corneliu Mănescu as his two deputies. The immediate deputy of Ceauşescu at this time being Kostyal. Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 95, 166 n. 23. Later he became First Deputy (1962-66) and then Minister of National Defence (1966-76). In 1976 he was promoted to Deputy Prime Minister and became a full member of the PEC. However, in 1979 his career started to go into a sharp decline, as he lost his membership of the Defence Council, and, then, his post on the PEC before, in November 1984, he was, finally, removed from the Central Committee. According to Brucan, as early as 1976, Ioniţă had become involved in the plotting of a military coup with the army Chief of Staff, General Ion Gheorghe. He is alleged to have fallen out of favour, partly because of his opposition to the rise of Ceauşescu’s brother, Ilie Ceauşescu, within the military hierarchy. Both Brucan and Radu have suggested he died in highly suspicious circumstances and have noted that he was buried without military honours. Brucan, The wasted generation, pp. 132-34; Shafir, ‘Preparing for the future by revising the past’, p. 32.

General Ştefan Kostyal was an old illegalist who had shared a prison cell with Ceauşescu in the late 1930s. Entering the Romanian army he had been a classmate of Militaru at the Voroshilov Military Academy in Moscow from 1956 to 1958. He subsequently married a Russian woman he met in Moscow at this time.
and, according to Kostyal, this was at the root of all his later disagreements with Ceaușescu. Placed in the army reserve in 1970 he sent a letter to the Central Committee protesting against Ceaușescu's policies particularly the 'personality cult' and his 'erratic' (anti-Soviet) foreign policy. Subsequently, in June 1970, Kostyal was arrested and demoted to the rank of private. At the time it was rumoured that Kostyal was punished for being a Soviet spy. Following the abortive coup in 1984 Kostyal was again penalised being sent into internal exile in Curtea de Argeș. Kostyal's rank was restored by presidential decree on 9 February 1990. For Kostyal see Behr, *Kiss the hand you cannot bite*, pp. 56, 103–4, 116, 220–24; *Monitorul Oficial al României*, 2:24, 9 February 1990, p. 11; Shafir, 'Preparing for the future by revising the past', pp. 29–42.


General Vasile Ionel was a former Deputy Minister of Defence who became Minister of Defence after the revolution.

201. Among members of the RCP mentioned are Janos Fazekas, Ioan Ursu and Vasile Patilinet. Fazekas had been a Deputy Prime Minister (1967–72) and Minister of Domestic Trade (1974–82) but was dismissed from this post in 1982. Shafir, 'Preparing for the future by revising the past', p. 31.

Ioan Ursu apparently procured for the plotters details of Ceaușescu's itineraries and, according to Teodorescu, Ceaușescu was aware of his treachery. Teodorescu, *Un risc asumat*, p. 25. Brucan has said that he became a close friend of Ursu when he received a Fulbright fellowship to Washington in the late 1950s. Brucan, *The wasted generation*, p. 133. He is also rumoured to have been at the heart of the mysterious 'transcendental meditation affair' of 1982 which also seems to have involved several prominent figures from the revolution such as Voiculescu. See 'Romania: explosive', *Eastern Europe Newsletter*, 2:13, 29 June 1988, pp. 2–3, where the prospect of KGB involvement in the affair is also raised. Note also *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 171, where it is alleged that a former member of the Securitate removed from the force at the time of the affair, Colonel Ion Cercel, appeared at the television at the beginning of broadcasts.

Vasile Patilinet was from 1965 Central Committee Secretary apparently in charge of the armed forces and security apparatus. He was removed from this post and the Defence Council in 1972 and at the time there was some speculation that it was related to the the Şerb case. 'Burtica replaces Patilinet as Party Secretary', *Radio Free Europe Research, Rumanian Situation Report*/7 17 February 1972, pp. 17–20. However, Patilinet was not completely disgraced, since he remained Minister of Forestry and the Machine Building Industry until 1977, and then, Minister of Mines, Oil and Geology until 1979. From 1974–79 he was an alternative member of the PEC. As Romanian Ambassador in Turkey he died in a car crash on 9 October 1986, according to Radu, killed by the Securitate on
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Ceaușescu’s orders.

According to Radu the ‘Securitate’ group was centred on a group of University Professors, including Virgil Măgureanu, who Radu states was a member of the Securitate from 1972 until 1980. Măgureanu seems to have been an associate of Iliescu, the latter once contributed a chapter to a book of essays he edited, and, after the revolution, he appeared at the core of the new regime being entrusted with the responsibility of presenting the Front’s commune of 24 December 1989 and attending the trial of Ceaușescu. After this he faded from the public eye until he took up the important post of head of the new post-Securitate Romanian Information Service. The name of Colonel Dumitriu Penciuc of the Securitate troops is also mentioned. His cooperation apparently being secured by Militaru in 1986 (according to Radu in 1987).

Perhaps, partly due to Brucan’s continuing hostility to the Securitate, it seems likely that the full extent of the 1984 conspiracy has yet to be revealed and in relation to the whole episode it is interesting to note that shortly afterwards Lieutenant-General Plesiță was removed from the position of Deputy Minister of the Interior. At that time he was probably head of the office of Foreign Intelligence (CIE). See René de Flers, ‘Are there problems in the secret service?’ Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/4, 1 March 1985, pp. 25-28.

Unsubstantiated sources have suggested to me that Plesiță was party to some form of conspiracy.

202. Militaru claims to have first met Iliescu in a hospital in 1982, Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 92, and Radu has said that Iliescu was recruited into the ranks of the conspirators by Măgureanu after his demotion and dispatch to Timișoara in 1971. Militaru has said that he was regularly in contact with Iliescu during the months prior to the revolution, and this has been confirmed by Roman, who has added that after one meeting they were called in by the Securitate for questioning, Michael Shafir, ‘Ceaușescu’s overthrow: popular uprising or Moscow-guided conspiracy?’, Report on Eastern Europe, 1:3, 19 January 1990, p. 17.

In his 23 August interview Brucan claims connection with the conspiracy from 1983 when he began having regular meetings with Ion Ionița and other military figures. However, according to Radu, Silviu Brucan’s only brief contact with the conspirators was in 1985 and that ended abruptly for the flimsy reason that he refused to contribute an article to a book being edited by Măgureanu. Here he is presumably referring to the book Puterea politică și sistemul social (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1985), which also featured contributions from Iliescu, Vasile Secăreș, Ioan-Mircea Pascu and Mihai Drăganescu. Shafir, ‘Preparing for the future by revising the past’, pp. 29-42.

203. Militaru quoted in Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, p. 91. Kostyal also mentions a specific plan in his testimony Shafir, ‘New revelations of the military’s role in Ceaușescu’s ouster’, pp. 25-26. But note that Kostyal in his interview with Behr states that he went to the Ministry of Defence only because he remembered it had been one of the targets in 1984.

204. According to Dennis Deletant, Doicaru had been appointed to head the Foreign Intelligence Directorate in 1958, becoming Vice Chairman of the State Security Council in 1967 and Deputy Minister of the Interior in 1978. In so far unexplained circumstances he seems to have lost both this job and that of head of Foreign Intelligence during 1978, when, for a few months, he was Minister of Tourism. However, he appears to have retained some favour since between 1974–80 he is said to have been a councillor of Ceaușescu and was also a candidate
member of the Central Committee. According to his testimony on the television, at the end of this period of time, he was placed under arrest and discharged from the service because he opposed Ceaușescu's method of rule. He died after the revolution in an alleged shotgun accident in March 1991. See Deletant, 'The Șecuritate and the Police State in Romania, 1964–89', p. 47. First-Rank Captain Emil Dumitrescu, although he does not seem to have been technically placed on the reserve, was seconded from active service to other duties. *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 203.


205. General Ion Șerb was apparently replaced as Commander of the Bucharest military garrison by Militaru. Prior to this, amongst other posts, he had been a Deputy Minister of the Interior. In early 1972 he seems to have been caught passing military secrets to the Soviet Military attaché in Bucharest, Colonel A.F. Mussatov, and, shortly afterwards, reports reached the West that he had been executed, but according to Pacepa this was an elaborate hoax stage managed by Ceaușescu. For details see Robert R. King, ‘Romanian difficulties in military and security affairs’, *Radio Free Europe Research*, Rumania Situation Report/6, 6 March 1972, pp. 1–11; Robert R. King, ‘Reorganisation of the Ministry of the Interior’, *Radio Free Europe Research*, Rumania Situation Report/17, 17 May 1972, pp. 8–10; Pacepa, *Red horizons*, pp. 195–97; Walter M. Bacon Jnr, ‘The military and the Party in Romania’, in Dale R. Herspring & Ivan Volgyes (eds.), *Civil–military relations in communist systems* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1978), pp. 170–171; Crowther, ‘Ceaușescuism’ and civil–military relations’, pp. 214–15. For the allegations about Militaru see note 200 above.

206. For Chirac’s statement on television see *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 35. The rather contradictory account of his journey to the TV can be found in ibid. p. 213.

207. Militaru has never suggested Milea was a part of the conspiracy and in a rather woolly statement he appears to rule him out. *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 208. For Kostyal’s verdict on Stănculescu see Behr, *Kiss the hand you cannot bite*, pp. 222–223, and for Radu’s Shafir, ‘Preparing for the future by revising the past’, p. 35.


209. ‘Was there a coup?’, *East European Reporter*, 4:3, 1990, p. 76.

211. *R evoluţia Română* in direct, pp. 136, 144, 148, 164. This seems to have been the root of the near fatal stabbing of the Vice-President of the TV, Traian Pușcașu. In circumstances that are far from clear he seems to have been the subject of a knife attack by Lieutenant-Colonel Constantin Vasiliu although probably the intended victim was General Tudor. It seems that Vasiliu had been held before this incident as a suspected terrorist. Notably Tudor was not recalled for active service nor promoted after the revolution. *R evoluţia Română* in direct, pp. 135, 332.

212. Such sentiments are apparently to be found in other Eastern European countries. See Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe*, p. 254, where he refers to a speech by István Csurka, a prominent Hungarian nationalist politician who used the same 'alphabetic conundrum' when suggesting that the two superpowers had cheated Hungary out of its revolution. The same formulation also seems to have been common in Bulgaria. See Maria Todorova, 'Improbable maverick or typical conformist? Seven thoughts on the new Bulgaria', in Ivo Banac (ed.), *Eastern Europe in revolution* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 159 n. 32. The Malta summit followed a series of meetings between Edvard Shevardnadze and James Baker that began at the abortive Cambodia Peace Conference in June 1989. Here it seems Shevardnadze gave an assurance that the Soviet Union would not use force to stop the reform process in Eastern Europe and this pledge was repeated in a private meeting the two held at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, in September. There is no indication that the question of Romania was broached at Malta, the two superpowers having more weighty matters on their mind, particularly the question of Germany. Generally, it seems that in return for Russian commitments not to intervene in Eastern Europe the Americans pledged not to take advantage of the situation allowing a step by step evolution of the process with a mutual recognition that neither of the two superpowers could have much of a direct bearing on the events. See Dan Oberdorfer, 'Altered superpower ties exemplified by Romania', *The Washington Post*, 1 January 1990, p. A.1.

213. A joke before 1989 lamented the fact that it was Gorbachev and not Stalin in power in the Soviet Union because the earlier leader would rapidly have intervened to remove Ceaușescu! Falin supports this view when he says the Soviet Union's relations with Ceaușescu had become worse than cool with no real dialogue. Falin, 'The collapse of Eastern Europe: Moscow's view', p. 24.


215. Militaru was trained in Moscow, but Pacepa's allegations that he fell from grace in 1978 when he became amourously involved with a Soviet spy remain unproven, although the story did receive wide circulation in the West at the time of the revolution. See Michael Knipe, 'Spy link fuels speculation on Soviet influence', *The Times*, 28 December 1989, p. 6; Pacepa, *Red horizons*, pp. 193-197. Even if the story is true, Militaru, as did Șerb before him, seems to have acted not out of ideological conviction but for sexual favours. Note also that, when Militaru made contact with a Soviet diplomat in Constanța 1987, his request for practical aid for their plans seems to have been rebuffed. See John Simpson, 'Ten days that fooled the world', *The Independent*, 16 December 1994, p. 21. If Militaru's assertion is true it would suggest that, despite the nomenclatural similarities between the
two bodies that came to power in Poland and Romania, preparations in the latter never reached a stage as advanced as in the former, where some sources suggest the detailed planning for the coup was settled in a two meetings between General Jaruzelski and General Kryuchkov and Marshal Viktor Kulikov of the Soviet Union. See Christopher Andrew & Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: the inside story of its foreign operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), pp. 485-86.

First-Rank Captain Emil Dumitrescu also states that in 1979 he was (falsely) accused of working for a foreign power — presumably the Soviet Union. *Revoluția Română in direct*, p. 203.

216. For the civilians see chapter four. Penciuc studied at the F.E. Dzerjinski Institute in Moscow.

217. Brucan, *The wasted generation*, pp. 149-52. For a long time Brucan denied that he had met Gorbachev at this time saying that he had only met lower officials who had given a very reluctant promise of support. Judy Dempsey, ‘Romanian revolution “backed by Moscow” ’, *Financial Times*, 4 January 1990, p. 2. It seems that the meeting with the Soviet leader was arranged through the agencies of Anatoly Dobrynin former Soviet Ambassador in Washington. Brucan says it was Gorbachev who insisted on secrecy, and it was only after his fall from office and the disintegration of the USSR that he felt able to speak.


219. ‘Stenograma „Marelui Consens“’, *România Liberă*, 10 May 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 11 May 1990, pp. 1, 3; ibid. 12 May 1990, pp. 1-2. See also Iliescu’s account in *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 224. Iliescu says he contacted the Soviet Embassy by telephone but there has also long been speculation that he went in person following his first address on the television. This seems largely to stem from a conversation overheard by Florian Filipoiu see *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 197. By his own admission, shortly after he spoke on the TV, Iliescu headed towards the Ministry of Defence with Velicu in his car, but just outside the Military Academy they were involved in a minor collision with another car which delayed but did not prevent, their arrival. However, such is the variation in all the accounts of who was present at the Ministry at that time that it cannot be proven conclusively whether Iliescu was there or not. Mazilu was later to say that Iliescu went to the Soviet Embassy again on the morning of 23 December. It was first publicly admitted that Iliescu had spoken to Gorbachev by telephone on 28 December 1989. See ‘Convorbire telefonică Gorbaciov–Iliescu’, *Adevărul*, 28 December 1989, p. 1.

220. Dinu Cornel, who was present at the XI floor command centre of the TV that night, says the question of asking for several battalions of Russian élite troops was discussed, *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 168. Mazilu and Lupoi, perhaps not the most unbiased of witnesses, have both said that Iliescu requested Soviet troops and a spokesman at the Soviet Embassy in Bucharest contacted by a reporter from the *Washington Post* at that time agreed that the NSF had requested military aid but said that this had been turned down by Moscow. David Remnick, ‘Nations’ sending aid; Eastern Bloc declines military assistance’, *The Washington Post*, 23 December 1989, p. A.22. A video recording of events inside the Central Committee building that night shows Gușă discussing and then rejecting the prospect of military involvement with somebody from the Soviet
Embassy in Bucharest. For a full discussion of this point see Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, pp. 111-12.

221. Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, p. 111; Blaine Harden, 'Romania orders surrender of arms', *The Washington Post*, 25 December 1989, pp. A.1, A.41. Guge says that, following this announcement on the radio with the aid of two translators, he contacted the Russians to make it clear that no help was requested and Gorbachev, whilst confirming to the Congress of People's Deputies that requests for help had been made also stated that the Chief of Staff of Romania's armed forces, [Guge] had said that Romania did not need help for the time being. At this time, it was suggested that a special Warsaw Treaty Organisation meeting would be convened in Moscow on 24 December, but later a Hungarian Foreign Office official was reported as saying it had been deemed unnecessary, General Ştefan Guge interviewed by Viorel Sâlăgean, 'Ce mai aveţi de spus?', *Adevărul*, 2 February 1991, p. 2.

Gorbachev at the time stated that a member of a Soviet trade delegation had been wounded and buildings housing various Soviet missions and employees severely damaged, David Remnick, 'Nations' sending aid; Eastern Bloc declines military assistance', *The Washington Post*, 23 December 1989, p. A.22. For references to this incident see: *Revoluția Română în direct*, pp. 164, 166. One report speaks of the building in question being besieged by paratroopers and a Tass statement, carried by both Pravda and Izvestia, on 24 December after giving some details of the events bears an unmistakable air of warning: '...an apartment building in which the families of the Soviet Trade Mission reside is in the shooting zone. Armed individuals have entered the building and are engaged in intensive firing from there. Fires have broken out in the building, and the lives of Soviet people, including women and children are in serious danger. The Soviet Union cannot remain indifferent to the fates [sic] of Soviet citizens, and it demands that those who unleashed the indicated actions jeopardizing the lives of Soviet people stop them immediately', *The current digest of the Soviet press*, 41:51 (1989), pp. 15, 28.


223. On news of the suppression of the demonstrations in Timişoara Baker seems to have passed a note to Shevardnadze via the American Ambassador in Moscow, Jack Matlock, asking him to press Ceauşescu to call a halt. Ceauşescu fell before this note was delivered, but the meeting between Shevardnadze and Matlock went ahead, as did a second meeting on 24 December before Baker's statement on television. Later the State Department repudiated Baker's comment saying it was an off the cuff remark made without any forethought. Ratesh, *Romania: the entangled revolution*, p. 113. Earlier Roland Dumas, French Foreign Minister, had said that his government had contacted the Soviet authorities to say they would support Warsaw Pact intervention and this position was later backed by the Dutch. Don Oberdorfer, 'Baker implies U.S. would back East Bloc military aid to rebels', *The Washington Post*, 25 December 1989 p. A.37.


Notes: 'The most obscure problem'

226. See chapter one for a suggestion that a Soviet Colonel was involved in talks with Romanian officers on the morning of 22 December. It has frequently been suggested that there were a suspiciously large number of Soviet citizens present in Romania immediately prior to the revolution. In Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and Poland in 1980 the KGB do seem to have instructed 'illegal' operatives stationed in the West to journey East on the assumption that as 'Westerners' they would be accorded freer access to information from oppositional sources. In the cases of Hungary and Czechoslovakia such agents may also have been ordered to act as agent provocateurs to prepare the way for Warsaw Pact invasions. That such tactics were employed in the case of Romania cannot be ruled out — reference might be made to unsubstantiated reports of the name of Ion Iliescu being heard on the lips of demonstrators in Timișoara before the fall of Ceaușescu. However, even if there is some substance to the various allegations, they should be placed firmly in perspective because, as in the case of Czechoslovakia in 1968, there is no evidence that they had any real effect on the course of events as they unfolded. The dynamics of the revolution were such that the situation soon passed out of the control of any forces and according to Falin on the Soviet side they had no idea before the events of '...the extent of the bloody bacchanalia that came to pass'. Valentin Falin, 'The collapse of Eastern Europe: Moscow's view', p. 24. For the alleged involvement of the KGB in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland see Andrew & Gordievsky, *KGB*, pp. 434, 486–87, 580. For reports that Iliescu's name had been chanted by sections of the crowd in Timișoara since 19 December see Mary Battiata, 'Priest's plight gave spark for revolution', *The Washington Post*, 31 December 1989, p. A.31.

As regards Soviet influence see also the mysterious Belgrade AFP report 'Witness tells of massacre', *The Times*, 28 December 1989, p. 6, which tells of eleven Soviet nationals being injured by Romanian security forces near the Yugoslav border. Mystery also surrounds an incident near Craiova on 24 December 1989 in which at least two people died in a clash between the Romanian army and a number of cars long suspected of carrying Soviet citizens. Tony Barber, 'Romanian's spy chiefs battle over revolution', *The Independent*, 19 July 1994, p. 10.

227. Reference here can be made to Militaru's initial broadcast when he alone that day refers to the Socialist Republic of Romania and insisted on referring to all senior army officers as 'Comrade General'. *Revoluția Română în direct*, 38–39; BBC EE/0649, B/2, 29 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1213 gmt, 22 December 1989.

The certitude that there is no salvation is a form of salvation, in fact it is salvation. Starting from here, we might organize our own life as well as construct a philosophy of history: the insoluble as solution, as the only way out...

Emil Cioran, *The trouble with being born.*

**The structure of the new regime**

With the formation of the Council of the National Salvation Front on the evening of 22 December, the first steps were taken towards the creation of a new structure of power. Once the Front consolidated its hold on power, the CNSF as the legislative body of the regime continued to lie at the heart of a somewhat complicated structure that eventually arose, but real power resided in the smaller Executive Bureau at its head. The Council was directly supported by two other structures: the government which was its administrative arm, and a series of NSF commissions which were to serve in an advisory capacity. Beneath the CNSF there stretched a series of county and territorial NSF councils which again functioned with executive bureaux and whose administrative arms were the local mayors. More controversially there also appeared a parallel structure of factory NSF councils.

However, things were never as clear cut as this diagrammatic pyramidal structure of power would suggest (see fig. 3.1) and, although the structures of the NSF at first sight mirrored those of the former regime, and, indeed, many derived from them, there were important differences. Nearly all the new lower bodies had been filled from below and, although it is true that many posts were occupied by their
Previous incumbents, they had achieved office by virtue of their local status and not through official fiat from above. Even in the case of the upper tiers of the new regime, to a certain extent, the composition of the CNSF had been dictated by expectations from below and abroad. Whilst the nomination of such noted non-Party dissidents as Doina Cornea, Mircea Dinescu, László Tőkés, Dan Deșliu and Ana Blandiana at the head of the first CNSF list may have been, at least in part, motivated by a desire to secure the broadest possible coalition amongst intellectuals for the new regime, it also reflected on the part of the incoming Iliescu group an acute awareness of the expectations of national and international public opinion. Only in the case of the government and, to a slightly lesser extent with the NSF commissions, can the nomination of personnel be fully said to have rested in the control of the new ruling group.¹

The legitimacy of the many of the new office holders at all levels of the NSF regime soon came under direct challenge from below, with the difficulties of the lower bodies sometimes being exacerbated by pressure from above for changes in personnel. This left many of the councils in a state of almost permanent flux with a bewildering rotation of membership, as a self-fulfilling cycle of instability was created, in which one set of changes frequently inspired pressure for further expulsions or, occasionally, the reversal of an apparently unjust decision. At a structural level this instability heightened the problem of defining the exact nature of relations between national and local bodies, which by mutual acceptance
The Council of the National Salvation Front

were expected to differ from before, the regime being committed to a certain level of decentralisation, and the new local bodies, by virtue of the prominent role frequently played by their members in the revolution and their popular ‘election’ from below, expecting a new place in the order of things. The month after December 1989 was, therefore, characterised by a confusing struggle for power and influence. Caught in a two-way squeeze the factory NSF councils were eventually allowed to disappear and the NSF commissions also fell by the wayside, although many of their personnel, particularly those on the influential Foreign Affairs Commission, were to continue to figure prominently in post-Ceauşescu politics. However, the greatest change during the first month after the fighting had subsided was the dissolution of the national CNSF and its local councils and their replacement at all levels by broader all-party PCNU in which the NSF participated as a separate political party. It was only with this move that the single party model was decisively abandoned in Romania and a territorial and pluralistic political structure on a more recognisably Western pattern fully adopted.

The original Council of the National Salvation Front comprising thirty-nine members rapidly swelled so that, by the 30 December 1989, it had grown to number 145. No full list of the members of the Council appears to have ever been published, but by correlating the names given at various times nearly all of the membership can be deduced. The membership of the Council does appear to have marked a clean break with the immediate past, since only General Ștefan Guse, who presumably secured nomination on the first list due to the military situation appertaining at the time, appears to have been carried over from either the permanent or alternative members of the 466 strong Central Committee named at the 14th Congress of the RCP in November 1989. According to Iliescu, the new members of the Council, apart from the Chairmen of the County Councils of the Front, who automatically secured representation, had been chosen largely on a symbolic basis, extending coverage both geographically and socially. Thus, it included representatives from the working class, the large industrial units in Bucharest, and students and intellectuals from the University centres of Iaşi and Cluj, with proportionate representation for the ethnic minorities being secured by the nomination of sixteen members from the ranks of the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania.

Many of the members of the Council, and particularly those drafted from outside of Bucharest, once more sank back into relative obscurity after the May 1990 election. From the available names it seems only about 20% stood and gained election to the Romanian parliament at this time, although a few others
The Council of the National Salvation Front were later returned at the 1992 poll. In May 1990, most who did stand were candidates for the ruling NSF, with the majority subsequent to the split in this party gravitating towards the DNSF identified with Iliescu.\(^4\) It seems that the bulk of the membership were well educated technocrats, frequently engineers, but their numbers were leavened by a scattering of workers, students and Professors; there was also an important small minority of dissident liberal intellectuals who included Gabriel Andreescu, Ana Blandiana, Mariana Celac, Doina Cornea, Dan Deșliu, Mircea Dinescu, Radu Filipescu, Dan Petrescu and Andrei Pleșu. László Tőkés may also be considered alongside these figures. Although they do not appear to have acted as a unified group at this time, their courageous dissidence under Ceaușescu gave these figures a strong moral authority which extended well beyond the bounds of Romania. Their pronouncements — especially in the case of Cornea, Blandiana and Tőkés — received widespread attention at home and abroad and, indeed, to a certain extent, particularly, after increasing doubts were raised about the true character of the Front, they became the dominant voice heard in the Western media. This enabled them to exert considerable pressure on the Iliescu regime and, when the first two resigned from the CNSF, their departures in both cases added an important twist to the dynamic of the unfolding events.

As the chief institution of the new regime the formal powers of the Council laid down by the 'Decree–Law on the Constitution, Organisation and Functioning of the Council of the National Salvation Front and its Local Councils' were sweeping.\(^5\) This Decree–Law was promulgated on the radio by the Vice President of the Constitutional, Judicial and Human Rights Commission, Oliviu Tocaciu, which may suggest that this body headed by Dumitru Mazilu was chiefly responsible for its draft outline. The Decree–Law gave the Council sole legislative power with the right to issue laws and decrees, which were to be adopted by a simple majority vote of Council members and published in Monitorul Oficial. The Council also held considerable powers of patronage being entrusted with appointing and removing the premier and approving the composition of the government as it was proposed by him. The appointment of the President of the Supreme Court of Justice and the General Prosecutor of the Republic also fell under its remit, as did the promotion or demotion of military officers. It also secured control of the political process having the powers to appoint the commission charged with drawing up a new draft constitution and, more generally, to regulate the electoral system. Additionally, it was also given powers to approve the state budget, to grant pardons and commute death sentences, and to ratify and annul international treaties.
The growth of the size of the CNSF with its diverse membership gathered from the four corners of a large country whose communications were still in a state of revolutionary flux, meant that it was an unwieldy body difficult to convene. In its short history it does not seem to have met more than two or three times, before effectively voting for its own dissolution, when it accepted on 23 January 1990, that the NSF would participate in the elections as a political party. Real power throughout this period was to lie in the hands of the far smaller Bucharest based Executive Bureau of the Council. This body not only was responsible for determining the composition of the larger CNSF but was also empowered to exercise the duties of the Council between its full sessions. The Executive Bureau had a membership of eleven consisting of the President: Ion Iliescu, First Deputy President: Dumitru Mazilu, Deputy Presidents: Cazimir Ionescu and Károly Király, Secretary: Dan Martjian, and six members: Bogdan Teodoriu, Vasile Neașca, Silviu Brucan, Gheorghe Manole, Ion Caramitru and Nicolae Radu. The formal powers of the President of the Council, Iliescu, as interim head of state, were somewhat limited — the most important being the rights to conclude foreign treaties and appoint and recall Romania's ambassadors abroad. In fact, by virtue of the amount of power consolidated in the Executive Bureau, his powers were considerable and, indeed, the presence of a number of students and others inexperienced in politics within the Executive Bureau meant that the six senior members, Iliescu, Mazilu, Ionescu, Martjian, Király and Brucan, appear to have been dominant. The members of the Executive Bureau also effectively controlled the policy making process, since each of the NSF commissions was headed by one of its members.

The Council was supported by the government and a number of advisory working commissions. Again no membership lists for these commissions ever seems
to have appeared and, as they effectively faded away after the founding of the PCNU, their achievements are difficult to assess, as is their status. For instance, in the only visible sign of the Commission for Youth Affairs — a declaration in high moral tone in which it supported the NSF position on the abolition of the death penalty — the Commission declared itself to be a consultative body which was politically neutral. The two most important commissions were probably those concerned with foreign affairs and constitutional, juridical and human rights issues. Under the chairmanship of Mazilu, until he was forced to resign, the latter committee was responsible for drawing up the draft electoral law and later a draft constitution in consultation with academic specialists. Brucan described his position as head of the Foreign Affairs Commission as 'honorary', but it may be that this was not entirely the truth, especially, given the influence the members of this body were to wield in shaping the post-Ceauşescu destiny of Romania. Indeed, most of the early legislation of the NSF appears to have been drafted by the members of these two commissions.

The government was established as the supreme administrative body of the state. The appointment of the new premier, Petre Roman, was officially announced on 26 December, although he had effectively entered office at the height of the revolution. Most accounts seem to agree that, although Roman was the son of one of Romania's most distinguished communists and had been a member of the Party, he had not been politically active within the RCP before the revolution. He seems to have secured the role of Prime Minister because, after his prominent role during the events, he was seen as being an intelligent but dependable youthful face to front a revolution, which, by common consent, was the preserve of the young. Within the government all decisions were adopted by a simple majority of votes. The government was entirely responsible to the CNSF and was in general obliged to fulfil the goals stated in the NSF programme and to apply the measures decreed by the CNSF, which had the right to cancel government decisions when 'it believes that they are at variance with the laws and decrees in force or at variance with the interests of the people'. All the ministers were officially appointed by presidential decrees signed by Iliescu. Of those selected only Drăgănescu and, probably Celac, were at the time considered to be close to Iliescu — the former can be seen as the main representative of the Iliescu group within the administration. Presumably the ministerial candidates were chosen by the inner council of the NSF and, in keeping with the ideas contained within Consensus, selection was said to have been purely made on the grounds of competence. Indeed, the government did have a strong technocratic leaning and the absence of any major political figures was quite noticeable — virtually the whole cabinet slipped back into obscurity.
The Council of the National Salvation Front

Table 3.2 The First National Salvation Front Government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
<td>Petre Roman</td>
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<td>Vice Premiers</td>
<td>Mihail Drăganescu</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gelu-Voican Voiculescu</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sergiu Celac</td>
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<td>Lt. Gen. Mihai Chițac</td>
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<td>Gen. Nicolae Militaru</td>
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<td>Col.Gen. Victor Stănculescu</td>
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<td>Mihai Șora</td>
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<td>Teofil Pop</td>
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<td>Andrei Pleșu</td>
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<td>Ioan Aurel Stoica</td>
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<td>Anton Vătășescu</td>
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<td>Nicolae M. Nicolae</td>
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<td>Mihai Lupo</td>
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<td>Ion Pățan</td>
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<td>Mihai Angelescu</td>
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<td>Ioan Folea</td>
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<td>Ioan Chesa</td>
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<td>Gheorghe Caranfil</td>
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<td>Simion Șăncu</td>
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<td>Ștefan Niculae</td>
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<td>Victor Murea</td>
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<td>Ion Rămbaru</td>
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<td>Constantin Popescu</td>
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<td>Adrian Georgescu</td>
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<td>Nicolae Dicu</td>
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<td>Corneliu Burada</td>
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<td>Stelian Pintelie</td>
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<td>Dan Enâchescu</td>
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<td>Nicolae Stoicescu</td>
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<td>Miheea Marmeliuc</td>
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<td>Corneliu Bogdan</td>
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<td>Victor Surdu</td>
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<td>Theodor Stoloian</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Deputy Minister of Finance</td>
<td>Theodor Stoloian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deputy Ministers of National Economy:</td>
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after the May election. Some of the new ministers, such as Simion Șăncu, a specialist in hydraulics appointed to the post of Minister of Water, Forests and the Environment, and Anton Vătășescu, the Minister of Electrical Engineering and the author of several works on electronics, do seem to have been experts in their field, and the same may also be said about the promotion of the two former dissident intellectuals, Andrei Pleșu and Mihai Șora, appointed to the ministries of culture.
However, as was commonly the case at this time, in most instances, it seems to have been more a matter of promoting the second tier of each department to the leadership or, occasionally, recalling a senior figure who had previously served in the same ministry. This seems to have been the case with Ștefan Nicolae, George Caranfil, Ion Pățan, Constantin Popescu, Ion Folea, Ioan Chesa, Ștefan Pintelie, Corneliu Burada, Iuliu Dicu, Nicolae M. Nicolae and Teofil Pop amongst others. This was a process of internal selection which might be expected to effectively stymie any chances of radical change, and, certainly, the apparently cosmetic nature of this face-lift soon drew harsh comment with a number of allegations surfacing in the press linking several ministers with the Securitate.

The only powerful interest group represented in the new government was the army, three members, Stanculescu, Chitac and Militaru, being serving generals. At the time this gave rise to much speculation about the strength of the military within the new regime, but, it seems, that their appointment was in fact made in recognition of the important role the army had played in the conflict, and reflected more the temporary instability of the Front rather than being the precursor of a more significant movement of the military into politics. As the NSF increased in confidence and divisions surfaced within the military, their influence in the new regime sharply waned. In general, it can be said to have been a rather bland and uninspiring government, scarcely chosen to excite and lead. Most charitably, it might be said it was the stopgap response of a regime without deep reserves of trusted lieutenants to promote, and, more harshly that it was an administrative arm not designed to challenge the leading position of the Executive Bureau of the CNSF. In the long-term amongst the ever changing musical chairs of Romanian politics, of the full ministers only Petre Roman and Ion Aurel Stoica have retained lasting political influence, although within the ranks of the Deputy Ministers there were two future Prime Ministers: Theodor Stolojan and Nicolae Văcăroiu. The more important of the others being fobbed off with the nigh ubiquitous diplomatic postings, a common means of reward for those whom it was deemed impolitic to remain in domestic politics.

**The leaders of the National Salvation Front**

Amongst the more prominent members of the new Front administration it seems possible to identify three rough groupings based on age. However, before proceeding to look at these groups in greater detail, it should be noted, that, whilst it appears true that shared experience to a certain extent gave rise to common mentalities, diversity has often been as prevalent as commonality, and there has been
The Council of the National Salvation Front

a tendency for differences to sharpen more clearly as the years since 1989 have passed. Firstly, there are those who might be considered the ‘old guard’ although they were not necessarily the most conservative voices to be heard. Primarily, these may be considered as three of the signatories of the ‘Letter of the Six’ — Silviu Brucan, Alexandru Birlădeanu and Corneliu Mănescu. All were born in the first decades of the century, the direct contemporaries of Ceauşescu, old illegalists (members of the RCP when it was a persecuted underground body), whose past gave them considerable moral authority in the post-war Party. Their lives had been shaped by service to the cause, as they had held a string of high posts, living through successive changes of policy, before each, in turn, came into conflict with Ceauşescu and was forced into political obscurity. As a group they appear to have retained some sort of belief in the Soviet Union as a guide to events and were unwilling to unquestioningly jettison a life devoted to the Left. However, it does not seem possible to say they shared a common belief system, in particular, Brucan’s and Mănescu’s long period in the West appears to have marked them out from Birlădeanu allowing, them to adopt differing postures in post-Ceauşescu politics. Mănescu became a Senator in the May 1990 elections but both before and after this, on account of his ill health, he played no active part in politics. Likewise, although Birlădeanu later became identified as one of the staunchest lieutenants of Iliescu and something of a bastion of conservative thinking, his initial influence seems to have been largely confined to behind the scenes activities.

From the beginning of the revolution the most active and important of this group was Brucan. He has often been called the éminence grise of the revolution, although his fluency in English and evident enthusiasm for granting interviews to the Western press probably played a role in gaining him this accolade, indeed, to a certain extent, he can be said to have become ‘the voice of the revolution’ abroad, especially for the English speaking world. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to establish his real influence on affairs. Important elements of the political agenda he laid out in one of his books, *World socialism at the crossroads: an insiders view*, can be traced in the programme of the NSF leaders, but the extent to which this constituted an original programme rather than just a distillation of some prevailing reformist thought remains open to question. His influence on the unfolding political scene is also far from easy to decide, since he took no public position in the new regime other than being a member of the NSF Executive Bureau and chairmanship of the Foreign Affairs Commission, which perhaps rather ingeniously he described as being purely ‘honorary’, especially, given the fact that this body contained many of the Young Turks of the revolution — although the the exact nature of the relationship between Brucan and these figures also remains
unclear. Immediately after the conflict ended, it is noticeable that he seems to have been most concerned with establishing his version of the events and the importance of his role in the dissidence against Ceaușescu. At least in public, his view was, therefore, more retrospective than forward looking and even he makes no claims to be the instigator of any major initiative in the period after the revolutionary violence.

The standard bearers of the second group were Ion Iliescu, Dan Mațian and Mihai Drăgănescu, with Károly Király and Nicolae S. Dumitru also seeming to have some initial influence. The name of Virgil Măgereanu can also probably be added. Born in the late 1920s or early 1930s, all were long-term members of the RCP, who in the case of Iliescu, Drăgănescu, Mațian and Király had risen to senior positions before falling out with Ceaușescu. Iliescu, Mațian, Király and Dumitru had all studied for extensive periods in the Soviet Union, the latter three during the period of the Khruschev thaw. They were highly educated technocrats, the direct Romanian equivalent of the Gorbachev generation, whose formative political experiences had been gained in the era of post-Stalinist liberalisation, which in Romania had extended beyond 1968 into the early 1970s. Indeed, it may be that in Romania opposition to the 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia may have diluted the sense of disillusion that was felt elsewhere in Eastern Europe at this time, allowing members of the 1960s generation to retain faith in the idea of a rationalistic, humanistic and socialist future for society as, cast aside during the years of Ceaușescu stagnation, they remained untainted by the corruption and venality of his decaying regime and, indeed, came to see its moral degeneracy as one of the root causes of decline. Although it does not seem possible to go as far as Stephen Hanson, who has suggested that their Soviet equivalents were the last uncorrupted generation of believers in Marxism–Leninism, the Iliescu generation had seen the successes of communism in Romania and it was possible for them to ascribe the failures to the mismanagement of Ceaușescu and his clique. Even after the abandonment of the political project of Consensus, Iliescu was still remarkably circumspect about his political beliefs. In answer to a question by a French journalist about whether he was still a communist he replied:

Today, you know, it is difficult to set out to establish such a definition. Let's say I was born into a family of militants and I have always remained a political militant... Marxism inspired human thought of the last century. There was scientific reasons for its appearance and therefore it remains an historical stage in the development of ideas. If it is considered as an instrument of analysis, and if we cease to consider it as a rigid dogma, it retains some usefulness. However, in its social, economic and political practices the ideology which inspired these, in this case, is completely discredited. It
is not any more on this ideological base that we can plan the development of modern society. Contemporary thought is much greater, richer, more flexible and better adapted to the dynamism of today. The simple marxist model, of the classical type, is no longer sufficient. The modern world can be characterised by a technological and scientific explosion which revolutionises everything. It is difficult to approach this reality through bygone models.

The third and most numerous group to be considered are those who were born in the late 40s and 50s. Amongst this generation may be numbered: Petre Roman, Vasile Secăreș, Dan Mircea Popescu, Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Adrian Severin, Eugen Dijmărescu, Adrian Năstase, Mugur Isărescu, Dorel Șandor, Victor Babuic, Daniel Dăianu, Vladimir Pasti, Corneli Codîtă, Liviu Mureșan and Ion Aurel Stoica. The formative years for this generation had been the late 1960s and 1970s. Old enough to remember 1968, they had lived through the hope engendered by the Nixon-Brezhnev détente but also the disasters of late Ceaușescu communism. Far more open to the West — where Roman amongst others had studied — and not educated in Moscow, they had only known the rejection of the USSR. Socialist values were to prove stronger in some than others, and the members of this generation were eventually to divide between those who almost totally rejected the past in favour of a liberal Western European free market model, and those who wished to retain some elements of the past within a broadly similar model.

Many of these figures at the time of the revolution were informally grouped into a forum known as the ‘Trocadero Group’, the members of which seem to have been mostly drawn from three of the most senior research institutes in Bucharest: the Institute of World Economy (IEM), the Party Institute for Political Research (Ștefan Gheorghiu Academy) (ISPB) and the Association for International Law and International Relations (ADIRI). As is perhaps inevitable, the exact composition of the group remains shrouded in some mystery, but the names most frequently mentioned together with the institutes with which they were associated, when known, are: Vasile Secăreș (ADIRI), Dan Mircea Popescu (ISPB), Ioan Mircea Pașcu, Adrian Severin (ADIRI), Eugen Dijmărescu (IEM), Adrian Năstase (ADIRI), Mugur Isărescu (IEM), Dorel Șandor (ISPB), and Victor Babuic. They were the intellectual cream of the younger generation of the RCP , actively promoted as the acceptable face of Romanian communism, appearing at international conferences and maintaining contacts with the outside world. Within their prestigious institutes, which stood at the pinnacle of the established hierarchy, this young élite seems to have been allowed considerable intellectual latitude in comparison with the closed world of the rest of Ceaușescu’s Romania. So, for instance, at the Institute of World Economy researchers were able to study the
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The ideology of the NSF as it gained power has been termed 'Consensus' but, since it was never clearly announced as an ideology or a political project and rapidly abandoned, its core ideas still remain somewhat opaque and veiled in confusion. A state of affairs that has not been aided by official insistence that Consensus had no ideological roots and that, indeed, by its very all-encompassing nature, as it sought to draw in all political persuasions, it could only be non-ideological — by which they really seem to have meant it was non-dogmatic in comparison with the

economies of the capitalist world and had access to a Reuters screen and other external sources of information, whilst other members of the group can recall working on research projects analysing the changes in the rest of Eastern Europe which gave them access to computers allowing for the comparative analysis of data on Romania. Some of the most talented and technically able members of the establishment were, therefore, not only able to keep track of the developments elsewhere in Eastern Europe, but were also able to gain some idea of what effect these changes would have if they were to be applied to Romania.

The exact status of the 'Trocadero Group' continues to be difficult to determine and, indeed, one member has suggested it is better to see it as representing a spirit rather than a formal body. However, several members have confirmed that the group gathered a number of times in the days shortly after the fall of Ceauşescu, and most if not all of its members, seem subsequently to have been drafted on to the Foreign Affairs Commission under Brucan, with Secăreş being named as his deputy. In the chaos of January 1990, when few were available who had the necessary experience needed to draft the considerable amount of new legislation required, these were often the men to whom the new regime turned for ideas and laws. Adrian Severin, for instance, seems to have been at least partly responsible for two of the most important early Decree-Laws, one on passports and travel abroad and the other the landmark 'Decree-Law for the Organisation and Unfolding of Economic Activity on the Basis of Free Initiative', and following the departure of Mazilu and Brucan from active politics, it was to the members of the 'Trocadero Group' that Iliescu was to turn for the NSF's 1990 election manifesto. However, this seems to have been their last collective effort because afterwards personality splits and differing currents of political thought surfaced, leading the group to divide, one section including Severin, Dijmărescu, Șandor and Babuic entering the second government alongside Roman, and the others, including Secăreş, Paşcu, Popescu and Năstase becoming presidential advisers to Iliescu.

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ideology of Ceaușescu. However, although this ideologically neutral stance equated well with many of the technocratic ideas espoused by the NSF leadership, it did not imply a complete abjuration of the past, for the language and values of socialism permeated throughout, as the new leaders spoke of continuing a high degree of state control over the economy and displayed a marked aversion to sanctioning the private exploitation of labour. Similarly, as a political project Consensus seems to have largely amounted to an attempt to reorganise the one party system on a more open and legal basis, leading its critics to see it as nothing less than reform communism in another guise, a supposition given added force by the fact that its chief adherents were all former senior members of the RCP. In short, it was charged with being nothing less than a Romanian perestroika and, indeed, although the terms 'Marxist–Leninist' and 'communist' were assiduously avoided at all times, much of Consensus does seem to bear more than a passing resemblance to the reform socialism of the 1980s and, especially, Gorbachev’s programme of reform in the USSR.

However, it would be wrong to stop short at this rather simplistic conclusion, because closely associated and frequently intertwining with the ideology of Consensus were a series of other concepts, such as ‘dialogue’ and ‘competence’, which had a far wider import than the relatively narrow bounds of the political project. At their heart, these concepts were principally concerned not with perpetuating the values of socialism but rather with raising the status of an important segment of the intellectual stratum and allowing them to, once more, ascend the high ground of Romanian politics. These concepts and the ideas of Consensus were to mesh together in a complex matrix which the fluid dynamics of the revolution filled at differing times with varying content. Thus, for example, whilst the political project of Consensus was rapidly abandoned in January 1990, the ideal of building a consensual, as opposed to a competitive political arena, retains influence until this day.

To gain some understanding of the foundations underpinning the ideology of the NSF as it gained power, it is necessary first to look at the status of intellectuals in Romanian society and the composition of their stratum. Intellectuals have traditionally enjoyed a high status in Eastern Europe, partly due to the relative weakness of both state and society — given the relative absence of a bourgeoisie which in Romania was notably weak and largely non-national in composition — and partly from a particularly fruitful interaction with nationalism through which they were often able to project themselves as ‘the conscience of the nation’. This endowed the intellectuals as a group with not only cultural but also considerable political significance, and throughout Romanian history many of this stratum,
such as the historian Nicolae Iorga, have achieved high governmental office. These traditions may be said to have fostered a certain tendency towards élitism within Romanian intellectuals (although charges of this have also regularly been used as an attempt to disqualify opponents from rule).

Until the 1950s intellectuals in the humanities had predominated, but beginning in that period, Romania underwent a massive programme of industrial development which fundamentally changed the social profile of the nation. In the years up to 1977 Romania registered one of the highest growth rates in the world, averaging 12.9% per annum, with recorded investment in industry reaching an average 13% each year. The workforce to service these developments also grew on average by 5% as huge numbers left the land to work in the new factories (see table 3.3). This process of industrialisation naturally spawned an enormous growth in the number of technocratic specialists needed to service the new factories and Romania’s educational system became geared almost entirely to the production of engineers and sub-engineers, as the social, natural and, especially, applied sciences blossomed at the expense of the humanities which were virtually decimated. In support of this new industrial base there appeared a proliferation of scientific and economic research institutes, which by 1989 were recorded as employing 169,964 staff, and no clearer indication of the prestige endowed to science at this time was Elena Ceauşescu’s selection of chemistry as the field in which she would become a ‘scholar’ of international acclaim.

During the 1960s a variety of factors had converged to push the regimes of Eastern Europe towards reform with the aim of better taking into account the demands of society so as to build a more consensual base for continuing single
party rule as opposed to the coercive one of Stalinism. At that time, which had also coincided with Ceaușescu’s ascension to power and his need to establish his own power base, moves had been made to co-opt the intellectual stratum into the Party and representatives of the scientific-technical élite had gained positions within the upper echelons of the regime. This period of reform within Romania saw a break with the Stalinist past as Ceaușescu allowed the space for some diversity of views and moved to establish a remuneratively based legitimacy by responding to domestic demands for consumer goods. At the same time Romania’s ‘deviation’ in foreign policy led to a temporary partial realignment of her trade with the West, resulting in the importation of advanced technology and scientific ideas, most notably, in several high-profile projects in aeronautics and nuclear power. In keeping with this process, a number of Romanian social scientists, one of the most prominent of whom was Valter Roman, began to stress the importance of this technological revolution to the development of socialism and offer a theoretical base for the importation of Western technology to permit accelerated economic development. Through the impeccable contacts made during his Spanish Civil War days with many leading communists in the West, Roman amassed a library of Western social science literature which was said to be the envy of Bucharest, and it appears that his house became a meeting place for a discussion group of like-minded reformers, amongst whose members were ranked Iliescu and Drăgănescu and under whose influence, presumably, also fell Valter Roman’s young son, Petre. The ideas that were to come to the fore in the 1980s, thus, enjoyed a direct line of succession from the 1960s and the thoughts of reformers such as Valter Roman, who within the confines of a strict adherence to Marxist ideology, wrote extensively on the importance of technological change and its political implications for socialist states, advocating the introduction of Western scientific and managerial methods with the aim of ‘restructuring the whole relationship between scientific knowledge and political power in the communist state, so as to harness expert talent and technological progress more effectively in the service of regime goals’.

Valter Roman and his fellow technocratic reformers had argued for a greatly increased role for the technical élite in the decision and policy making process, but, unexpectedly from the early 1970s, this group from the promised land were increasingly cast into the wilderness, as Ceaușescu effectively nipped the 1960s reform process in the bud by abandoning his brief flirtation of legitimation by remuneration in favour of ideological-symbolic legitimation, a move frequently associated with the so-called ‘July Theses’ of 1971 in which he called for a reposition of ideological conformity. In fact, the change of policy seems to have
been a haphazard and patchy affair and, as they were concerned with often arcane technical matters, the staff of many research institutes seem to have continued to enjoy a certain amount of intellectual latitude until much later in the 1970s, when the Securitate appear to have stepped up their presence. However, from the beginning the policy change does seem to have marked an important shift back from 'expert' to 'red' and, although the policy change does appear to have often overlapped and overlaid pre-existing patterns of factional infighting within the Party, the result, nonetheless, was the eventual exclusion from power of a segment of the scientific-technical élite who had pioneered the previous industrial expansion, with many of these, including Iliescu, eventually taking refuge in academia or publishing.

However, despite the sidelining of some of those associated with the reform movement of the 1960s, this does not seem to have spelt the end for all reformist thought in Romania, especially, in the economic field where signs of a continuing debate over strategy occasionally broke to the surface throughout the late Ceauşescu years. For example, in two articles that appeared in 1984 and 1985 the young economists, Daniel Dăianu and Vasile Pilat, suggested that the decline in growth in the CMEA economies arose from the rigidities of a system that emphasised quantitative rather than qualitative growth and that this lead to the amassing of frequently obsolete technology and severe shortages of consumer goods. The remedies prescribed included the abandonment of autarky in favour of rational development of selected fields, integration into world markets, decentralisation, greater managerial autonomy, competition and flexibility and a partial reversion to a market pricing system. In their second article, the authors suggested that such changes were all the more necessary, since the microchip revolution would lead to a fundamental restructuring of the global economy in which only the most fluid and dynamic of national economies would thrive. Although both articles were written in English in a dense and highly specialist language and appeared in an official journal which had a very restricted circulation, mostly in the West, they do suggest the scope of reformist economic thinking within some institutions (which appears to have been on a par with elsewhere in Eastern Europe) and at various times, during the late 1970s and 1980s, elements of official policy were also to reflect such ideas.

Rather than being in a state of total stasis, Michael Shafir has suggested that the chief leitmotif of the Ceauşescu regime, up until at least the mid-1980s, was 'simulated change' in which a superficial attention to form was matched by an almost total lack of content; a situation, he sees, as fully reflecting the historical propensity within the country to emphasise the pays légal at the expense of the pays...
This concept of 'simulated change' is particularly useful when considering the reformist programme known as the New Economic and Financial Mechanism, which in many regards was the direct successor of the 1960s reform package. Introduced in 1978, the NEFM sought to instil some degree of market mechanism into the system through concepts such as 'self-financing' by which enterprises were expected to generate sufficient income to sustain themselves without recourse to subsidies from the state. Also associated with the NEFM was a number of other packages, such as the *acord global*, which in the 1980s sought to raise productivity by abolishing the minimum wage and closely aligning pay to output. Another measure proposed in June 1982 can even be seen as a mild form of 'privatisation', as workers were encouraged to purchase up to 30% of the registered value of the fixed assets of their enterprises. Aside from any hopes that giving the workers a direct stake in their enterprises would stimulate productivity, such a move would also have had the beneficial effect for the regime of raising funds and soaking up surplus purchasing power. However, none of these proposals ever seem to have had much impact, with the possible exception of the *acord global* which, although it does not seem to have had any influence on productivity does appear to have produced pay cuts and, thus, fomented worker discontent. The schemes remained largely empty formulae with little real content, but they, nevertheless, do indicate the presence of a degree of dynamism within late Ceauşescu policy formation, at least until the mid-1980s, which is often overlooked. This is significant because not only did these ideas offer one possible avenue of reform once Ceauşescu was deposed but also because the search for reasons to explain the failure of the 1980s reforms seems to have produced two important assumptions amongst reformist forces within the Party. The first was that, although by the late 1980s the Romanian economy was in a disastrous position, this was largely due to the actions of an obstructive central bureaucracy — which in protecting their own interests had moved to block any redistribution of resources — and the policies of Ceauşescu, who in 1981 with the economy still in a reasonable position and the country held in a favourable light by the West, chose instead of pursuing a path of intensive technical development to embark on a series of grandiose projects and a crash debt repayment programme which had effectively overridden all other economic priorities. This perception appears to have generated something of a myth of a lost opportunity of creating a technocratically based modern, industrial, socialist, Romania, and prevented the formation of an appreciation on anything but a limited scale that it might in fact be impossible to reform the system. Secondly, the obstructive nature of the bureaucracy and an understanding amongst some reformers that the RCP, despite its allegedly high membership, was nothing more
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than a hollow shell with an unsupported élite merely held up by an administrative structure, seems to have bred a feeling that any economic reforms would have to be matched by political changes and some, including Brucan, even began to argue for the primacy of political reform.

In his 1971 speeches Ceaușescu had also spoken out against the slavish imitation of foreign forms and this was to presage over the coming years an intensified use of nationalist symbolism and a gradual cutting of links with the outside world in favour of an indigenist and autarkic pattern of development. Katherine Verdery has plausibly argued that these developments can be firmly rooted in the traditions of the Romanian political discourse, in which the concept of the nation has been such a potent ‘master symbol’ that, historically, it has subsumed under a debate couched in terms of national identity (or as she terms it ‘national essence’) nearly all other issues, including key questions relating to the applicability of differing political models to Romania, relations between state and society and, in particular, the appropriate path for modernisation. Historically, the debate has created the space for intellectual endeavours and served to distinguish the intellectual stratum from the peasant masses, and it is Verdery’s contention that it has become so embedded within the Romanian intellectual discourse, even taking physical form through the various institutions established in its wake, that, eventually, it was even able to subvert the official ideology of Marxism–Leninism. The argument being that it was not just the Party which turned to a nationalist ideology as a source of legitimisation but also that ‘...to a considerable extent... the Party was forced onto the terrain of national values (not unwillingly) under pressure from others, especially intellectuals whom it could fully engage in no other manner’. Usually voiced in terms of the nineteenth century philosopher–statesman Titu Maiorescu’s famous formulation of ‘form without substance’ through which he questioned the degree to which imported foreign forms related to the substance of Romanian society, this debate on ‘national essence’ has frequently been the idiom for intra-élite conflict in Romania and was to be so again during the 1980s as the Roman/Dacian dichotomy at the heart of Romanian national origins was once more played upon, this time to stress the indigenist model of development.

Ceaușescu’s shift to a symbolic–ideological mode of control and his embracement of an extravagant cult can be seen as marking the rise of a relatively small group of artistic–literary intellectuals who were encouraged to produce the appropriate nationalist symbolism required to legitimise his regime. Often termed the ‘protochronists’, due to the stress they laid on the pseudo-supremacy of Romanian (Dacian) thinking in all fields from political economy to sociology, their argument that a strong indigenous culture could only grow through isolation from
contaminating foreign values fully reflected the autarkic policies of Ceauşescu and the cult mythology which projected his providential role in Romanian history. But, whilst the 'protochronists' were rising in official esteem, another larger group of cultural intellectuals, many of whom had been associated with the brief window of reform in the late 1960s, were gradually being eclipsed although, as in the case of the technical intelligentsia, their displacement from positions of influence was a gradual affair during the 1970s, with this group even retaining control of the Writers' Union until after the 1981 Conference when the regime, apparently tiring of ever bringing it back under full control, moved to effectively render the organisation impotent.

Whilst bearing in mind that there were a number of contradictions and ambiguities, for heuristic purposes it is possible to see Romanian cultural politics in the late 1980s divided between two opposing groups. One relatively small indigenist or ‘protochronist’ group in close alignment with Ceauşescu and the ruling Party apparat, the other larger and often more ‘liberal’ in orientation deprived of any power and influence. Also largely excluded from power and increasingly chafing at their impotence were leading members of the scientific-technical élite, and during 1987 two potential leaders of this group, Ion Iliescu and Silviu Brucan, published works in which they appeared to be proposing a potential reform coalition between these segments of society. In an article in România Literară, which is effectively a hymn of praise for technocrats, Iliescu suggested that the defining characteristic of the twentieth century had been technological development which over the years, through the introduction of automation and advanced production techniques, had had important social consequences as the demand for manual labour had declined in relation to a corresponding rise in the need for technical expertise. On the basis of these changes Iliescu suggested that society could now be broadly divided into non-creative and creative forces, the former roughly identified with the working-class, the latter with the intellectuals — at their widest extent. In making such a division Iliescu might well in part have been aiming to reassert the importance of intellectuals vis-à-vis the working class, but more immediately, he appears to have been making a plea for the equality of technical creativity with cultural creativity; indeed, he even suggests that the former may be accorded greater status on account of its less ephemeral nature. Then, by identifying bureaucratic inertia as the common foe of both technical and cultural intellectuals, Iliescu appears to be suggesting that these two forces in society should make common cause in the interests of reform. A similar argument was also voiced by Brucan in a book published in the West in the same year in which he suggested that the only revolutionary group capable of challenging the entrenched power of the apparat was the scientific
and technical élite in alliance with cultural intellectuals. Brucan giving a more theoretical base to the same divisions made by Iliescu by suggesting that relations between the means of production have so lost meaning in socialist societies that the concept of 'class' was no longer applicable and should be abandoned totally in favour of 'socio-economic groups' and, if this is done then, according to Brucan, the main cleavages along which the dialectic falls are between the social categories of industrial-agricultural and manual-mental workers.

It seems possible to suggest that both these analyses owe something to the 'New Class theory' of George Konrád and Ivan Szelenyi first propagated during the 1970s. Broadly, this held that with the scientific-technical revolution in Eastern Europe a fused humanistic and technical 'intellegentsia' by virtue of its 'teleologica'l' knowledge would as a class displace the 'old-line' bureaucrats and ascend to power. The whole tenor of his work and various statements made after the revolutionary event suggest that Brucan broadly accepted this formulation, although within his book he takes several contradictory stances. Thus, within the general framework of doubting the continuing applicability of the idea of class, he argued that during the information technology revolution the working class could only maintain its vanguard role in society if it included 'the engineers, specialists and scientists who are the embodiment of the emergent productive forces' continuing in somewhat contradictory fashion 'the working class will play its historical role as the ascendent and dominant class of society only if and when it has succeeded to create a class of intellectuals from its own ranks — the intellectual workers.' Whatever his theoretical position there is no doubt the importance Brucan ascribed to intellectuals whom he termed the 'most advanced and important part of socialist society' and during the events of December 1989 he was emphatically to state '...in the revolution it is the intellectuals who are in command'. Thus, within the framework of a strong domestic tradition of intellectuals holding a pre-eminent place in society, it seems possible to see the policies advocated by some members of the NSF, as they ascended to power, in the light of an attempt to realise something close to the New Class project in Romania. Certainly, this idea would seem to lie at the heart of the controversial remarks made by Brucan during an interview in January 1990 in which he noted that "Everywhere in the world, the intellectuals are marching to power.... They are the only social category which can cope with the information revolution", implying that only intellectuals — defined as holders of university degrees — would be qualified to rule in his brave new world.

In their works both Iliescu and Brucan were sketching the outline of a possible reform coalition in Romania, and in their other writings and those of some of the
younger members of the technocratic élite it is possible, with an eye to a subtext which has become more apparent with hindsight, to read into the often highly specialised material an alternative set of values to those supported by the regime. Broadly, these were centred on concern about the growing 'information gap' between Romania and the outside world, the necessity of adopting realistic and not utopian policies, the importance of professional expertise and accrued knowledge, and, most of all, the need for Romania to rejoin the European mainstream. This latter sentiment was strikingly caught in the 'Letter of the Six' when the writers lecture Ceauşescu: 'Romania is and remains a European country and as such it must advance along with the Helsinki process and not turn against it. You started changing the geography of the countryside, but you cannot remove Romania to Africa'. By stressing the idea of a return to the European mainstream — a position historically equated in Romania with Eugen Lovinescu who sought through 'synchronism' with the outside world to encourage the growth and development of Romanian culture to international accepted norms — the reformers were not only able to sharply define their movement in relation to the indigenist Ceauşescu and his 'protochronist' allies, but were also able to present a 'globalist' stance which encompassed ideas attractive to a broad swathe of the Romanian intelligentsia.

Other indications of this 'globalist' reform orientation come from a number of clandestine reform programmes circulating at this time. The visit of Mikhail Gorbachev to Bucharest in May 1987 seems to have inspired the appearance of a number of manifestos, including one by Nicolae Stănescu and another by Ion Fistioc, both middle ranking officials from economic ministries. Both these authors blamed the catastrophic state of the Romanian economy not on systemic failings but on Ceauşescu's dogmatic pursuit of failed policies and the resulting decline in professional standards. The main reforms they advocated for the economy were the reduction of food exports and the diversion of more resources to the domestic market, an increase in the size of peasant plots, and radical decentralization coupled with a restructuring of the bureaucracy, which would see a reduction in the number of economic ministries. Calls were also made for a greater dialogue in society, particularly the opening up of the media, legal protection for those who offered contrary opinions, and the safeguarding of the autonomy of professional organisations so that they might offer competent advice. Demands were also made for equality before the law with one of the reports suggesting that there should be dual candidacies for all elected posts. Many of these demands were to be reflected later within the programme of the NSF, but what is noticeable is that similar issues were also raised in an open letter to Ceauşescu written in the next year.
by someone far removed from the technocratic reformers of Bucharest, the leading ‘liberal’ dissident and French Professor, Doina Cornea. In this letter Cornea called for a genuine debate (dialogue) over the country’s problems, the separation of powers within the state, the ending of the Stalinist policy of social homogenisation, respect for human rights and greater freedom for the press. In economic policy she asked for priority to be given to the domestic market instead of exports, Party activists to be replaced by technical experts, decision making in industry to be decentralised so as to allow enterprises to operate in accordance with market requirements and to permit them the prospect of forging direct contracts with foreign companies, thereby opening up the possibility of the formation of joint-ventures. Loss making enterprises were to be closed to allow for a concentration of investment in internationally competitive sectors but with full social cover being extended to the workforce during this transition. Private initiative was to be encouraged within the service and tourist sectors and in a re-peasantised agriculture, where household plots would be returned to peasant families. At a superficial level, and in the coercive atmosphere of late Ceauşescu Romania, where personal contacts were often difficult or impossible, this was probably the only appreciation available for many of the intellectuals, by 1989 it could be interpreted that the germ of a reform consensus on a ‘globalist’ platform drawing in both Party and non-Party sources was beginning to emerge.

In terms of élite politics the Romanian Revolution may be viewed from several angles. In one sense it can be seen as a victory of Pareto’s able, energetic and resolute lions who triumphed over weak and cunning foxes, because the revolution was partly triggered by the pressure exerted by displaced members of the élite, unable to rise, upon inferior elements who had become ossified in the upper stratum of society. Indeed, in a society in which 54% of the population were under thirty-five, the higher echelons of the RCP were a veritable gerontocracy and their replacement by far younger rulers marked an important generation shift. Some evidence that the new leaders saw the revolution in such Paretian terms come from Iliescu who seems to have seen the ‘renewal’ of Romanian society largely in terms of a continuous circulation of élites: ‘Nobody will be allowed to stay in a managerial post for life. They get a mandate, answer for how they fulfilled their mandate, make room for those who come with new forces, with a new outlook. This renewal, the refreshing must be permanently made. It is the only way to ensure a continual progress.’ In fact there had been a circulation of the élite under Ceauşescu, but this had been largely hermetic, and by advocating such continuous
movement Iliescu seems to have been primarily seeking the introduction of new blood into the system and the return of the scientific-technical elite to power.\textsuperscript{65}

As previously suggested, associated with Consensus were both socialist values deriving from the experience of the past forty years and a set of concepts which found wider adherence within intellectual circles, although the boundaries between these two sets were not clearly defined and, to a certain extent, they derived from each other. These wider concepts sought to redefine the boundaries of the intellectual stratum in relationship to professional competence, accrued knowledge and the espousal of ‘true’ values, so as to promote an alternative world vision by which they would also effectively disenfranchise a rival group of intellectuals who had usurped the ear of the regime. The revolutionary slogan ‘Down with the illiterate’ aptly testified to the resentment felt within ‘globalist’ intellectual circles at the fact that they were ruled by a man, who in reality was no better than the crudely educated cobbler from the village of Scornicești he had been, and who, through the bogus promotion of his wife as a scientist of great learning, made a mockery of traditional intellectual values.\textsuperscript{66} However, due to the coercive tactics of the regime this ‘globalist’ counter grouping — opposition seems an inappropriate word due to the lack of any organised dissent — did not achieve any open physical form prior to the revolution but remained, instead, a largely mental construct shaped by a shared negative identity deriving from exclusion from power rather than by a clear prescribed common attachment to a core reformist agenda. It, therefore, seems possible that, when Iliescu announced the names of several dissident cultural intellectuals at the head of the list of CNSF members on 22 December, he was not just engaging in the politics of symbols and using them as window dressing for the names below but, instead, was attempting to forge the projected ‘globalist’ coalition and offering a clear statement of intent as regards the re-establishment of those values seen as identifying this constituency. Certainly, during the revolution he was to continue to speak of Consensus as being the ‘unification of all creative forces’ in society.\textsuperscript{67}

Indeed, within the euphoria at the height of the revolution it did momentarily seem that sufficient commonality of vision might exist to permit a ‘globalist’ platform to be constructed. However, seemingly outside the bounds of this proposed political constellation lay the bulk of the population, including the then relatively unimportant students and the remnants of the old political parties. What virtually none seems to have foreseen was the depth and scale of the revolution. Most expected Ceaușescu to be toppled relatively peacefully and certainly not in the ‘bloody bacchanalia’ which ensued. This violently shifted the ground of the debate as it effectively created a \textit{tabula rasa} for Romanian politics, wrestling
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the political process temporarily out of the hands of the élite and forcing them to share political power with wider segments of society especially the Bucharest crowd. Several new competing groups were also introduced into the political arena from outside of the previous élite, the most important of which were the traditional parties. In a broad and rather simplistic sketch the Romanian revolution can be characterised as the victory of a reform orientated counter élite over the upper echelons of an elderly and conservative ruling élite. However, the stresses and strains of the revolution at a slow and uneven pace dissolved this victorious coalition of 'creative forces' until eventually they reformed as a ruling élite and oppositional counter élite. In this process, the boundaries of the élite were withdrawn so as to allow several new groups to enter into the ruling class and some of the less tainted elements of the defeated élite to rehabilitate themselves, whilst the wider segments of society were effectively frozen out of the political process.

Consensus

Consensus seems to have been the initial defining goal of the revolution as perceived by the NSF. During the first days after the overthrow of Ceauşescu the new leaders peppered their speeches time and again with references to 'consensus' and, although during its short life Iliescu never clearly laid out the exact basis of the ideology, it seems that both it and the Front were foreseen as being permanent fixtures on the Romanian political scene. On 26 December Iliescu spoke of building a permanent consensus on the foundations of the revolution and more explicitly that 'Our front is organised as a permanent structure which prepares the new elections, which sanctions and establishes, on new bases, the forms of our organisation' and returning to the theme several days later he declared: 'We intend that the general consensus, which was the determining idea in the struggle, should continue to play a dominant role in all structures which we will create'. Perhaps, amidst the euphoria of a nigh universal popular movement against Ceauşescu momentarily the illusory perception did arise that it would be possible to build a lasting revolutionary consensus. Iliescu declared in his New Year address made on 31 December 1989: 'The most remarkable fact of this revolutionary turning point is the whole people's wide consensus expressed also in the wide adhesion to the platform of the National Salvation Front, an expression of the popular will for its own reconstruction and renewal'. To the new leadership the ideology and the NSF were indivisible, Consensus as expressed through the near universal support for the overthrow of Ceauşescu was the ideal of the revolution with this very unity of purpose legitimising both the bearers of the message — the Front — and the
message itself which became the ideology of the people. Consensus was, thus, presented as the will of the people, the ideological equivalent of the popular slogan 'We are the people'.

The roots of Consensus, as has already been suggested, can be traced to the reformist ideas of the 1960s which were in turn built upon the changes in society wrought by the scientific–technological revolution. By the 1980s the emphasis had shifted to the information technology revolution, but many of the concerns remained the same, as reforming modernisers such as Iliescu and Brucan sought to embrace technological change and harness it to the cause of political reform. Within a frame of reference, still resolutely Marxist–Leninist, Brucan even offered in his book, World Socialism at the crossroads: an insider's view, an analysis which pointed towards social revolution, as he argued that the dynamic tension arising as the means of production developed more rapidly than the relations of production could no longer be accommodated within the existing social framework. A state of affairs which, he concluded, illustrated 'the dialectical law that social phenomena will perish as a result of their own development'.

During the 1960s the reformers had sought a modernised socialism better able to fulfil the aspirations of the general population and, thereby, achieve their consent for the continuation of single party rule. In the era of perestroika, such ideas once more surfaced, as Soviet ideologists spoke of the Party adopting a role as 'an instrument to achieve consensus not an end of power in itself', suggesting that by renouncing its claim to a monopoly of power and allowing new political movements to emerge, including political parties, it could still retain something akin to its leading role as 'an essential factor ensuring broad consensus in the transition towards democratic and humane socialism'. In practice, such formulations were remarkably similar to those first floated in the 1960s and subsequently dubbed 'one party pluralism'. Aside from seeking to introduce a degree of pluralism into the system through encouraging the growth of factions within the Party, this model also proposed a new and more regulated contract between the Communist Party and people, in which the Party would be subject to the rule of law monitored by an independent judiciary in a state where there would be a vigorous separation of powers between the executive, judicial and legislative branches of the government. These motifs were heavily stressed in many of the early pronouncements of the NSF, with the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers being enshrined in the third point of the Front programme, and the separation of the Party and the state also decreed. Critics of the regime argued with some justification that, at least in the early days after the fighting, these formulation held more form than content, and Iliescu at times does seem to have perceived the
separation of power more in terms of the general shift from 'red' back to 'expert' and the removal of political influence from managerial decision making: 'Political representative power should be severed from executive power.... we should put an end to the practice in which the management of the enterprise belonged to a person who did not have material responsibilities. I am talking about a party person.'

Although the leaders of the Front never clearly laid out their political agenda, and Iliescu was adamant that they were 'not the slaves of any ideology, of any pre-conceived ideas, of any prefabricated models', within the often ambiguous rhetoric of their speeches the shadowy outline of something close to the one party pluralism model can be sometimes glimpsed. The clearest exposition of this 'novel' political vision coming in Iliescu's New Year's speech at the close of 1989:

A guideline in everything the National Salvation Front undertakes has to be the promotion of democracy in all spheres of social life, a genuine participation of the masses in decision making and their control of the leading factors. We will also promote the Front's programme-like ideas regarding the achievement of a large, novel political pluralism, relying not only upon the existence of several parties, but also upon a genuine assertion of a broad democratic framework in which all tendencies, all interests and all values may be manifest, and all creative forces of the country may be involved in constructive work.

Reading behind the lines of this and other speeches of the period, it can be suggested that the Front's vision of democracy, often shaped in terms of goals rather than process, rested on three concepts each of which may be conveniently reduced to a keyword: 'participation', 'representation' and 'pluralism'. These three words appeared regularly in the early pronouncements of the NSF and will be recurring motifs within the remainder of this chapter.

Earlier in his book Brucan had argued that in order to 'acquire political legitimacy for the one-party system, the Communist party must include representatives of all classes and major social groups which exist in socialist society and must guarantee them every opportunity to defend their specific interests and express their views' and now, as the new leaders enlarged the CNSF, Iliescu publicly insisted on the broad representative nature of all appointments in order to confer legitimacy on the new body, announcing, for instance, that the representatives from Timișoara, the seat of the revolution, would include one worker, a youth and a German. However, Brucan had continued his argumentation by stressing that a one party system could only be seen as being truly legitimate and representative if it embraced the idea of pluralism by which he implied the acceptance of groups
and factions within the party. Not only would these permit debate, thus, breaking the stultifying monologue which had pervaded the latter years of communism, but also the existence of these groups would ensure greater democratic control of existing institutions alongside related moves, such as placing a strict limitation on periods of office and re-establishing the eroded link between the elected and elector through offering voters a choice of candidates at elections nominated from within their local constituencies rather than by the central power. Once it entered office, the NSF moved rapidly to permit the formation not only of factions but also of other political groupings. On 31 December 1989 a ‘Decree on Registration and Operation of Political Parties and of Public Organisations in Romania’ was announced, which placed few restrictions on political formations with the exception of fascist parties. A number of political groupings swiftly emerged but, at the same time, considerable efforts were made to make sure that these new groupings aligned themselves with the programme of the Front. Iliescu stressed that, whilst the HDUR had its own programme, it was fully in keeping with the spirit of the NSF platform, and in a TV debate between Cazimir Ionescu and Adrian Ştefănescu of the Romanian Democratic Party Ionescu made strenuous efforts to win Ştefănescu and his party over to the Front by stressing the similarities between the two political programmes before finally ending by grudgingly admitting that ‘If you really want to remain as a separate faction, we have nothing against it’. A statement that would seem to imply that too many factions might not be seen as desirable.

The definitive statement on the political position of the Front, stressing the all-encompassing nature of the organisation, was issued by Rompres on 4 January 1990 on the eve of Edvard Shevardnadze’s visit to Romania:

In connection with the National Salvation Front, we are in a position to specify that it is not and will not become a party. The Front will take part in the April elections as a broad political organisation gathering all the personalities and groups that rouse [sic] courageously in defence of freedom and dignity in the years of totalitarian tyranny. The vision seems to have been of the NSF acting as an umbrella institution within the Romanian body politic — in the words of Aurel Dragoş Munteanu a ‘moral platform’ — a forum of debate encompassing various factions and individuals of talent that would provide a wing under which they could shelter until they reached fully fledged maturity, at which point they would presumably be so persuaded of the benefits of continuing rule by the Front that they would willingly chose to remain under its tutelage. Thus, from the beginning, the Front intended to fully participate in the political process and this was clearly stated by Brucan, as
early as 27 December, when he said in an interview that the CNSF 'is going to participate in the elections as a political force. We don't have to be a party. We will field candidates'. However, within such a structure the powers accruing to the Front and its leaders would have been considerable, as it was to be the goal setter, universal arbitrator in all debate and the executor of decisions reached, and Brucan was obviously aware of this, when he ominously warned that the CNSF was to 'be so powerful there will be little room outside of it'.

Consensus had taken shape under communism and, willingly or not, its ideologues had accepted the constraints imposed by that system, particularly, the need to perpetuate a system in which a socialist party remained dominant. Brucan was apparently told by Gorbachev, when they met in 1988, that reform must be based on the continuation of Communist Party rule and his writings reflect this, although, mirroring Dubček, his Party had to earn the right to rule because, if it no longer possessed 'revolutionary drive and spirit', then the emergence of alternative sources of power would be legitimate. However, the revolution had swept away not only the RCP but with it the single party system, creating an effective tabula rasa for Romanian politics, allowing the possibility of a choice of models for the future, and, in this atmosphere, those who retained a belief in the idea that one party rule continued to hold legitimacy seem to have been guilty of an unreasonable optimism, both as regards the ease by which popular consensus for the continuation of such a system of rule might be forged in a society largely alienated from such a concept, and as to how, once it was unleashed, pluralism and increased institutional autonomy could be squared with the Party retaining a leading role. In truth, although the ideal of rule by a rationalising and modernising single party seems to have deep roots in Romania, the excesses of Ceaușescu and his predecessors had delegitimised not only the RCP but also the whole political concept and, throughout this period, divisions within the NSF and the tenuous nature of its hold on power appear to have combined to ensure that it never felt able to fully announce a clear political vision in public, let alone impose it by force, for fear of sparking general unrest. In a growing ideological vacuum, as January progressed, the future for the Romanian people was increasingly presented as being a straight choice between a continuation of single party rule and a return to a Western pluralist model, with the latter being expected and apparently desired by most of the population, certainly in Bucharest, to judge by an opinion poll dating from the end of December 1989, which indicated 62% favoured a multiparty system and only 6% wished to see a continuation of single party rule. In January 1990 this alternative vision of Romania's future was supported by an ad hoc alliance of the traditional parties, the crowd on the street, the international media,
and Western governments and financial institutions all of which wanted to see the installation of a recognisable pluralist democracy. By the end of the month, a combination of internal contradictions and external pressures had been sufficient to make the Front abandon its already deeply flawed project of Consensus and the dream of a novel political system and resign itself to becoming a political party in a competitive political arena. However, the relative lateness of this decision, and the apparent reluctance with which it was made, were only to breed the deep seated suspicions and animosities that continued to feed the confusion and unrest which convulsed Romania after the fall of Ceauşescu.

Dialogue

Frequently linked with Consensus in speeches during the revolution was the concept of dialogue. Iliescu spoke of the NSF engaging in a permanent dialogue with society and, at one point, he even referred to Consensus in term of a 'vivid dialogue'. However, dialogue as a concept appears to have had a far wider significance than it was accorded by the relatively narrow bounds of Consensus, for primarily within Romanian intellectual circles it seems to have been seen as a strategy for intellectual inclusion.

The emphasis on the need for dialogue also stemmed in part from thinking on the consequences of the information technology revolution, and a realisation that in future access to information would not only be difficult to curtail but also undesirable, as the free flow of knowledge and ideas was seen to lie at the root of development and progress. This belief was at the bottom of Brucan's desire to promote the emergence of factions and debate under the umbrella of a single party, but beyond this there was also to be a dialogue with and within society through the establishment of a free press, and during the revolution publications such as România Liberă soon began to openly display a line critical to the thinking of the regime, with early official approval of this more independent stance being suggested by Brucan's use of the pages of the newspaper to launch a public polemic with Gheorghe Apostol over the 'Letter of the Six'. This spirit of openness to the press was also initially discernable in the new regime's dealings with the international arena as the leaders of the NSF gave numerous interviews to foreign journalists.

Dialogue was also shaped in direct response to the experience of the Ceauşescu years, which were seen as being characterised by a total lack of public debate, and in his analysis Brucan argued that this lack of dialogue was the root cause of stagnation in communist societies. Indeed, it is possible to see the public sphere under Ceauşescu, as with earlier absolute monarchies, providing little more than a space for the leader to represent his authority. In the term of Habermas, it was
a 'representative public sphere', which functioned not as a social entity but as an
arena for spectacle and display, where the populace could only assert itself through
the person as an individual, and the only source of information outside the control
of the state was gossip and rumour. Brucan and the other 'globalists' through their
stress on dialogue seem to have been advocating the creation of a 'critical reasoning
public sphere' where alternative channels of information would exist and in which,
to the extent that legislation would reflect public opinion, authority would cease
to base itself on the capricious whims of one man and, instead, would derive from
consensus. The chief beneficiaries from the creation of such a sphere would be
the intellectuals, as the arena established would largely be their preserve and they
would act as adjudicators, assuring the wisdom and correctness of the decisions
made. The creation of such a public sphere would also permit the intellectuals
to project their authority since, in order to make a successful claim to status as
the bearers of cultural authority, they require elements of society to be reasonably
conversant with the matrix of ideas they espouse.\(^2\)

Expanded in terms of practical politics, in what it must be remembered was
a concept shaped within the confines of a one party state, dialogue was seen as
being something like an attainable half-way house on the road to full pluralism,
in which the regime and public would embark on a mutual apprenticeship with
the goal of the authorities taking the needs of the population into greater account
in decision making and, thereby, allowing public opinion to re-emerge as a social
factor. Dialogue was, thus, linked to a transitional stage of development on
the path to political maturity but, since the technical problems associated with
running a modern state were clearly beyond the ken of most, the real beneficiaries
would be those who were qualified to enter the debate and these were largely
the specialists and technicians who held the necessary knowledge. The raising in
status and general emancipation of intellectuals would, therefore, be the prime
consequence of such a strategy, since it would be through their agency that the
authorities would conduct their dialogue with the people. And, since intellectuals
would have the duties of both explaining decisions that had been made to the
general population and articulating the demands of society to the authorities,
they would effectively in the process assure for themselves a pivotal position as
the transmission belt between society and state. This open consultation process,
in which representatives of all major interest groups and even individuals could
be heard, would insure the widest possible social support for any decisions taken
and avoid confrontation, instead ensuring its antithesis — consensus.\(^3\) Dialogue,
therefore, held out the prospect of bridging the chasm between the individual
Dialogue as both a social goal and a political strategy found its fullest expression during the revolution in the programme of the Group for Social Dialogue, whose very name denotes the significance applied to the concept. The membership of the GSD was a veritable roll-call of Romania's most prominent cultural intellectuals many of whom had been known dissidents. Amongst its members were: Doina Cornea, Petru Creția, Mircea Dinescu, Ștefan Augustin Doinas, Gabriel Liiceanu, Alexandru Paleologu, Dan Petrescu, Andrei Pleșu, Mihai Șora, Călin Anastasiu, Thomas Kleininger, Andrei Pippidi, Dan Oprescu, Radu Popa, Radu Bercea, Pavel Câmpeanu and Stelian Tănase. Formed on 31 December 1989 the GSD published its declaration of principles in the first edition of its influential journal, 22, which appeared on 20 January 1990. 94

Like the NSF, the GSD was also established as an umbrella grouping, but, in this case, with the express aim of representing Romania's intellectuals and moving them from the margins to the centre of the political stage. Although the GSD sought to represent all the country's intellectuals, it remained something of an élite group which, in contrast to the NSF's technocratic leanings, inclined more towards the liberal humanities with a nod also towards the social sciences. 95 Members were expected to be independent of all political affiliations, and as a group the GSD professed a neutral political stance not seeking to impart a common position on its membership and seeing itself rather as a purely intellectual forum for the airing of divergent views. Its strength was to come from the wielding of moral influence, not the exertion of actual power, and to maximise this goal it attempted to adopt an elevated position above the political fray, projecting itself not only as 'the moral conscious of our humiliated and destroyed society' but also as a force for national moral renewal. In this guise, and in line with the concept of dialogue, it sought to establish itself as the voice of society and as a mediator between it and the new regime. To this end, a series of dialogues were conducted with a wide variety of social and political groups, the first being with actors and directors from the world of theatre and film at Theatre 'Nottara' in Bucharest, later followed by discussions with Corneliu Coposu, Radu Câmpeanu and the leadership of the HDUR. The GSD also had early meetings with representatives of the ruling regime, including Cazimir Ionescu and Silviu Brucan, suggesting that there was some official recognition, at least amongst part of NSF, for the pivotal role it sought to play.

The declaration of principles of the GSD highlighted not so much the practical economic problems facing Romania but the diseased mentality which they
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perceived was crippling the nation. Communism was seen as having eroded all the positive values of dignity, honour, truth, freedom and even beauty, leaving only a false life, suffocated by fear, terror and vulgarity.\(^9\) The regaining of positive moral values was, therefore, the greatest of national imperatives, a reasserting of dignity and spiritual purity that was frequently expressed in almost apocalyptical biblical terms revolving around the word salvation.\(^7\) This emphasis on moral values may partly be explained by the fact that many of the Group were grounded in the humanities, but it also finds an echo in the teachings of Constantin Noica — several Noicans were prominent in the GSD — who had taught an individualism which saw as the remedy for man's ills, not politics, but the ending of his internal spiritual alienation: 'If there is misery, then, this is to be found in yourselves, in your inner limitations'.\(^8\) These ideas and others seem to have influenced the GSD to adopt an initial course, which in later years some have described as political naivety, as, after years of being silenced, it was believed by some that the mere production of the journal \(^22\) would suffice to lead to the general acceptance of their elevated values and prescriptions for recovery.

At first sight, there appears to have been a certain commonality of language and even shared ideals between the GSD and the NSF, but the Group adopted a stance firmly outside the Front and, by claiming also to be the authentic voice and representative of those who had fought on the streets for liberty and civic rights, it rapidly became a competitor for the symbols of the revolution — which, in contrast to the NSF, it saw as being entirely motivated by 'liberal' values. This distinctive position was reinforced by its emphatic rejection of co-operation with anybody connected with the previous regime, its frequent and serious consideration of human rights and a genuine belief in the necessity of fostering a liberal civil society in Romania. The divisions which appeared within the Group were not over these goals, nor over the idea that the pursuit of freedoms would require affirmative actions, but rather over whether they should abandon their medial role and directly enter the political fray. As January progressed, and new cleavages appeared within the Romanian body politic, many of the members of the GSD adopted a more proactive stance, as they began to level ever harsher criticisms at the NSF, asking how with the presence of so many former communists within its ranks there was any guarantee that it would not adopt the 'mask of communism'.\(^9\) General disenchantment seems to have set in with the ideals of dialogue and, by the time of the elections several of the most prominent members of the Group, including Gabriel Liiceanu, Stelian Tănase, Petru Creția and Alexander Paleologu, were to stand as independent candidates for parliament, as the bulk of the GSD
transmuted into an intellectual opposition and embarked on the path that was eventually to lead to the formation of the Civic Alliance.\textsuperscript{100}

**Competence**

Alongside dialogue another important concept within the matrix of ideas taken up by the Front was competence. Time and time again during the revolution the new leaders of the NSF declared that in future competence was to be the sole criterion in the selection of candidates for any post. This stance was to a large extent also shaped in reaction to the failings of the Ceaușescu regime, whose prime criterion in making all appointments had been political loyalty. During January, Roman offered an analysis of the country's ills solely in terms of personnel, suggesting that the failure of the system was due to the fact that Ceaușescu's appointees 'were never selected on the basis of competence but only on the basis of blind submission.'\textsuperscript{101} From this point of view the solution to Romania's woes lay in the better utilisation of human resources and, especially, in the deployment of professional expertise. The bitter attacks of Iliescu on Ceaușescu and his clique were more than pure politics, they underlined a conceptual view of the Romanian situation which saw its misfortune rooted in the mismanagement of a gerontocracy. However, as in the case of dialogue, the emphasis on competence can also be seen as a further strategy employed by displaced intellectuals to redefine the boundary markers of their field so as to exclude opponents and raise their own social status, and in keeping with this, invocations of competence can be found more generally in the writings of displaced cultural intellectuals during this period. For instance, in the two enormously influential and accessible books, *Jurnalul de la Păltiniș* and *Epistolari*, in which Gabriel Liiceanu propagated the ideas of the philosopher Constantin Noica to a wider public, an intellectual strategy and language of discourse is propounded that stresses the accumulation of knowledge and its dissemination and use by specialists, that is, competent people.\textsuperscript{102}

Associated with competence were a number of other important values which also served to distinguish the displaced intellectuals from the old regime. These included their attachment to 'rationalism' which was strongly contrasted with the perceived 'irrationalism' of Ceaușescu's economic policies.\textsuperscript{103} Generally, 'rationalism' was less stressed than competence, perhaps because previous invocations had been associated with denoting the apogee of enlightened Marxist thought, but, more probably, because competence served to differentiate between people whilst rationalism related more to the sphere of ideas. However, in a number of speeches the ruinous Ceaușescu years, in which a series of vainglorious white elephant economic projects and an 'irrational' debt repayment programme had
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savagely distorted the domestic economy, were depicted as being the result of a demented economic policy run by non experts who in their ‘irrationalism’ had defied the fundamental laws of nature. In future it was stressed that the country’s economy must be ‘...in harmony with economic laws and with our country’s realities’ with Roman stating that ‘...the government is duty bound first of all to lead the economic apparatus onto rational bases, in accordance with economic laws and in accordance with economic principles,...’

The return to rationalism was, thus, also concerned with a return to the universal, the prime leitmotif of the ‘globalist’ agenda, with its calls for reintegration into the European mainstream and the redefining of the parameters of learning to reject autarky and ‘protochronism’ in favour of the importation of specialist knowledge. For the philosophers adherence to this agenda required stressing the inheritance of Plato and Hegel in preference to that of the Geto-Dacian priest Zamolxe, whilst for political scientists, such as Ion Mircea Paşcu, it meant emphasising the universality of international relations and reminding the reader of the rich heritage of Plato, Thucydides, Hobbes, Rousseau and Kant amongst others.

In this context the revolution was seen as marking the exit from a dark isolationist age and a return to the European fold. The chant ‘Europe is with us!’ was heard on the streets during the fighting, official statements asserted that ‘Romania was and remains an European country’, and in a January campaign to reverse the decision to hold a referendum on the death penalty, the NSF argued that through its abolition of capital punishment Romania was conforming to the norms of civilised Europe.

However, competence also had a further moral foundation. The Noicans through the antithetical pairing of the moral values of purity and pollution — the former expressed through competence and the dissimilation of knowledge, the latter through ignorance and incompetence — raised cultural competence to such an exalted position that they saw it as being not only ‘the proper aim for intellectuals but the very basis of Romania’s salvation’. Although, as suggested previously, the use of the word ‘salvation’ in the name National Salvation Front most probably arose from the straight transmission of a Polish term to Romania, within Front intellectual circles similar connections were also made between professional competence and national salvation as they sought to project a new value system under the label ‘national renewal’. Competence alone was not seen as being sufficient to guarantee the selection of the right candidate for a job, moral rectitude was also required and these two virtues are constantly referred together as a pair. This stress on moral cleanliness was, in part, another attempt to erect a barrier between the new regime and the venality and corruption of the late Ceauşescu era, a means
of differentiation and exclusion, but it also carried a deeper ideological resonance because when Iliescu called for: '...more modesty in everyone's private life, the limitation of everybody's incomes to decent dimensions, without neglecting the incentives for the promotion of true values,' in place of the old 'false' values espoused by Ceaușescu, he was effectively seeking to lay the foundations of a new 'true' value system in which national salvation would be achieved through hard work and moderate and abstemious behaviour. Then, imbued with these new 'true' values society, freed from all political impositions and offered real rewards for its labour, would work with fresh vigour towards the goal of national renewal. This vision appears remarkably similar to the ideas current in perestroika at the time, usually labelled the 'human factor', and identified with the Russian sociologist, Tatiana Zaslavskaiia. These held that the solution to the widespread problem of poor workforce discipline and economic stagnation was not a return to coercion, with its obvious long-term motivational difficulties, nor recourse to the sanction of unemployment, rather what was required was a cultural transformation that would bring about a professionalisation of working practices and a widespread enthusiasm for labour. Within Romania the popular mobilisation effected by the revolution appeared to offer exceptional circumstances for achieving such a goal, and an opinion poll carried out at the end of December 1989 by the Centre for Research into Youth Problems clearly mirrors this agenda when it asks its respondents whether in the future they believe people will work harder, 97% replied 'yes' and only 1% 'no'.

Increased motivation for work would come through the provision of decent civilised conditions for the labour force. The 'profoundly popular and humanistic character' of the new regime was repeatedly stressed and, when Iliescu promised that bread and edible oil would be available for all without queuing, he was not only removing a potential cause of social unrest but also seeking to end the alienation of the workers from the system. Moves to lower the prices of electricity and gas and remove restrictions on their domestic usage, as well as the string of decrees issued abolishing the worst excesses of the Ceaușescu regime, can all also be seen in the same light, as can the new government's quick promise to cut the working week to five days. Although this latter move was welcomed by many, there were also fears that, as wages were linked to productivity, it would lead to a fall in pay and a rise in partial unemployment, but in an interview of the time the Minister responsible, Mihnea Marmeliuc, argued that such fears were groundless because the reduction in the working week from forty-six to forty hours would have no effect on levels of production, a statement that can only be grounded in an assumption that a reinvigorated labour force would be prepared to work
The regime was effectively offering the country a new social contract in which, in return for a renewal of labour enthusiasm, it was prepared to forego the sanction of unemployment and guarantee the free availability of basic commodities and full employment. Roman declared '...we have pledged ourselves to ensure that each citizen of this country should have a secure job and conditions for a decent, civilised life' and a decree law was enacted promising that all those who asked for work before 15 February 1990 would be found employment by the new Directorate for Work and Social Protection. In a move which appears to completely override the market orientated criteria of efficiency and profitability enshrined in point four of the NSF programme and in other laws of the period, the new jobs were to be allocated in direct proportion to those already employed, with each unit being held responsible for creating the necessary places. Although the future was to cruelly strip bare the false illusions of their hopes, at first it did seem that the proposed 'contract' might be generally accepted by the population, with Roman in the middle of January asserting, that 'Now...the people work far better because they work in normal conditions: normal technological discipline, normal management, correct technical-material supply, free of any arbitrariness and voluntarism.' Front leaders also spoke optimistically of generating amongst the workforce a feeling that 'they are acquiring a specialisation and become useful to society' and even of introducing some form of popular participation into the decision making process.

Ilieşcu seems to have been well aware of the dichotomy at the heart of the information technology revolution which opened up both the possibilities for greater social control as well as a potential for democratisation. However, within the ideology of Consensus the new leaders chose to focus on the more beneficial attributes of the new technologies which were seen as facilitating access to information and permitting the possibility of more 'participation by members of society in the life of the units, of the collectives in which they take part, in social life in general'. The idea that the Western model of democracy could be improved through the adoption of new participatory forms, which would bring 'the voice of the ordinary citizen into the political process', has been a recurring theme in both academic and popular literature in the 'West' during recent years. In the late 1980s these ideas were enthusiastically taken up by Brucan and other reformers in Romania, who saw them as being apt to developments in their own country, with Brucan directly equating a Japanese study with Marxist models of self-management and self-administration. By the late 1980s, Iliescu and Brucan were arguing that, as the post-industrial world emerged, by embracing radical reforms the socialist
societies had a unique chance to leap-frog the representative model of democracy associated with industrial capitalism and move straight to a more advanced participatory form. However, Brucan, in particular, also emphasised that caution was needed in the transition from an administrative to a democratic electoral system and, despite their ambitious words, none of the Romanian reformers ever seem to have clearly spelt out what they implied by participatory democracy nor how it might be applied in such a technologically backward country. It is possible that their schemes might have entailed little more than the ideas embedded in dialogue, but during the revolution, Iliescu hinted at a more radical construct through the concept of eligibility. Eligibility appears to have implied a real transfer of power to the grass roots of society, with Iliescu promising that 'The constitution will consecrate the principles of compulsory eligibility of all managerial bodies and factors from central to local level' before adding that the question of eligibility was even discussed in relation to the militia 'which should be held responsible to the masses and not the reverse.'

This appears to suggest that some form of popular democracy would be instituted at the local and workplace level, and, indeed, Brucan had spoken of a 'direct participation of the working class in both economic management and political governance.' The obvious forum through which such ideas might be put into practice were the grass roots NSF enterprise councils, not least because the introduction of popular democracy might also be expected to offer the best chance of the hoped for re-motivation of the labour force, and, indeed, according to Mihai Montanu, the chief task of the NSF councils was to '... mobilise all Romanians to real work, to intelligent activity.'

**Enterprise Councils of the National Salvation Front**

Under the NEFM considerable emphasis had been placed on enterprise 'self-management' with workers' councils being established within factories. Superficially in creating these councils Romania appeared to be adopting a model similar to that found in Yugoslavia, Hungary, or Czechoslovakia in 1968, but, in reality, any similarities were purely semantic, since the new bodies were in fact just another facet of 'simulated innovation' having little real power and largely serving as a conduit for regime propaganda as well as an additional tool for mobilising the workforce.

Following the downfall of Ceaușescu throughout Romania these structures of the old regime, as an expression of support for the revolution, transformed themselves into NSF enterprise councils with many of the new bodies taking the responsibility of organising guards to protect their factory premises from possible terrorist attack. By changing the names of the councils, workers and management were seeking to eradicate RCP control at the most basic level, and although in many
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places the transformation was often just a case of simple nomenclatural replacement, in others there were serious attempts to fill the councils with fresh life and give the old forms real content.

The composition of these new councils depended to a large extent on the prevailing circumstances, with much resting on status within the factory and strength of personality, but, as a general rule, it seems that larger enterprises in bigger cities saw more radical changes. Thus, whilst in many enterprises the existing management and RCP leaders within the factory seem to have met behind closed doors and merely recast themselves in the new guise of NSF council, in others workers outside the formal structure of power played a far greater role and, sometimes, seized control of the new structures. In forming their councils many workers seem to have considered that they were at last accomplishing the workers’ power, long promised in communist propaganda but never achieved, as seizing control of their factories they set about choosing their management. In many cases the workforce seem to have despised the senior management, and now, fed up with working for poor rewards under an often corrupt and bullying factory regime which had achieved office through political loyalty rather than managerial ability, some of the more radical councils took the opportunity to try and eject their previous banes. In some cases they accomplished their goal, but elsewhere they were less successful and, occasionally, management and workers became locked in a vitriolic battle for control which was sometimes aired in the pages of the press. In moving to dismiss the existing management the workers may have been genuinely seeking competent replacements untainted by the past, but with few candidates to choose from the new leadership were usually those from the second tier who had been held in popular esteem within the factory. However, sometimes the upheavals of the revolution seem merely to have served as a mask for private vendettas and the settling of scores amidst a general atmosphere of disruption verging on anarchy. The ethos of worker ownership as propagated by the communists had placed intangible boundaries on ownership, and now the chaos and uncertainty of the revolution seems to have provided the cover for a considerable amount of theft. The actual extent of this is totally unknown, but management and workers seem to have been as guilty as each other, and, whilst undoubtedly hampering state production, the flow of goods out of the public sector at this time did much to kick-start the private black economy. However, the general effect of the collapse of discipline in the workplace was a dramatic fall in factory output, and so an early imperative for the regime was the restoration of order in the factories and, in particular, there were repeatedly pleas from members of the leadership for the re-establishment of dismissal from above instead of from below. At
the beginning of January, Iliescu pleaded for increased productivity and defended the right of managers to manage through reference to the separation of powers: 'in the case in point the separation of the political and executive, administrative powers, the Front's councils in the enterprises and the local ones must not interfere with the current activities of the technical-administrative management of the enterprises'. It was also stressed that the dismissal of management who did not reach the desired level of 'quality, competence and moral authority' could only come through the councils of the NSF as representative bodies appealing to higher authorities.

Although in many places the incoming regime was presented with the de facto creation of the councils this does not mean they did not generally fit within their plans as regards labour mobilisation and worker participation. Before the revolution Brucan had written 'The time has come for socialist democracy to be installed through the direct participation of the working class in both economic management and political government' and, in the first flush of the revolution, Iliescu voiced his support for the councils seeing them as a way in which the 'representatives of the masses really contribute to finding solutions to problems', but he added the telling proviso that this must only be as 'a collective body in which the administrative management, manager, deputy manager, chief engineer, and chief accountant should be represented, as well as the Front committee, and that they should co-operate for the success of the overall activity'. Given the propensity of many of the councils to want to become actively engaged in the running of their enterprises, the NSF was confronted with the problem of deciding what role they should actually play and determining the exact nature of the relationship between the councils and management. Iliescu was openly to voice the confusion felt by many at this time when he said 'there is great bewilderment in enterprises in connection with how they should act, what the function of the Front councils in enterprises is, and what the relations with enterprise administration are.' Matters were complicated still further by the intricate web of connections which frequently bound factory NSF councils with local territorial councils. In Timișoara and Brașov, amongst other cities representatives of the NSF enterprise councils had been directly responsible for electing the local county councils and in many other places factory managers sat on territorial councils.

By 12 January Iliescu was beginning to openly express doubts about the enterprise councils, noting that the NSF had 'criticised the tendency of taking over the role of former Party organisations in enterprises' and stressing that the new bodies could never become political organisations. These points were given further
clarification in a series of regulations published in the press with a commentary on the radio stating that councils in economic units:

"do not have political ambitions of management and control over the technical-administrative apparatus". Their role, the new regulations show, is to represent the interests of the collectivities that elected them, giving assistance in the technical-administrative management, in the settlement of all issues.... These councils debate and advance proposals to the administrative executives regarding the working conditions, organisation and conduct of the activity, the elimination of the administrative-bureaucratic methods, social assistance, etc.\(^\text{137}\)

In other words, their duties were to be similar to trade unions which according to the statement would 'be set up in enterprises' and 'take over the attributions of the councils of the National Salvation Front' and, until the elaboration of further legislation, the management of enterprises was to be run by administrative boards, the president of whom would be the general manager.\(^\text{138}\)

Thus, whilst the existence of NSF factory councils probably fitted well within the overall goals of the new regime, they were proving in many cases to be unruly subordinates and were fomenting such popular discontent that by the middle of January the Front saw trade unions as a more controllable alternative, presumably hoping that they would place themselves under the umbrella of the National Provisional Committee for Organising Free Trade Unions, which had replaced the General Trade Union of Romania.\(^\text{139}\) However, amongst the many new bodies thrust up by the revolution, there were also a proliferation of independent trade unions, most of these were relatively small, being based on individual plants, but by the end of January these were already beginning to come together in larger formations, most notably the Frația confederation established on 25 January 1990.\(^\text{140}\)

Many of these new independent trade unions proved no more amenable to official control than the NSF enterprise councils had done previously, and by the end of January, as the Front reorientated itself as a political party drawing on working class support with Iliescu and Roman having a series of meetings with workers and especially miners, increasing interest once more began to be shown in the factory councils.\(^\text{141}\) Thus, when Iliescu once more returned to the subject he stressed the central role that the enterprise councils occupied in NSF thinking, suggesting that instead of being amalgamated with the trade unions, they could be the dominant partners in an alliance which would lay the foundations for a 'participational democracy and of a framework of co-participating of workers and labourers in the management of enterprises.' \(^\text{142}\)

However, by the end of January the tide had again begun to turn, as the councils became increasingly identified with some of the more unsavoury aspects
of the new regime. At times of adversity, and most recently in response to the
demonstrations in Timișoara, Ceaușescu had mobilised workers in support of his
cause and the potential effectiveness of such cohorts had not been lost on the
leaders of the Front. Faced with unrest in Bucharest they were not slow to follow
this ‘traditional’ pattern and mobilise the workers, apparently, through the agency
of the NSF factory councils. As it became apparent that the enterprise councils
might become an important arm of NSF power, the traditional political parties
began to call for their dissolution labelling them as relics of the communist era
and, although they do not appear to have been formally disbanded, they faded from
the political scene with the foundation of the PCNU at the beginning of February,
when they were deliberately disavowed by Iliescu, who pointed out that they had
never been formally constituted by the NSF through a normative act. Although
the continued existence of the councils was incompatible with Western democratic
norms and their eclipse was probably speeded by pressure from the opposition
and the outside world, by the time of their demise they were also proving to
be of doubtful utility to the NSF, since once they became institutionalised and
were effectively shorn of their popular legitimacy, they appear to have proved a
less than effective mobilising force. The heavy reliance of the NSF on the miners
during subsequent demonstrations would seem to suggest that they were less sure
that the urban workforce would rally to their cause and, indeed, there are reports
of workers from the 23 August works in Bucharest and the 1 May oil refinery at
Ploiești refusing to heed calls from their local NSF branches to join the 19 February
rally in Bucharest.

The NSF enterprise councils were a radical grass roots manifestation of the
revolution, and for a few weeks in some factories they did mount a direct chal­
lenge to the ruling bureaucratic techno-administrative élite and the established
hierarchy, as through them, to a limited extent, power did start to flow from the
bottom upwards. However, they never had any real impact on the upper levels
of the pyramid of power, and by the end of January their challenge had been
effectively checked, as the publication of rules for the councils led to their emas­
ulation, marking a victory for the bureaucracy and blocking at least one avenue of
development of the revolution — a radical worker based experiment. Instead,
the dissolution of factory based organisations paved the way for the establish­
ment of an entirely territorial based structure of power on the Western pluralistic model.

The economy

Many of the main features of Consensus were clearly mirrored in the new regime’s
economic policies. Just as Consensus was described as a novel form of political
pluralism, so the economy was to be organised on the entirely new basis of a ‘socialist market economy’. A structure for which the leading NSF economist, Alexandru Birlădeanu, freely admitted they had no previous model to follow — the Yugoslav experience being ruled out as too confusing.\(^{146}\) Brucan had also written of such a model, coming to favour the adoption of market mechanisms, it seems, not out of any conviction as to their value but because ‘the command-type planning system does not and cannot assimilate the scientific-technological revolution’, and, notably, he was careful to specify that in his estimation the introduction of the market into a socialist system would not necessarily lead to capitalism.\(^{147}\) In fact, he seems to have had a dual economy model in mind, broadly based on the Soviet New Economic Policy of the 1920s, in which the ‘socialist sector’ of heavy industry, transportation and banking would remain largely run by plan, whilst market forces were introduced into peasant farming, small manufacturing, trade and service industries.\(^{148}\)

The sometimes contradictory, and apparently rather limited, vision the new regime had as regards economic reform can be seen from the plans it rapidly unveiled for the key sector of agriculture, an obvious high priority given continuing serious food shortages. Indeed, one of the first moves of the new regime was to halt the export of foodstuffs so as to divert supplies to the domestic market. The proposed agricultural reforms were most probably driven by a desire to improve conditions in the urban centres so as to motivate the workers rather than any wish to win the peasantry over to the NSF, although in hindsight they can be seen as marking the beginning of the process which made the peasantry amongst the most solid supporters of the Iliescu regime. The priority accorded to agriculture may also have been influenced by Brucan’s long-standing interest in the subject, and was possibly partially shaped as a direct response to the evolving de facto situation which had seen peasants in some areas during the revolution move to seize land without waiting for any formal authorisation.\(^{149}\) Changes in agriculture were also relatively simple to make and had to be rapidly announced to allow time to prepare for spring planting.

The reforms involved a series of steps which loosened the constraints on the peasants. The maximum permissible size of personal plots in the fertile plains was increased to 0.5 or 0.6 hectares, all restrictions on the sale of surplus produce on the free market were dropped and any who did not hold land had the right to rent a plot of 0.25 hectares from a cooperative providing they undertook to keep it well tilled. In hill areas the reform granted greater latitude, with the size of the plots being determined by the maximum area usable by a family and the possibility of contracts between individuals and cooperatives for the management of livestock
also being raised.\textsuperscript{150} Within these proposed reforms the distribution of arable land was to be effectively limited to the poorer hilly areas, whilst in the richer more fertile regions a private plot, although considerably bigger than before, was still little more than a large garden. Indeed, the overall limits of official thinking were clearly indicated by Iliescu’s stipulation that the hiring of labour to work any plots would be prohibited.\textsuperscript{151} Furthermore, the distribution of land was limited to those able to work it, which suggested that the reprivatisation of plots to their previous owners was not originally intended, although at the same time Birlădeanu did suggest that the question of land ownership might be on the agenda.\textsuperscript{152}

Instead of widespread structural reform the keys to unlock the productive forces of the Romanian economy were to be competence, a return to rationalism and the removal of political controls, especially, the burden of excessive centralisation — according to Roman the most extreme in Eastern Europe — which had stifled managerial enterprise and made nearly all economic decision making subject to political criteria.\textsuperscript{153} The new regime through decentralisation would lessen bureaucratic and political control in favour of managerial autonomy — managers who would be competent professionals — thereby liberating the rich human resources ignored by Ceauşescu and effectively passing control of the economy from the political \textit{apparat} to the technical élite. Despite warning of hard times ahead, Iliescu remained confident that ’provided work is well organised and efficient... units which have now acquired more leeway by being freed from arbitrary interference and recommendations from political figures have real chances to obtain, as early as the current year, results clearly superior to those that could be obtained during Ceauşescu’s time.'\textsuperscript{154} However, as with agriculture there appear to have been limits as to what exactly decentralisation should involve, since it appears to have rested more on imposing different criteria for decision making rather than any large-scale redistribution of resources. The only law to be enacted tackling the question during January 1990, the ’Decree–law on Investment’, whilst paying lip–service to the principle that all future investment was to be subject to the criteria of ‘profitability and efficiency’, through its rigid division of decision making showed little divergence from the prevailing economic orthodoxy. Investment would still occur according to plan with decision making being delegated to differing levels depending on the sum involved.\textsuperscript{155} Well after the violence had abated, the language of the NSF leaders, when they spoke of economic reform, indicated that their vision was one of adjustment rather than radical change and, although the initial stress on the need to assess the real condition of an economy, so distorted by false statistics that it was ’based on a gross lie’, is understandable, continued
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talk of reviewing the next year's plan, so as to set it on a more realistic basis in tune with the country's requirements, does not suggest that the initially many of the new ruling group envisaged having to set in motion any great economic transformation.\(^{158}\)

The failure of the political project of Consensus

References to 'consensus' suddenly disappear from Iliescu's speeches on 7 January 1990. After the optimistic and visionary word of his New Year's address of only a week before, in which he had laid out the bare bones of a 'novel' political pluralism, the sobriety of Iliescu's speech of that day was a stark contrast, as the new leader invoking realism called for national unity, hard work and perseverance in the face of the multitude of problems that confronted the country. In searching for reasons for this seemingly abrupt change of tone it is interesting to speculate as to the effect the visit of Edvard Shevardnadze, which ended on the same day of 7 January, may have had on Iliescu's apparent change of direction because, although no detailed report of the talks between the new Romanian leaders and the Soviet Foreign Minister has ever emerged, the future political direction of the country must have been on the agenda. Following Iliescu's lead no speeches by other Front leaders mention the word 'consensus' after this date, although ambiguities continued to exist over the fate of the project, as many of the forms of Consensus featured prominently in the television appearance of Iliescu, Mazilu and Roman on 13 January, and the term was still used in a front page editorial of Adevarul as late as 25 January but, then, it was conspicuously linked to the new keyword of 'unity'.\(^{157}\) However, before then, Consensus as a political project had been laid to rest, as on 23 January a meeting of the CNSF had decided that the NSF would participate in the coming elections as a fully-fledged political party.

The reasons for the failure of Consensus would seem to be varied, with one of the most important being the external political pressures brought to bear on the NSF which are discussed at greater length in the next chapter. However, deep rooted structural contradictions also played an important part in assuring its downfall. The abandonment of Consensus was closely linked to the unexpected depth and persistence of the crisis in the economy. The faith held in the idea that decentralisation and the better use of human resources would transform the Romanian economy helps explain the generally optimistic tone in the first speeches of the new leaders with Roman speaking of a situation that was not '...disastrous as regards the operation of the economic mechanism'.\(^{158}\) However, as the catastrophic state of the economy was gradually revealed, these optimistic words soon tailed away to bleaker pronouncements. Gradually, it became clear that the better use
of human resources alone would not suffice, and throughout January, in a series of
often conflicting analyses, Roman offered a variety of reasons for the failure of the
economy, with the only constant being that all was to be blamed on the excesses
of the Ceaușescu era. Thus, in one speech the problem was squarely located in
an antiquated capital stock of obsolete technologies and equipment many decades
old, whilst in another, in which the new Prime Minister displayed a quantitative
economic perception remarkably similar to his predecessors, the distribution sys­
tem was said to be primarily at fault since the amount of raw materials available
were not sufficient to fully utilise existing production facilities. The extent of
the confusion over economic policy being graphically illustrated by Roman who at
one point even managed to state within the space of two days that the economic
mechanism had both been set in motion and that it was blocked — without being
specific in either case as to what he implied.

The growing crisis in the economy was to be an important motor for acceler­
at ing the pace of change, increasing pressures for the wider introduction of market
mechanisms. This would also have the added benefit of making Romania more attrac­tive to the Western credits and investment which were seen as being necessary
for the modernisation of its often moribund industry. Some members of the
Front began to openly voice their support for privatisation, and Stănculescu, the
new Minister of National Economy, in an interview in România Liberă, spoke of
moving to a "broad liberalisation" which might include the introduction of a mar­
ket economy once the initial stabilisation period had passed. Indeed, subsequent
to the abandonment of Consensus, a more liberal law on free initiative was passed
at the beginning of February 1990 as a first step on the long road of economic
reform. However, the economic crisis was not only a spur for change, it also
undermined the very foundations of Consensus. Implicit in the stress the new
regime had placed on technocratic competence as the solution to Romania’s woes
was a belief that large-scale structural change was unnecessary or undesirable.
However, whilst technocrats with their primary values of efficiency and rationality
could be expected to strive to optimise an existing system, when it was revealed
that this would be insufficient and what was needed was a radical shift from the
current model, it soon became clear that competence would not suffice, and that
a more visionary political approach was required, implying a widening and deep­
ening of the debate to include humanist intellectuals, who, Shafir has argued,
can be distinguished from technical intellectuals on the very basis that they are
competitors for the core values of the polity.

Alongside the structural problems of the economy it soon became clear that
motivating the workforce to greater efforts would be more difficult than initially
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expected. Instead of the revolution and the social concessions made by the NSF galvanising the workforce to greater productivity, as the ideologues of the 'human factor' had preached, industrial production began to plunge sharply from December 1989 onwards. Outmoded machinery and production techniques can only be partly blamed for this, as can the redeployment of military forced labour from the industrial sector, although this undoubtedly had a serious effect in the coal mines. A more intractable problem was the fact that the ingrained workplace culture of minimal work for low rewards easily overrode what little carrot was offered by the small immediate improvement in living conditions, and the ideological rejection of the sanction of unemployment effectively removed any stick that could be wielded. Instead of rediscovering their enthusiasm for work, many factories were plagued by increased labour unrest and strikes, sometimes motivated by power struggles within the workplace and, in consequence, January 1990 was to see constant but largely ineffective exhortations by the new leaders for a greater commitment to work.

Both Brucan and Iliescu in earlier analyses had highlighted bureaucratic inertia as the chief problem facing the Romanian economy, indeed, Iliescu had spoken of the polluting effect of the bureaucracy. Almost immediately after the NSF entered power it moved rapidly to at least superficially restructure the central bureaucracy, as in a flurry of decrees ministries were reorganised and names changed with complete abandon, some being dissolved, others divided or merged and yet more created. The extent of these changes would seem to indicate that they had at least in part been planned in advance, but whilst new faces appeared at the top, it must be doubted if they brought any great transformations in personnel lower down the chain, or any innovations in bureaucratic practices. In part, this is because the new leaders, when they spoke of the bureaucracy, seem to have been implying not the enormous provincial and central administration nor technical-managerial groups but rather the relatively narrow band of political appointees that constituted the upper ranks of the late Ceauşescu nomenclatura. And, indeed, many members of this latter group do seem to have been ousted from political power during the revolution, although most were soon to find a ready consolation in newly acquired economic power. Whether any greater onslaught on the bureaucratic structure of the state was ever intended must remain an open question, because as the pressure for market led reforms increased the natural constituency of the NSF, the technocratic-managerial bureaucracy, who were often saddled with running totally unviable enterprises, were more and more drawn towards the position of the provincial and central administrative bureaucracy, who appear to have rejected all attempts to redistribute their considerable
powers. With these changes in emphasis, and the replacement of the embryonic revolutionary coalition with an effective opposition, the leadership of the NSF, increasingly needing to cement its political position, came to be seen as having aligned itself with the interests of the bureaucracy in all its guises. Whether such a strategy was embarked upon willingly or not is unclear, but soon the NSF were passing legislation which could be interpreted as being deliberately aimed at gaining the administrative bureaucracy's support, such as the decree redeploying any officials temporarily rendered unemployed by the reforms. Soon the exigencies of the economic situation and the difficulty of changing mentalities were being deployed to explain the slowness of the removal of central controls. Dumitru Breabăn, Deputy Minister of the Economy, admitting that shortages of some items had almost blocked inter-enterprise economic relations and that a 'centralised system is still employed to guiding resources' continued 'This programme is necessary at present for reasons that have to do with the scarcity of resources and the need to avoid credits unless they are truly needed and prove efficient. Centralisation will be reduced as the economy recovers and a change is wrought in the tendency to "recommendations from the top"'. The limits to the decentralisation of bureaucratic power were soon revealed, since it could not be allowed to unleash uncontrollable political forces, as in the NSF enterprise councils, nor could it apparently amount to widespread redistribution of resources from the bureaucracy.

This apparent reluctance to embrace more deeply rooted reform led to the creation of a political paradox at the heart of the Front which was to undermine both the standing of the new regime and the ideology and political project of Consensus. From almost the moment they entered power the new leaders had called for stabilisation and continuity with Iliescu stressing that the Front did 'not want to demolish the present central organs, as we must rely on the existing structures' and that it had to rely on the current administrative structures at all levels to ensure a continuity of process. However, the events of December 1989 had almost universally been acclaimed as a revolution and, since such a word carried connotations of radical change, it bred an expectation amongst certain segments of society of a fundamental transformation. The resulting paradox between ideology and expectations drew the leaders of the Front into feats of verbal gymnastics, as calls for stability and change were frequently paired in the same sentence. As early as the 26 December, Iliescu was stating that 'We should pass from the phase of general concepts, of programme to ensuring the continuity of a normal life by reorganising it on new bases', and afterwards he continued to stress the newness of the NSF and its institutions and speak of radical renewal whilst simultaneously advocating a return to normalcy. But what was normality in a Romanian context? Clearly
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it could not refer to the late Ceaușescu era, but did it refer to the early Ceaușescu period or was it as prescribed by accepted Western European norms?

This political conundrum was to be the eventual undoing of the Front, since it raised the thorny question of the exact relationship between the new leaders and the defunct RCP. In their early pronouncements the new leaders had conspicuously centred their attacks not on the RCP but on Ceaușescu and his supporters. The Party was portrayed as having been captured by a demented clique and an odious nomenclatura who had instituted a hegemonic outlook that stifled all dialogue. Left unsaid, but present by implication, was the belief that it was not the ideology or structure of the Party that had been responsible for its undoing but rather the presence of certain malign personalities. And the persistence of such ideas within the political discourse was evident, when the leaders of the NSF instead of admitting to any flaws in their own institutions and programme, chose to blame all evils on the bad apples within their own ranks. As the anti-communist radicalism of the crowd increased along with doubts about the veracity of the revolution, the new NSF leaders, who were nearly all former RCP members, began to legitimise their position and that of their allies, not only through their position as the ‘chosen’ leaders of the revolution but also through reference to their competence to rule. In an interview Corneliu Bogdan, whilst admitting that many of the leaders of the Front had belonged to the RCP, stressed their opposition to Ceaușescu, before stating that it was out of the question to keep Party members out of political life and that many of them as competent individuals had a part to play in rebuilding Romania. The NSF had legitimised itself through the revolution but, as important segments of society came to see this as being a radical event, implying a shift away from Marxism–Leninism, Consensus, which echoed the values of the former ideology, became an unviable anachronism.

The above argument has suggested that Consensus drew upon a rich matrix of ideas taken from the wider political discourse within Romania, including, a strong dash of reform socialism. However, to what extent Consensus was a cohesive ideology remains unclear, indeed, it might be wondered whether its practitioners thought of it as an ideology at all, given Iliescu’s oft repeated and strenuous denials that it could be considered as such: ‘We want to be free from any preconceived ideas, from any ideological or party constraints; we want to think out and formulate solutions for all problems by starting from the realities and requirements of our society’. The purpose of such affirmations were, perhaps, not to disavow ideology per se but rather to reject ‘dogmatism’ which was largely seen in terms of political interference in technocratic decision making. However, they could also be
seen as a political ploy designed to distance the members of the incoming regime from their previous beliefs, opening the Front, in the absence of the clear announcement of any credible alternative ideology to Marxism–Leninism, to charges that Consensus was merely masking a continuation of communist beliefs under another rubric. Indeed, by stressing its inclusivity and lack of ideological commitment, the NSF did render itself tactically difficult to attack with the continuing ambiguity that surrounded its political position during early January causing considerable confusion both to its supporters and opponents.

On the other hand, the stressing of an absence of any firm ideological commitments, either to the ‘right’ or to the ‘left’, would also seem to be natural for a regime attempting to build an organic solidarity, since few would be likely to be alienated from a truly central position in the political spectrum. However, the stress in the NSF was not on political centrality but on political neutrality, which had a totally different basis. Through Consensus it seems that the NSF regime was warily treading towards a new ideological base which might be termed ‘the end of politics’. Indeed, if politics is understood as a competitive bargaining process, then consensus, as the antithesis of competition, has its root in the diminution of politics. In this model the post–industrial information technology age was equated with a post–political era which was to see the transformation of political life and the passing away of the old structures and discourse including such outmoded labels as ‘left’ and ‘right’. These ideas were reinforced by both the technocratic base of Consensus, which had a low ideological input since science and technology are by their very nature relatively value neutral, and through specific conditions appertaining in Romania, with a common aim of the technocrats and the artistic intellectuals being the removal of political criteria from their specialist spheres and the reassertion of competence and expertise. Taking this one step further, it is possible to see Consensus as striving for the minimization of politics, since embedded in the idea of competence was the assumption that politics was to be a mere support act with its primary role the creation of the social and administrative framework necessary to promote technical expertise and professionalism. The cynical might presuppose that the ideology of the NSF was merely a strategy for maintaining their hold on power and, indeed, there is much truth in this; however, it also seems to contain elements of thought which were genuinely attempting to move beyond the confines of economically derivative socialism towards a new agenda of the ‘left’ and in this, it might be said, that they were embarking on a similar quest to the socialist and social democratic parties of Western Europe.

However, the diminution of politics was only one strand of Consensus, because like its progenitor, Marxism–Leninism, the ideology was also characterised by what
Ken Jowitt has termed 'charismatic impersonalism', as it imbibed both rational-legal norms and a charismatic revolutionary emphasis on transcending the existing order. Technocratic competence was, thus, united with a Messianic vision of a reinvigorated society working together towards the goal of national renewal, but by the first weeks of January this dream had already been shattered, when it became evident that the workers were not going to respond to the prospective social contract on offer and the deeply atomised Romanian society, instead of finding common cause, was dividing into a host of competing groups. As the situation in the factories began to fall out of control threatening to undermine the very basis of the existing order, the NSF responded by reining in the enterprise councils, thereby effectively killing not only hopes of a radical mobilisation of the workforce but also the chance of a charismatic driven Consensus.

The abandonment of Consensus and, thus, radical reform socialism left the NSF leaders adrift in a sea of ideological confusion, with Iliescu publicly admitting at the end of January that as of that moment he had no vision of the future. Members of the NSF leadership were to respond to this situation in differing ways, but in the search to develop credible political strategies most adopted an eclectic mixture of elements of the concepts already discussed, admixed with a general acceptance of the Western political model and some degree of free market economics, the nuances between these various formulations forming the bases of the divisions which were eventually to split the NSF asunder. The failure of the leaders of the NSF to clearly announce Consensus as an ideology or a political project had been a weakness, as hidden behind impenetrable and largely meaningless slogans it could not act as an effective mobilisation strategy, but, at the same time, it was also a strength, since it gave considerable leeway in which to form new strategies once it had been abandoned.

Of the concepts discussed in this chapter it is competence that has retained the most lasting significance. In a limited marketplace of ideas it has remained one of the chief bases for political legitimisation, broadly understood as 'we are capable of doing things better'. Ostensibly competence merely indicated the placing of trust in professional expertise, but, given the retrogression of the Romanian economy and a political culture marked by relatively low levels of political socialisation and sophistication, inherent within its bounds was also an assumption of social backwardness and the need for intellectuals to lead society towards modernity. Competence, thus, fitted in with the traditional role sought by Romanian intellectuals and, indeed, paradoxically the much stressed new technocracy may also reinforce their position rather than heralding a new participatory democratic era, since it is the rationalising rather than the democratising potential of
the information technology revolution which will probably predominate with the more advanced technology remaining within large institutions and functioning as a means of cementing the ideological control of dominant groups.\footnote{This would seem to hold especially true of relatively technologically backward states such as Romania, where, until recently, a computer remained a rare sight. At the heart of the alignment of competence and dialogue within Consensus was the intention of once more giving intellectuals the leading role in society. However, in the face of the political realities of the revolution, most accepted that the embracing of democracy effectively ruled out such rarefied \textit{élitism}, since it would have yielded too narrow an electoral base. Instead, they were forced to enter a highly competitive political arena in which the NSF was challenged by several new oppositional groupings and it is within these events that the real causes for the downfall of Consensus as a political project can be traced.}
Notes

1. In so much as some of the minor commissions included a number of students, who seem to have been initially selected on no other basis than being at the right place at the right time, then their composition was perhaps not entirely as the ruling group may have desired.
2. See appendix one.
4. Members of the CNSF who were elected to the Romanian parliament at the May 1990 elections with their party affiliations include: Alexandru Birlădeanu (DNSF), Sorin Botnaru (Liberal), Mihai Cheșan (DNSF), Géza Domokos (HDUR), Nicolae S. Dumitru (DNSF), Marian Enache (DNSF), Mihai Iacobescu (Independent), Vasile Ion (DNSF), Cazimir Ionescu (NSF), Constantin Ivanovici (DNSF), Károly Király (HDUR), Gábor Kolumbán (HDUR), Gheorghe Manole (Liberal), Dan Martițian (DNSF), Corneliu Mănescu (NSF), Petrișor Morar (Romanian Democratic Front), Corneliu Ruse (NSF), Timotei Stuparu (DNSF), Victor Surdu (DAPR).
6. Formally the powers of the President of the Council were as follows: representing the country in international relations; concluding international treaties; appointing and recalling Romania’s ambassadors abroad; receiving accreditation and recalling credentials of diplomatic representatives of other states; granting Romanian citizenship; approving the establishment of residence in Romania by citizens of other states; granting rights of asylum; approving the adoption of foreign minors by Romanian citizens and the adoption of minors, who were Romanian citizens, by foreigners. BBC EE/0650, B/7, 30 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 2116 gmt, 29 December 1989. The right to appoint and recall foreign ambassadors was exercised to the full throughout the first months of the new regime when a stream of Ceaușescu appointees were replaced. The first being the former Minister of the Interior, George Homoștean, recalled from Czechoslovakia. See ‘Decret privind rechemarea unui ambasador’, Decrete no. 40, dated 31 December 1989, Monitorul Oficial al României, 1:9, 31 December 1989, p. 5.
7. Brucan somewhat ingeniously was to tell journalists on 4 January that of the eleven members of the Executive Bureau six were students in recognition of the role that they and young people had played in the revolution, although to arrive at such a figure, he must have classified himself as a student and, perhaps, Iliescu as well!
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Tocaci, University Professors Ioan Muraru, Antonie Iorgovan, Florin Vasilescu, Procurator Mihai Constantinescu and economist Iulian Şomăcescu.


11. BBC EE/0649, B/3, 29 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 0814 gmt, 26 December 1989. According to Brucan it was he who nominated Roman as Prime Minister. Born 22 July 1946 in Bucharest the son of the Valter Roman (see note no. 40), after studying in the hydro-energy section of the Energy Faculty of the Polytechnic Institute in Bucharest, from which he obtained his diploma in 1968, in 1970 Roman went to France to study for his doctorate at Toulouse, where he stayed until 1974. Returning to Romania he pursued an academic career becoming head of the Hydraulics Department of the Hydrotechnics Faculty of Bucharest Polytechnic. Source: Petre Roman interviewed by Ion Lăzăr, ‘Guvernul României la inceput de drum’, Adevarul, 17 January 1990, pp. 1, 3.

12. Brucan has also suggested that Iliescu and Roman were in contact during the days after the outbreak of disturbances in Timişoara. “They were talking in general about who among those in power they should contact, who among the generals”. Brucan quoted in Celestin Bohlen, ‘Bucharest says entire politburo ruled by Ceauşescu is in custody’, New York Times, 3 January 1990, p. A.12.


15. Nicolae Dicu had been a Deputy Minister of Mines since 1979, Stelian Pintelie a Deputy Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications since 1984 and Ştefan Nicolae a Deputy Minister of the Food Industry since 1986. Ion Folea had been Minister of Geology (1981–86) and then retained a similar post. Teofil Pop had previously been a Director in the Ministry of Justice. Nicolae M. Nicolae had been a Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade (1966–71) and then First Deputy and Minister of State for Foreign Trade before becoming Romanian Ambassador in the United States (1976–78). George Caranfil had been Minister for the Chemical Industry between 1980–84 and subsequently Romanian Ambassador in East Germany. Ion Pățan had been one of the most senior economists in the late Ceauşescu regime. Deputy Prime Minister between 1969–82, he had been Minister for Foreign Trade and International Economic Cooperation (1972–78), Minister for Technical and Material Supply and Control of Management (1978–84) and Minister for Light Industry (1984–86). He had been both a full member of the PEC and a member of the Permanent Bureau from 1974–84 and at the 14th Congress of the RCP just, one month before the outbreak of the revolution, he had been reselected as one of the CC members for Caraş-Severin. Constantin Popescu had been a Deputy Minister for Light Industry (1974–87), Corneliu Burada a Deputy Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications (1972–82) and Ion Chesa had served as a Deputy Minister in various related posts between 1971–88. Caranfil, Folea, Nicolae Nicolae and Pintelie as well as Pățan had all at various times been members of the RCP Central Committee with Folea retaining his post until the revolution. See Shafir, ‘The new Romanian government’, pp. 35–38.

16. See chapter four for more details.
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17. Most noticeably Sergiu Celac to London, Gelu-Voican Voiculescu to Tunisia and Anton Vătășescu to France.

18. Alexandru Birlădeanu was born in 1911 at Comrat in Bessarabia. A member of the RCP from 1936 he had been a member of the CC from 1955, becoming a full member of the seven man Executive Committee in 1965 where he sat alongside Ceaușescu and Apostol. Amongst a number of governmental positions he was Deputy Minister of the National Economy between 1946–48 and Minister of Foreign Trade from 1948–54. From 1955–68 he was Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. In 1968 he lost all governmental office apparently because of sharp disagreements with Ceaușescu over economic policy, with Birlădeanu championing a radical reform package. After that date, he returned to academic pursuits becoming President of the Department of Economic Sciences at the Academy of Social and Political Sciences from 1970. For his removal in 1968 see ‘Barladeanu losing ground again’, Radio Free Europe Research, Rumanian Situation Report/94, 5 December 1968, pp. 1–3; ‘Rumanian party changes’, Radio Free Europe Research, Rumanian Situation Report/98, 18 December 1968, pp. 1–4.

Corneliu Mănescu was born in 1916 in Ploiești. A member of the RCP since 1936 between 1948–55 he was Deputy Minister of the Armed Forces and then from 1955–60 Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Committee in charge of supplies for the Army. A member of the Central Committee of the RCP from 1965 between 1961–1972 he was Foreign Minister. As head of the Romanian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly (1961–72) he was Chairman of the 22nd Session of this body (September 1967–October 1968), a position from which he gained considerable prestige. From 1977–82 he was Romanian Ambassador in Paris. From 1973–1977 he was Vice President of the National Council of the Socialist Unity Front.

Silviu Brucan was born in 1916. Entering the RCP in the late 1930s he had participated on the fringes of the 1944 coup. After serving as a Deputy Editor of Știința in 1956 he was appointed Ambassador to the United States moving in 1959 to the same post at the UN where he stayed until 1962. Subsequently, he served as the head of Romanian television before from 1966 onwards concentrating on academic pursuits.

19. Birlădeanu seems to have made a few pronouncements on the radio most notably one stressing the importance of youth in the revolution: BBC EE/0655, B/12:48, 6 January 1990, Rompres in English, 1228 gmt, 3 January 1990.


22. Ion Iliescu was born on 3 March 1930. The son of an old illegalist he was educated at the Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest and in Moscow. A member of the Communist Youth Movement since 1944, in 1953 he became a member of the RCP. He served in several prominent positions within the Youth Movement, including Secretary of the Central Committee between 1956–60 and First Secretary from 1967–71, in 1965 he became an alternative member of the Central Committee and then a full member between 1968 and November 1984. From 1969 until November 1980 he was a candidate member of the PEC and during 1979–80 a member of the State Council. Between 1967–71 he was Minister of Youth Affairs and then from February to July 1971 Secretary for Propaganda.
and education of the Central Committee. Between 1968–72 he was also a member of the Bureau of the National Council of the Socialist Unity Front. From 1972 he had been Secretary first of Timișoara (1972–76) then Iași (1976–79) County RCP Committees. Between 1979–1984 he was Chairman of the National Water Council and, after that date, Director of the Editura Tehnică publishing house. Iliescu’s career was noticeably uneven after his first disagreements with Ceaușescu in the early 70s, reflecting the varying vicissitudes of the scientific-technical elite as a whole. He appears to have not been entirely disgraced and, indeed, made something of a come back in the last years of that decade before suffering a further round of demotions in 1980 and, finally, in 1984.

Dan Mațian was born on 23 November 1935 in Bihor. He attended the Economics Faculty, of the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest and then from 1960 Lomonosov University, Moscow. On return to Romania, he taught at the University of Bucharest and was active in the Party especially the Youth Movement. In 1971 following Iliescu he became Minister for Youth Affairs holding the post for one and a half years until October 1972. According to Mațian he was then replaced following disagreements with Ceaușescu over policy for the Youth Movement and the promotion of Zoia and Nicu Ceaușescu within the organisation. He was subsequently transferred to the International Section of the Party until May 1974 when he returned to teaching. Source: Dan Mațian interviewed by Ion Lăzăr, ‘Pentru un dialog real cu cetățenii’, *Adevărul*, 25 January 1990, p. 5.

Mihai Drăgănescu was born 6 October 1929, the son of a railway station manager. In 1947 he attended the Polytechnic Institution of Bucharest — Electromechanical faculty — gaining in February 1952 his engineer’s diploma. He remained a University lecturer and also served on various government committees concerned with high technology. Between 1968–74 he was Vice Chairman of the National Council of the Socialist Unity Front and from 1969–74 alternative member of the Central Committee of the RCP. From 1969–85 he was a Deputy in the Grand National Assembly. He is the author of many books some on philosophical subjects with the scientific works being published by Editura Tehnică. Drăgănescu’s career seems to have had two troughs: one in 1974, when he lost most of his places on scientific commissions, his place as alternative member of the Central Committee and his executive position on the Socialist Unity Front, although he remained a member of the National Council of this body until 1985, when he appears to have suffered a second demotion, losing in that year also his Grand National Assembly seat. Source: Mihai Drăgănescu interviewed by Ion Lăzăr, ‘Adevărul vă prezintă Guvernul României: Informatica — o mare șansă pentru economia românească’, *Adevărul*, 18 January 1990, p. 2. Michael Shafir, ‘The new Romanian government’, *Report on Eastern Europe*, 1:2 12 January 1990, p. 36.


Károly Király was born on 26 September 1930 at Tîrnăveni, Mureș the son of
a worker. After attending the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest he studied between 1955–57 in Moscow. Returning to Romania he was employed in a string of different factories and held a number of Party posts, being an alternate member of the PEC until 1972 and Vice–Chairman of the Hungarian Nationalities Council until March 1978. From 1977 he was the most prominent Hungarian dissidents in the country sending a series of highly publicised letters to prominent RCP members protesting at the treatment of the Hungarian minority in Romania (see chapter five). Source Personalităţi publice–poliice 1989–92 (Bucharest: Editura Holding Reporter, 1993), p. 109.


27. Immediately after the fall of Ceauşescu and before the abandonment of Consensus Roman replied to a question of whether he was still a communist or a Marxist: ‘No not at all, after the revolution... it is not possible.... I was a marxist, not a communist, because the communism we experienced in Romania was only Stalinist, Bolshevist. I was a member of the Party, but I have always been against Stalinism and Bolshevism, as was my father, who fought in Spain. To sum up,... maybe I am still a marxist, but I really do not have the time to philosophise about the matter. In any case, we are not the slaves of any type of ideology any more; this cost us too dearly.’ Petre Roman interviewed by Patrice Claude & Georges Marion, ‘Un entretien avec le premier ministre roumain’, Le Monde, 4 January 1990, p. 4.

28. The name is supposed to have arisen because when members were given directions for meetings at the Institute of World Economy they were told it was next to the Trocadero Restaurant. In Romanian: Institutul de Economie Mondială, Asociaţie de Drept Internaţional şi Relaţii Internationale and Institutul de Ştiinţe Politice din Bucureşti.

29. For instance Eugen Dijmarescu was amongst the Romanian speakers at a symposium organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe on ‘Economic reforms in the European centrally planned economies’ held in Vienna on 24–29 November 1988.


31. A Future for Romania Foundation, ‘The end of transition?’, Sfera Politicii, 1:3 (1993), p. 17. Consensus has been employed on the basis that it is the term used by some of those involved in the project. The term is not entirely satisfactory and it can be argued that its employment serves an ulterior political motive, because by suggesting it was abandoned during January 1990, it can be cast as a barrier cutting the NSF from its earliest ideological roots. To obviate this charge, it should be stressed that the argument that follows is that, firstly, Consensus was a complex matrix which included alongside reform socialism several other concepts and that, secondly, the ideology and the political project should be distinguished because, whilst the latter ceased to be feasible in January 1990, some of the ideas within Consensus continue to have validity within the Romanian political discourse until the day. Throughout this work the upper–case C has been used
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for the ideology and political project of Consensus to distinguish it from the idea of consensus.

32. This chapter draws heavily on Katherine Verdery's excellent study of intellectuals in Romania during the late 1980s and, broadly, follows her lead in seeing intellectuals as occupying a territory in society that can be fought and struggled over. In such a formulation, the crucial determinant enabling entry into the battle is self-ascription and this leads Verdery to steer clear of the vexed debate over where the boundary between intellectuals and intelligentsia should be drawn in favour of the single term 'intellectual'. Whilst within this chapter adoption of this idea of self-ascription would make a great deal of sense elsewhere and, especially in chapter five, I have found it useful to maintain some distinction between the two groupings and, to this end, I have drawn upon Schöpflin's value-based definition in suggesting that intellectuals are those who participate in the creation of new value systems and offer alternative visions of the future (understood here in the broadest terms of reference involving scientific research) — who can be broadly be equated in Verdery's terms with those who enter the debate — whilst the intelligentsia are those who possess specialist knowledge. A more detailed examination of this problem is beyond the scope of this study and, whilst I am aware that these two approaches sit somewhat uneasily together, for the needs of this current work they will suffice. Furthermore, as it is the composition of the intellectual/intelligentsia stratum which is of most interest here, for matters of convenience the broad labels cultural or humanist intellectuals/intelligentsia and technical intellectuals/intelligentsia have been used throughout, but neither are meant to be entirely exclusive, and, indeed, there has often been a fruitful tendency for cross-over between the two realms. For their respective views on the matter see Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, pp. 92, 145-49, Katherine Verdery, National ideology under socialism: identity and cultural politics in Ceauşescu's Romania (Societies and Culture in East–Central Europe, Berkely, Calif.; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 15–19.

33. Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, p. 147. In addressing his fellow members of the Writer's Union in 1989 Petru Creţia asks 'We are supposed to be representatives of the nation's conscience; ought we not, then, analyse the subtle forms of compromise we have acquiesced in?', Petru Creţia, 'Death knell sounds for a state of brutal terror', The Times, 22 December 1989, p. 7. Some idea of the pivotal role Romanian intellectuals have traditionally seen their stratum playing can be gained from Mircea Eliade who in 1934 wrote: 'Intellectuals...represent the only invincible force of a nation...A nation enters into eternity not through its politicians, nor its army, nor its peasants or proletarians — but only through what is thought, discovered, and created within it....The forces that sustain a country's history and feed its mission have nothing to do with the political, the economic, or the social. They are borne and magnified only by "intellectuals."...This, then, is what "intellectuals" represent: the struggle against non-being, against death; the permanent affirmation of their nation's genius, virility, and power to create.' Mircea Eliade cited in Verdery, National ideology under socialism, p. 56.


35. The percentage of graduates in technical fields rose from 39.0% in 1960/61 to 58.5% in 1980/81 with only 8% that year in the humanities. Shafir's figures cited in Verdery, National ideology under socialism, p. 335 n. 14.
36. Anuarul statistic al Romniei 1991, (Bucharest: Comisia naional pentru statistic, n.d.), p. 190. Indeed, Elena Ceaușescu’s relentless desire to publish scientific works and collect academic titles was one of the stranger traits of the Romanian cult which, presumably, can partly be explained in terms of a compensation mechanism for a lack of formal education. Unsubstantiated gossip holds that she chose chemistry as her realm of ‘expertise’ because she had once worked as a cleaner in the laboratories of a prominent professor of that subject. Brucan, underlining the high status he accords intellectuals, makes a division between power and prestige noting that those who hold power in socialist societies have often tended to use that power to publish books to try and achieve prestige. Brucan, Pluralism and social conflict, p. 102

37. For a good discussion of the 1960s reform process see Schopflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, pp. 127–56. For the inclusion of the technical–scientific stratum in Romania see Verdery, National ideology under socialism, p. 335 n. 12.

38. William E. Crowther, The political economy of Romanian socialism (New York: Praeger, 1988), pp. 82–85. According to Mihai Botez this ‘Romanian Spring’ was characterised by a break with the Stalinist past, a burst of relative economic prosperity, the rise of members of the technocratic stratum to positions of influence, an unprecedented opening to the outside world, the rediscovery of national spiritual values, national pride, and a new patriotism, and an atmosphere of national reconciliation. See Georgescu, ‘Romanian dissent: its ideas’, p. 184.

39. In 1967 Romania embarked on a programme of acquiring Western technology by importing a substantial amount of machinery and encouraging collaborative joint-ventures. This led to an initial growth in trade with the EEC but as Romania experienced difficulties in marketing her predominantly agricultural exports this fell back. For Romania’s trade with the West in this period see Alan H. Smith, ‘Romanian economic relations with the EEC’, Jahrbuch der Wirtschaft Osteuropas (vol. 8, Munich: Günter Olzog, 1979), pp. 323–61.

40. Given the importance of his son, Petre, to this study it seems worthwhile to sketch Valter Roman’s career. Apparently born in 1913 he trained as an engineer in Bucharest and Brno, Czechoslovakia, joined the RCP in the early 1930s and achieved lasting renown through his exploits on behalf of the International Brigade in Spain where he rose to the rank of Major. He spent the War in the Soviet Union becoming associated with the group of communists headed by Ana Pauker. Returning to Romania he was promoted to Major General and served as Chief of the General Staff of the Romanian Army from 1945–51. Between 1951–55 he moved to the civilian post of Minister of Post and Communications before leaving government to head the Editura Politica publishing house, a job he continued to hold until his death in 1983. He was University Professor of Scientific Socialism and Chairman of the Social Science Department at Bucharest Polytechnic Institute and, when the Academy of Political and Social Sciences was established in 1970, he was made chairman of the political science section. He was also a prime mover behind the establishment of the National Council for Scientific Research. From 1965 he was a full member of the Central Committee of the RCP. For the career of Valter Roman see Vladimir Socor, ‘Valter Roman: reform communist who failed’, Radio Free Europe Research, RAD Background Report/4 (Romania), 13 January 1984, pp. 1–9.

41. Shafir, ‘The new Romanian government’, p. 36; Rady, Romania in turmoil, p. 128; Calinescu & Tismaneanu, ‘The 1989 revolution’, p. 53 n. 41. Note that Valter Roman and Drăganescu also had shared ties with the National Council for Scientific Research.
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46. ibid. p. 61.

47. Some technocratic intellectuals outside the Party such as Mihai Botez do seem to have come to this conclusion but how many others shared his view is unknown. See Georgescu, 'Romanian dissent: its ideas', p. 184.


49. For use of Roman and Dacian symbolism in the Ceaușescu era see Dennis Deletant, 'The past in contemporary Romania: some reflections on current Romanian historiography', *Slovo*, 1:2 (1988), pp. 77-91.

50. For the 'protochronists' see Verdery, *National ideology under socialism*, in general but particularly, pp. 167-214; Andrei Marga, 'Cultural and political trends in Romania before and after 1989', *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, 7:1 (1993), pp. 14-32. ; Vladimir Tismaneanu, 'Romania's mystical revolutionaries: the generation of angst and adventure revisited', *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, 8:3 (1994), p. 404-405; Deletant, 'The past in contemporary Romania', p. 91 n. 27, suggests the word may first have been coined by Gabriel Liiceanu in *Jurnalul de la Palating* but also notes its employment by Matei Calinescu in 'How can one be a Romanian? Modern Romanian culture and the West', *Southeastern Europe*, 10:1 (1983) p. 28. n.6, where it is used in direct opposition to 'synchronism'. The two figures most commonly identified with the movement are the poet Corneliu Vadim Tudor and the literary critic Eugen Barbu.


52. The frustrations felt at being excluded from power are caught in an article on the global development of the academic discipline of international relations by Ioan Mircea Pașcu a prominent member of the 'Trocadero Group'. After noting the considerable influence international relations experts have enjoyed in political decision making elsewhere in the world, Pașcu bemoans the fact that in Romania the academic discipline has remained purely theoretical lacking 'formative and informative/consultative functions, which are both relevant for the relationship of the science with the decision-making factors'. Ioan Mircea Pașcu, 'Theory and practice in international relations as a subject of study', *Revue Roumaine d'études internationales*, 21:4 1987, p. 344. A number of the most prominent scientific-technical intellectuals had been sociologists by training but, after a period of revitalisation in the post-Stalinist era, in 1977 sociology departments were dissolved and merged with those teaching philosophy. Sociological institutes remained open but with Doctorates no longer being awarded in the subject their
eventual extinction was only a matter of time. Verdery, *National ideology under socialism*, p. 335 n. 13.


61. The inter–war literary critic Eugen Lovinescu termed synchronism ‘the tendency for all forms of life in modern societies that are solidary with one another to become uniform’, Verdery, *National ideology under socialism*, p. 52. In an interdependent world he argued that developments in one state would have repercussions in others producing a tendency towards imitation in all walks of life. Historically, Lovinescu’s position has tended to be equated with extreme ‘occidentophilia’ but, in fact, he saw the borrowing of Western forms as a means to aid the development of indigenous social and cultural life. Attacked at the time he came into vogue briefly during the 1960s and early 1970s before becoming officially unacceptable again during the 1980s.

The term ‘globalist’ has been taken from Jadwiga Staniszksis, ‘Patterns of change in Eastern Europe’ East European Politics and Societies, 4:1 (1990), pp. 77–97, who traces a similar pattern throughout Eastern Europe with the main axis of conflict being ‘the choice between an ontological opening, followed by westernization, or the reinforcement of specificity.’ ibid p. 95. Staniszksis identifies two other factions besides the ‘globalist’, one being the ‘populist’ but, since in Romania ‘populism’ as identified with Constantin Stere has historically adopted a qualified pro–Western stance, I have preferred to use the Romanian term ‘protochronist’, even though, strictly speaking, this should be used to refer to a literary group when describing the proponents of this point of view. The third faction Staniszksis identifies the ‘bureaucratic’ has proved particularly resilient in Romania largely due to the considerable resources which it yields allowing it
to adopt a strategy of co-opting leading figures from the other factions to help defend its cause.


63. These proposals were made in an open letter to Ceauşescu. Vladimir Socor, 'Recent texts by Doina Cornea', *Radio Free Europe Research*, RAD Background Report/246, 30 December 1988, pp. 2-3.

64. BBC EE/0649, B/6-7, 29 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 2259 gmt, 26 December 1989.

65. For Ceauşescu's policy of circulating the elite see chapter five.

66. Brucan was to head the chapter on the Ceauşescus in his book *The wasted generation* 'The illiterate couple' and during the revolution he was quoted as saying: 'There has been no one like Ceauşescu. Stalin was a comparatively educated man. Romania was run for the past 20 years by someone with four years of elementary—school classes behind him.' Silviu Brucan by John Lloyd and Judy Dempsey, 'The voice of the new Romania', *Financial Times*, 29 December 1989, p. 11. In the same interview Brucan, obviously referring to Elena Ceauşescu, was to mock that Ceauşescu created a new category of 'power scientists'—those who were scientists only as long as they had power.


70. BBC EE/0651, B/6:12, 1 January 1990, ADN in English, 1519 gmt, 29 December 1989.

71. It may be argued that the concept of consensus has far deeper roots in South-Eastern Europe reflecting the abiding influence of nationalism and an attachment to the ideals of the village, underlined by Orthodox preachings on conformism and universality. In Greece under the Colonel's dictatorship the ideal (which McNeil argues closely relates to the village experience) was to 'live in a world where all Greeks thought and felt alike .... In such a world, and only in such a world, could every Greek be perfectly free to pursue his personal and private affairs, because shared values and rules of life would keep conflict to a minimum and prescribe proper solutions to personal encounters when they did occur — then all the nation would rally to its defence if necessary'. When such a view is adopted, it tends to be highly exclusive and divisive effectively leaving open only positions for or against the regime. William H. McNeill, *The metamorphosis of Greece since World War II* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp. 120-21.

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doing their job and running society, ...' became something of a bible for members of the Eastern European New Class during the late 1960s. Szelényi, 'The prospects and limits of the East European New Class project', p. 112. Richta's book was translated into Romanian as *Civilizatia la rascruce* and published in Bucharest in 1970.

73. Falin, 'The collapse of Eastern Europe', p. 23. Alexander Lebedev, 'It is wrong to prod us on', *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 7:2 (1990), p. 24. Since any legitimacy the Party continued to hold rested largely on its historical right to rule Lebedev, who was deputy head of the Ideology Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was forced into the dubious and nonsensical assertion that consensus had always been a feature of communist societies stating that in totalitarian times this had rested on terror and the power of the state.


75. BBC EE/0649, B/12, 29 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1100 gmt, 27 December 1989; For the Front programme see chapter two.

76. BBC EE/0651, B/4(b), 1 January 1990, Agerpres in English, 1800 gmt, 30 January 1990. It seems that initially the CNSF continued to hold both legislative and executive powers with Ministers in the new government being directly answerable to the council of the Front rather than the Prime Minister, Eyal, 'Why Romania could not avoid bloodshed', p. 159. The drumhead court martial of Ceauşescu and the lack of transparency in other trials also left many unconvinced that the powers of the judiciary had had been fully separated from the executive, see, for instance, Ionescu, 'Old practices persist in Romanian justice', pp. 44–48.

77. BBC EE/0652, B/9–11:14, 31 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 2057 gmt, 31 December 1989. During the revolution Brucan had vehemently declared that 'There is none of this reform communism nonsense in Romania' but despite the commitment within the first point of the NSF programme to abandon the leading role of a single party and to establish a democratic and pluralist form of government (neither of which ruled out the establishment of one party pluralism) it seems that the novel pluralism Iliescu spoke of resembled more closely the one party pluralism, earlier advocated by Brucan, than the Western European pluralist model. For Brucan's statement see Silviu Brucan by John Lloyd and Judy Dempsey, 'The voice of the new Romania', *Financial Times*, 29 December 1989, p. 11.


79. Brucan, *World socialism*, p. xiv. BBC EE/0655 B/8:35(ii), 6 January 1990. Note the double use of representative: '... we want to complete the composition of the National Council with a number of representatives from big representative units'.


81. Only Military cadre and civilian staff in the Ministry of National Defence and the Ministry of Interior, judges, prosecutors, diplomats, and operative personnel of the radio and television stations were prohibited from joining political parties. Otherwise the only restriction was that nobody might participate in one or more party. To register each party had to present its statutes and political programme, declare its headquarters and financial means at its disposal, and
prove it incorporated at least 251 members. Political parties were to be registered at the Bucharest Municipal Court, which would pronounce on the legality of their establishment within five days. An appeal on any decision could be lodged within three days at the Supreme Court who would give a ruling within five days. BBC EE/0653, B/21–22:70, 4 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1103 gmt, 31 December 1989.

82. Emphasis added. BBC EE/0649, B/4, 29 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1420 gmt, 26 December 1990. For the HDUR's declaration in favour of the Front see BBC EE/0649, B/8, 29 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 1141 gmt, 26 December 1989, and for Iliescu's comments BBC EE/0655 B/8, 6 January 1990. The relationship intended between the Front and these embryonic organisations at a lower level is suggested by the case of Cluj, where the Democratic Federation of Magyars in Cluj was described as being one of the 'grassroot branches of the National Salvation Front, for as part of the county the Cluj committee was subordinated to the NSF'. BBC EE/0653, B/26, 4 January 1990, Budapest Home Service, 2100 gmt, 28 December 1989.


84. For Munteanu's comments see BBC EE/0658, B/12:21, 10 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 2030 gmt, 8 January 1990.


86. For the deep roots of the concept of technocratically based single party rule in Romania see Mary Ellen Fischer, 'The new leaders and the opposition', in Daniel N. Nelson (ed.), Romania after tyranny (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1992), p. 51, where she draws attention to the similarity of language between the interwar neo-liberal Mihail Manoilescu and Iliescu. Fischer further suggests that many of the most senior NSF members had been exposed during their formative years to the débâcle of 1930s constitutional politics in Romania leaving them with an abiding suspicion of electoral politics.

87. Carried out between 26–30 December by the Centre of Sociological Research of Bucharest University the sample size of the poll was 1,231 respondents 84% of which lived in Bucharest, 11% in other towns and 5% in rural areas. 20% were under 25, 30.5% aged 25–34, 30% 35–44, 13% 45–54 and 6.5% over 55 years of age. When questioned 'What form do you wish the democratic pluralist system to take?' 62% responded in favour of a multiparty system. Of these 54% wanted many parties and 8% only two parties. 5% of all polled mentioned the exclusion of the communist party and 1% called for the exclusion of all extremist parties. Only 6% favoured a single party system and 2% an unspecified non party system. 14% mentioned a pluralist system without specifically mentioning parties. 16% replied they did not know. 70% men supported a multiparty system but only 49% women. Nearly 33% of those polled professed themselves uncertain about democratic political practices. 'Primul sondaj de opinie liber', Adevarul, 12 January 1990, p. 3.

88. BBC EE/0649, B/6, 29 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 2259 gmt, 26 December 1989.

89. See Gheorghe Apostol, 'O scrisoare din partea domnului Gheorghe Apostol', România Liberă, 10 January 1990, pp. 1, 5, and for Brucan's response Silviu
Brucan & Corneliu Vlad, ‘Silviu Brucan face precizări’, România Liberă, 11 January 1990, pp. 1, 5. Brucan was to accuse Apostol of betraying him to the Securitate.


91. Brucan, World socialism, pp. 141–44.

92. Verdery, National ideology under socialism, p. 143.

93. These ideas were most clearly articulated by Mihai Botez. See the report on various interviews he gave to the Western press to be found in Vladimir Socor, ‘Mihai Botez on Romanians problems’, Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/2, 6 March 1987, pp. 13–16.

94. The declaration appeared in Romanian, English, German and French (unambiguously highlighting the ‘globalist’ outlook of the organisation). It can be found in 22, 1:1, 20 January 1990, p. 3. Curiously the GSD seems first to have thought of calling their weekly ‘Azi’ the name later adopted by the chief NSF organ. See the announcement in România Liberă, 6 January 1990, p. 5.

95. Specifically mentioned within its manifesto are economists, sociologists, political scientists, historians, philosophers, town planners, writers and theologians.


97. See, for instance, the language used in Petru Creția, ‘Death knell sounds for a state of brutal terror’, The Times, 22 December 1989, p. 7. This article is the text of an address written by Creția whilst he was on a visit to Britain and, subsequently, broadcast to Romania on the BBC World Service. Creția refers to ‘regimes that have shaken the very foundation of the human condition’ where people have been reduced to ‘a state of despair that has warped their souls’ and Ceaușescu is accused of creating ‘an evil so deep and hard to cure, such an irresponsible abuse of old customs, such a radical breakdown of the good in living, culture, hopes, human relationships, and the good name of the country itself.’

98. Gabriel Liiceanu, Jurnalul de la Păltiniș quoted in Marga, ‘Cultural and political trends in Romania’, p. 22.


100. For the Chamber of Deputies there stood: Gabriel Liiceanu, Constantin Tici Dumitrescu, Stelian Tănase, Radu Popa, Pompiliu Militaru, Petre Mihai Băcanu, Florin Gabriel Mârculescu, Radu Filipescu and Ion Mârculescu. For the Senate: Octavian Paler, Petru Creția, Ioan Marcuș, Alexandru Paleologu, Sorin Dumitrescu and Alexander Pesamosca.


102. Noica was the last philosopher of stature remaining in Romania descending from the interwar circle of Nae Ionescu which included such notable figures as Mirea Eliade and Emil Cioran. In 1974 he had settled into an ascetic existence in a small cabin at Păltiniș high in the mountains near Sibiu, where he began to systematically instruct a group of disciples, who gathered around him, the most prominent of whom were Gabriel Liiceanu and Andrei Pleșu. Of the two books of Liiceanu Jurnalul de la Păltiniș, (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1983, revised edition, Bucharest: Humanitas, 1991) and Epistolar, (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1987), Jurnalul appeared in 8,000 copies Epistolar in 16,000 although, as is usual in Romania, circulation was considerably larger than these
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figures might suggest. The impact they had on Bucharest intellectual circles by all accounts was considerable and Tismaneanu has argued that Noican thinking has 'more or less visibly irrigated' all major cultural controversies in Romania since 1968. Tismaneanu, 'Romania's mystical revolutionaries', p. 412.

In fact, the premises on which Noica's ideas were founded were fundamentally at variance with those of the communist technocrats, indeed, according to Marga, the basis of Noica's philosophy was 'a critique of reason and modern rationality and an attempt to redefine them away from their scientific, positivist-technocratic senses towards meanings more suited to spiritual creation'. Arguably his ideas were only able to gain a wider hearing precisely because of the virtual eclipse of Marxist materialist philosophy in Romania due to Ceauşescu's stress on ideological legitimisation through nationalism. For a fuller treatment of this and related issues see Verdery, National ideology under socialism, pp. 256-301. Noica's attitude to Western Europe was also somewhat ambivalent as he was highly critical of its materialist and consumerist values, Tismaneanu, 'Romania's mystical revolutionaries', p. 412.

103. In so much as Ceauşescu's ideology did derive from Marxism–Leninism, which is fundamentally the quintessence of rationalism, since it replaces the spontaneous evolutionary development of capitalism by a premeditated system based on abstract reason, then, rather than 'irrationalism' it might be better to speak of the Romanian leader propagating a 'counter-rationality' to that of the 'globalists'. Moreover, if it is accepted that the prime rationality of socialism was the accumulation of resources (see chapter five), then, arguably, the policies followed by Ceauşescu were entirely rational within the constraints of the system. Although the 'globalists' do not seem to have been specifically associating Ceauşescu's 'irrationalism' with the mystical or spiritual irrationality of the 1930s, which had rejected the teachings of the Enlightenment, strong traces of this movement can be found within the indigenist ideas propagated in the latter Ceauşescu years as a glance at a statement by Nae 1onescu intellectual mentor to the Eliade, Cioran and Noica generation clearly shows: 'What state politics do we now propose?... A wholly revolutionary politics, ... [which] recommends: decoupling us from world politics; closing us up in our own borders as completely as possible; taking into consideration what is realistic for Romania; provisionally reducing our standard of living to a realistic level; and laying the foundations for a Romanian State of peasant structure, the only form in which we can truly live according to the indications of our nature and the only one we can implant that will enable the powers of our race truly and completely to bear fruit.', Nae 1onescu writing in 1937 cited in Verdery, National ideology under socialism, p. 48.

Substituting the word peasant for workers this would have made a fairly accurate mission statement for Romania in the 1980s. During the 1930s these ideas found voice in the Orthodoxist school of which Nichifor Crainic was a leading member. See Keith Hitchins, 'Gindirea: nationalism in a spiritual guise', in Kenneth Jowitt (ed.), Social change in Romania, 1860–1940: a debate on development in an European nation, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California, Institute of International Studies, 1978), pp. 140–73. Note that Hitchins in his survey of the 1930s discerns similar divisions to those evident in the 1980s but terms them 'Europeans' and 'traditionalists' rather than 'globalists' and 'protochronists'.

104. These sentiments are clearly caught by the novelist Augustin Buzura who wrote in the late 1980s 'I have a feeling of being on a planet where only amateurs and dilettantes are accepted... It is an absurd world full of miracles, of — idiots holding professors’ chairs and of wise people exiled in caves, a world in which
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reality is one thing and opinions about reality another...a world of the devil, in which the devil is gaining the upper hand.' Quoted in Daniel N. Nelson, *Romanian politics in the Ceauşescu era* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1988), p. xv.


107. The argument was epitomised by the headline spanning several articles about the matter in *Adevărul* 'România şi civilizaţia Europeană' which included a scientific rebuttal of the proposal by Adrian Năstase, one of the leading members of the 'Trocadero Group' and Vice President of ADIRI, Adrian Năstase, 'Pedeapsa cu moartea: să luăm o decizie în cunoştinţă de cauză', *Adevărul*, 16 January 1990, pp. 1, 5. For other quotations see Verdery, *National ideology under socialism*, p. 2; 'Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, 6 January 1990', Revue Roumaine d'études internationales, 23:5–6 (1989), p. 413.


110. At least Brucan and presumably others in Romania were aware of Zaslavskaia's work. See, for instance, the references throughout Brucan, *Pluralism and social conflict*, and especially pp. 112–13, where Brucan writes: 'In short, the scientific-technological revolution marks a period in the history of modern civilization when the most efficient way of increasing the productive forces of society becomes the very development of the human factor, the growing of man's capacities, of his creativity — briefly, the development of man as an end in itself' (emphasis added). Although also note that Brucan traces the development of such ideas from Richta's aforementioned book.

111. This analysis of the 'human factor' leans heavily on Hanson, 'Gorbachev: the last true Leninist believer', pp. 33–59.

112. 'Rezultatul unui sondaj de opinie', *Adevărul*, 30 December 1989, p. 4. The Centre for Research into Youth Problems polled 232 members of 'patriotic organisations' on guard duty around Bucharest, 2% were don't knows.


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121. ibid.


123. BBC EE/0649, B/6, 29 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 2259 gmt, 26 December 1989.


127. See Viorel Chiurtu, 'Tot ei ?!', *România Liberă*, 6 January 1990, p. 2, which describes the apparently spontaneous formation of an NSF council at a Bucharest hospital on 26 December 1989 through a free vote of the staff. The committee consisted of fifteen people with its very size apparently been taken as a measure of its democratic credentials. The Committee seems to have come into conflict with the manager of the hospital who dissolved it on 29 January.

128. For a general analysis of the NSF factory councils see Florin Gabriel Mărculescu, 'Schimbarea conducêrilor', *România Liberă*, 18 January 1990, pp. 1, 2. Also Viorel Chiurtu, 'Tot ei ?!', *România Liberă*, 6 January 1990, p. 2, which carries a report from Braşila where it seems some institutions and factories, when they formed enterprise councils, did take the opportunity to vote out their existing management or certainly the boss. However, in other cases, it appears that management installed themselves as a new committee. Viorel Chiurtu, 'Înnoiri democratice la Braşila', *România Liberă*, 18 January 1990, p. 2, carries reports of large demonstrations in Braşila with the principle causes of complaint apparently being the incompetence of some members of the local Front and the presence of members of the old regime in the councils. The NSF council of the margarine factory at Bragadiru near Bucharest visited by the American journalist Jonathan Randal also seems to have been composed entirely of members of the old workers’ council minus only the chief RCP Secretary, although here as well there were rumblings of discontent and calls for new elections by the middle of January, Jonathan C. Randal, 'A Romanian lesson in democracy', *The Washington Post*, 13 January 1990, p. A.17.

129. This seems to have occurred at the 'Tractorul' factory in Braşov where the former director was forced to resign and a visiting Western journalist wrote that at the plant '...there is now a tangible atmosphere of workers’ rule. Conscripts with ancient bolt–action rifles guard the gates, and work has been disrupted by a series of crisis meetings. Sergiu Nicolaescu...has twice flown up from Bucharest to try to resolve the workers’ challenge to the prevailing government
line that, in the name of economic reality, the old Party apparatchiks should remain at their desks.' Harvey Morris, 'When the workers of Romania said no', *The Independent*, 13 January 1990, p. 13.

130. See, for instance, 'Murdaria de la “Crinul”', *Adevărul*, 27 January 1990, pp. 1, 3, which carries a report about a delegation of twenty workers from the section of I.T ‘Crinul’ at Lehliu–Gară arriving at the offices of *Adevărul* to complain about the elections for the Council of the NSF at their factory. According to their complaints, during the revolution the old leadership had merely self-elected themselves to the council with the 1,300 workers not been given the chance to vote. The head of the works had become the President and promptly ejected the newly elected leader of the free trade union. The workers complained that the management of the factory were particularly corrupt with widespread theft to which the Director frequently turned a blind eye. In order to gain employment bribes of money or goods had to be given, with a man who wanted to obtain a qualification as an electrician handing over a 100kg pig, peppers to value of 1,000 lei, honey, 25kg of fish, a 15kg box of cheese, a turkey, two hens and twenty litres of wine.


132. Ibid.


135. See, for instance, the complaints from Gorj to be found in Ion Giurgiulescu, ‘Un posibil răspuns d–lui Mihai Montanu’, *România Liberă*, 19 January 1990, p. 2, which suggests that the local County Council contained seven directors of local enterprises.


139. ‘Organizarea sindicatelor libere din România’, *Adevărul*, 29 December 1989, p. 3.

140. See, for instance, the announcement of the first congress of the Federation of Free Unions of Journalists and Printers to be held on 21 January 1990, Grupul de Acţiune, ‘Primul congres al federației sindicatelor libere ale ziaristilor și tipografilor’, *România Liberă*, 6 January 1990, p. 5. Also ‘Statutul sindicatului liber independent “1 Mai” din Ploiești’, *România Liberă*, 19 January 1990, p. 3. Of the seven unions which initially comprised *Frația* three appear to have been more or less based on individual factories, whilst the others had wider constituencies including an oil workers union from Ploiești, a drivers union from Bucharest under the leadership of Miron Mitrea, and public transport workers from Bucharest. There was also a substantial grouping from the Banat. See "The trade union factor", *East European Newsletter*, 4:5, 5 March 1990, p. 4. A good example of the doubts and uncertainties surrounding the election of the leadership of a new union at a margarine factory can be found in Jonathan C. Randal, ‘A Romanian lesson in democracy’, *The Washington Post*, 13 January 1990, p. A.17.
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141. Roman and the Minister for Mines, Nicolae Dicu, are first reported as meeting miners from Maramureș. See ‘Un dialog necesar’, România Liberă, 17 January 1990, p. 5. Iliescu, Roman and Dicu then met representatives of the miners of the Jiu Valley on 19 January. The miners gained promises of improved working conditions including from 1 February a cut in the working week underground to five days and six hour shifts on the promise that production would not drop from the six day week level. They were also assured double pay for official holidays and a cut in the amount of night shifts. In return the miners promised full adhesion to the platform-programme of the NSF, see ‘Revendicările minerilor din Valea Jiului’, România Liberă, 20 January 1990, p. 3; ‘Ion Iliescu şi Petre Roman s-au întîlnit cu o delegaţie a minerilor din Valea Jiului’, Adevărul, 20 January 1990, p. 5. Later, the government also announced it was establishing an inter-ministerial commission to solve the problems raised by the Jiu Valley miners, ‘Şedinţa guvernelui’, Adevărul, 24 January 1990, p. 3.


144. ‘The trade union factor’, East European Newsletter, 4:5, 5 March 1990, p. 4.

145. This analysis is based upon Vladimir Pasti, ‘Democraţie, putere şi sindical’, Expres, 13 February 1990, p. 3.


147. Brukan, World socialism, pp. x, 48, 98 (Emphasis in the original).

148. For the ‘socialist sector’ that is the ‘industries of capital goods, once they are nationalized, their products lose the character of commodities and acquire use value. Although these products are formally sold (or exchanged) by one state enterprise to another, this is merely a bookkeeping operation and a general verification of the execution of the plan and of the economy as a whole. . . . Although the capital goods industries can be effectively run by the state plan, the production of the consumer goods industries and of agriculture must be regulated by the law of value; the plan can do no more than try and set some limits to its action.’ Brukan, World socialism, pp. 95–96. Brukan mentions the Soviet NEP model approvingly in ibid. p. 25.

149. In this they were following a traditional revolutionary pattern, see, for instance, the actions of French peasants in 1848 who invaded commons and forests to claim back their traditional rights. Theodore Zeldin, France 1848–1945: politics and anger (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 127. One of the prime targets of perestroika was also the ‘peasantrification of the peasant’ Władzimierz Bruz, ‘“Perestroika”: advance or retreat of a revolution?’, in E.E. Rice (ed.), Revolution and counter-revolution (Wolfson College Lectures, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 184.

150. Iliescu’s first major pronouncements on agriculture were in his New Year’s address to the nation, BBC EE/0652, B/10, 3 January 1990, Agerpres in English, 2057 gmt, 31 December 1990. They passed into law as ‘Decrete–lege privind unele măsuri pentru stimularea țăranimii’, Decrete–lege no. 42, dated 29 January 1990, Monitorul Oficial al României, 2:17, 30 January 1990, pp. 1–2; and ‘Decrete–lege privind unele măsuri pentru stimularea țăranimii și activității economice a unităților agricole cooperatiste și de stat!’, Decrete–lege no. 43, dated 29 January 1990, Monitorul Oficial al României, 2:17, 30 January 1990, pp. 2–4, see

151. Although obviously constrained by Marxist values Iliescu's views were nevertheless a move away from the Leninist view which was hostile to even self-employment on the view that small scale production engenders capitalism, Bruz, "Perestroika", p. 177.


153. For Roman’s comment on centralisation see BBC EE/0658, B/12:22, 10 January 1990, Soviet Television, 1440 gmt, 6 January 1990.


155. In most industries investment of up to 20 million lei could be sanctioned at the enterprise level, 20–60 million by industrial centres and units, 60–100 million by ministries, central organs of state, certain institutions at the county level, 100–500 million by the Ministry of National Economy and figures over this sum by the government only. 'Decree–lege privind desfăşurarea activităţii de investiţii', Decree–lege no. 28, dated 14 January 1990, *Monitorul Oficial al României*, 2:10, 15 January 1990, p. 4–5.


161. Roman announced $125 million for imports of technology and consumer goods.


164. Iliescu: 'So much at the macro but also at the micro level, it requires the raising of the general level of culture and the emancipation of social and political relations, the development of effective forms of social control over the factors, over the factors of power and political decisions — forces that, as a rule, are conservative; that have appeared in public life as instruments for defending the established order, the status quo; and that, therefore, act as instruments of inertia and as the principal source of the phenomena of social alienation',
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Brucan, World socialism, pp. 111–21.

165. A large number of decrees reorganising ministries appeared in Monitorul Oficial al României between 28 and 31 December 1989. The following examples give some idea of the changes: the Ministry of National Economy was created through the abolition of State Planning Committee and the Ministry of Technical and Material Supply; the former ministries of Agriculture and Food Industry were amalgamated; a Ministry of Water, Forests and the Environment was established through the reorganisation of National Council for Water, Ministry of Silviculture and the Council for the Protection of the Environment and a Ministry of Culture was formed through the reorganisation of Council of Culture and Socialist Education which was abolished.


167. 'Decret–lege privind unele măsuri ca urmare a încetării activității sau reorganizării unor organe centrale și locale de stat', Decret–lege no. 1, dated, 1 January 1990, Monitorul Oficial al României, 2:1, 3 January 1990, p. 4. Bureaucrats displaced by reorganisation received three months salary and a commitment that the territorial councils of the NSF would find work for those suitably prepared for it. Such policies were also fully in keeping with the 'human factor' outlined previously.


171. BBC EE/0652, B/14:27, 3 January 1990, Agerpres in English, 1807 gmt, 31 December 1989. At the end of December Iliescu spoke positively about the participation of RCP members in the NSF: "The present members of the party can contribute to the development of the country, even if in a different organisational form. For, party members constitute an important part of society. We are encouraging all social forces to join together, and act in unity. The National Salvation Front would like to hold together the left and right wing forces alike, in the interests of consolidation", see BBC EE/0651, B/6:13, 1 January 1990, Budapest Home Service, 1519 gmt, 29 December 1989.

172. BBC EE/0657, B/5:8, 9 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1831 gmt, 7 January 1990. In a similar vein he had also declared: 'we no longer want to be bound by taboos, by pre–established schemes', BBC EE/0650, B/10(b), 30 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 0912 gmt, 28 December 1989.


With the dawn of the new year, as the swirl of battle dimmed and the worst of the fighting ebbed from the streets of Bucharest and the other cities, the people of Romania began to emerge blinking into the light of an uncertain future. The scent of victory was sweet and a feeling of excitement and expectation hung in the air, but, as life began to return to some semblance of normality, even this began to pall as the drudgery of everyday existence reasserted itself with a painful jolt. During the revolution hidden stockpiles of food had been broken open bringing scarcely remembered quantities of provisions to the shops, including such unexpected luxuries as oranges. But, when these stocks were exhausted, the exotic fare once more disappeared from the shelves and rationing reappeared in many towns together with the daily grind of queuing for even the most shoddy of products. Disappointment and doubts began to surface, as the dreams of the revolution appeared to be crumbling before the very eyes of the people, and, as the post-Ceaușescu euphoria began to evaporate, old and more sinister habits were reported as returning. Journalists noted that Romanians were once again ‘resorting to whispering lest their views are noted by the Securitate men they are convinced are working for the ruling National Salvation Front in another guise’ and, despite the appearance of a markedly more open media, people still reported to be subsisting ‘from hour to hour on a diet of rumours’, many of which were fixed on the doubts and tantalising questions that remained unanswered after the revolution. How many had really died, who had been responsible for the shooting, and when would they be brought to trial?

However, even if the material condition of everyday life quickly returned to something close to the former status quo and old fears and suspicions remained far from banished, there were also considerable changes. Most obviously, the Romanians began to take the first tentative steps towards reclaiming the public sphere previously appropriated entirely by the Party–state. The monolithic world
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vision rigidly imposed from above during the Ceaușescu years had been shattered. In its place diversity returned as people thronged the streets, makeshift popular shrines appeared honouring the dead of the revolution and, most strikingly after the fearful public silence of the Ceaușescu era, everywhere there was discussion and debate. In Gail Kligman’s evocative words: ‘Talk — energetic, angry, fearful, hopeful — talk about the past, present, and future constantly filled the air in the city, as well as in remote villages’. In Bucharest, Timișoara, Brașov, Cluj and the other major centres, where the revolution had been a mass experience drawing vast crowds onto the streets, the politicisation of the population was tangible. Politics became a passion as informal groups began to gather in public places, such as an underground concourse in Bucharest, to debate amidst graffiti-adorned walls, where painted slogans battled for space with posters announcing public meetings called by newly emergent political groupings. This explosion of popular expression was one facet of a powerful and dynamic radicalism which somewhere along the way during the dust of battle had transformed what for the protesters had begun as an anti-Ceauşescu uprising into a full blown anti-communist revolution and, once stirred, the energy of this crowd was slow to dissipate. The roots of the oppositional movement which arose to challenge the NSF can be traced not so much in any political leader or grouping, but rather in the raw energy of the streets. It grew out of a deep anger, focused chiefly on the abuses of the past, but, perhaps, also deriving a little from shame at prior quiescence. This fury gave the movement an essentially negative edge as it was driven largely by a desire for vengeance and a need to erase the past rather than by any unified vision of the future. In a personalised political arena, in which ideology was often minimised, the targets of the protesters’ wrath were not only their oppressors of old, the Ceaușescus, the nomenclatura and the Securitate, but also increasingly those who were seen as being tarred with the same brush, Iliescu and his fellow leaders of the NSF. Many of the most pointed slogans of the time drew the two strands together: ‘Ceaușescu, don’t be sad, Iliescu is a communist!’, ‘FSN = PCR’, and ‘NSF, NSF, go to the Soviet Union!’

The hostility of the crowd was drawn not only from scepticism at the sight of so many former communists professing Damascene conversions, as they struggled to take the helm of what — from the perspective of the streets — was an avowedly anti-communist revolution but also from a more bitter taste of betrayal. With the first doubts about the true nature of the events each of the actors, who had participated on the streets and carried his own personal vision of the revolutionary truth, usually expressed in terms of heroism and bravery, was required to equate
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his own experience with a growing perception of falsification. This led to the paradoxical situation of those who claimed status from their action in the revolution, often in the same breath denying that the event should even be termed as such. This produced a particularly strong sense of betrayal amongst many of the street revolutionaries which, in turn, fuelled much of the dynamic of this period, as the previously dispossessed rose to challenge the newly promoted elite.

All the sources seem to agree that the main locus for this growing radicalism was those who had been most prominent on the streets during the fighting and, in particular, the country’s student population. Assured a place in the pantheon of the revolution through their own bravery and lionised by the new leaders of the NSF, who declared it was their participation that had given a unique characteristic to the events, these young people came to consider that they had a legitimate right to pass judgement on the new rulers.\(^5\) From the earliest days of the revolution in Timișoara the crowd had chanted ‘Down with Communism!’, but most of their anger and slogans had been directed at Ceaușescu and his clan. Now, with his departure from the scene, the scope of the slogans broadened to take on a sharper anti-communist edge and encompass more of the old regime: ‘We don’t want any more communists, secret police and activists!’\(^6\) On 26 December there was a public demonstration in front of the old Central Committee building calling for a more thorough cleansing of the Augean Stables of the previous regime, and, in the same evening, a ‘debate’ was aired on the television between one of the leaders of the newly formed Romanian Democratic Party, Adrian Ștefănescu, who was presented as the voice of these protesters, and Cazimir Ionescu of the Front.\(^7\) Although to term the event a debate is something of a misnomer, given the rather patronising manner in which Ionescu brusquely dealt with the inexperienced Ștefănescu, the event was significant, in that it constituted a public acceptance by the new rulers that there was popular discontent with their regime. It also set a precedent for other political groupings to demand television air time to voice their opinions and call for ‘dialogue’ with the leaders of the Front.

The return of political diversity thrust the media to the forefront of the debate and, particularly, the television, since, despite the sharp rise in the circulation of newspapers at this time, relatively high levels of radio and television ownership (table 4.1) together with the nationwide coverage of broadcasts meant that they remained the chief sources of information for much of the population, especially outside of Bucharest, where newspapers, even if they did arrive, because of the poor distribution system, were usually several days late.

Freed from the constraints of the Ceaușescu era the hours broadcast rose sharply from a mere twenty-two hours a week to more than 100, as the drab
reports on industrialisation and the doings of the Ceaușescus were replaced by a diet of news, cartoons, films and programmes imported from the West. The new Free Romanian Television found an avid audience, but still in some quarters doubts soon surfaced about the impartiality of the service, as the same faces continued to appear on the screen. After years mouthing the banalities of Ceaușescu, their protestations that 'physically we are the same people, but mentally we are completely different' had a hollow ring and their continued presence only served to undermine the message they purveyed. Soon demonstrators were calling for greater changes and on 31 January 1990 in a presage of what was to become a familiar form of protest, a twenty-five-year old engineer was reported to have begun a hunger strike outside the Intercontinental Hotel in Bucharest to protest at the bias present within TV reports. The chief target of the protesters' wrath appears to have been Aurel Dragoș Munteanu, whose combined roles as head of the TV and spokesman of the NSF seemed to epitomise for many the Front's domination of the media and, eventually, under mounting pressure he was forced to step down first as the regime's spokesman on 29 January and, then, from his post at the television on 10 February.

During 1990 the state television service was to maintain its monopoly over TV broadcasting, but, elsewhere, from the start of the Year, there were considerable changes. Several private radio stations were established — often generating considerable political controversy — and, most striking of all, there were the first tentative signs of a re-emergence of diversity in the printed word, as a few publications began to move away from the 'official line' and publish investigative and polemical articles critical of some aspects of the new regime. Later in the year, there was to be a tremendous explosion in publications, but, initially, the field was still dominated by the traditional titles, although in keeping with the political events, some of these felt it prudent to adopt a change of name. Thus, Scinteia, after appearing for one day under the name Scinteia Poporului, dropped the tainted 'Spark' in favour of the 'Truth' (Adevărul) and Informatică Bucureștului, which
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had heralded the revolution on 22 December under the name *Libertatea*, continued to bear that appellation. The titles *Tineretul Liber* and *România Liberă* were deemed sufficiently neutral to remain unaltered and, ironically, in the coming months, these publications were to change more than those newspapers where the transformation seems to have stopped at the masthead. Immediately after they reappeared on the news-stands, the daily newspapers claimed large rises in circulation. During the period 3–5 January it was reported that 439,000 subscriptions had been taken out for *Adevârul*, raising daily circulation to 1,848,629, and placing such strain on the antiquated presses that the paper had to decline to four pages, and not to be outdone *România Liberă* was soon also boasting a rise in circulation to 1,000,000. Long queues were reported for some publications and a number less identified with the regime, such as *22* and *România Liberă*, did not receive sufficient newsprint from state suppliers to meet demand, giving rise to accusations that the shortages were politically manipulated to curb the opposition press.

A deputation of youths that had visited the offices of *Adevârul* on 25 December had demanded accurate and impartial reporting in the future, but, with few traditions to draw upon, it soon became clear that there was no clear acceptance of what would constitute such journalism. Differing interpretations can be observed by contrasting reports of the students' meeting of 7 January. The Western press, the next day, was full of stories about the expression of anti-Front sentiments, but these were totally ignored by *Adevârul*, which chose to focus exclusively on the academic demands of the students. This position also seems to have been followed by the TV judging from a lengthy letter, which appeared shortly afterwards in *România Liberă*, denouncing the 'censored' television report of the event and, thus, implicitly establishing that newspaper's line. Thus, whilst *Adevârul* was slow to change and appears to have remained to a large extent the mouthpiece of the regime, by the beginning of January *România Liberă* had already begun to move towards a more independent position. However, as the newspaper was still technically under state control, receiving newsprint from state suppliers, and being printed on state presses, how this came about is still something of a mystery. As suggested in the previous chapter, at least some members of the new regime seem to have had an ideological commitment to a freeing of the press, but, since the bounds of that freedom seems never to have been clearly spelled out, credit for extracting the most from the latitude given should probably go to the journalists of *România Liberă*. The two most prominent figures behind the paper at this time were Petre Mihai Băcanu and Octavian Paler. The elder of the two, Paler (born 1926), had had a long career in the media, being a former director
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general of the television (1965–70) and editor of România Liberă before falling foul of Ceaușescu.¹⁹ The younger Băcanu (born 1941) had also served on the staff of the paper but was arrested by the Securitate in 1989 for trying to publish an independent newspaper and only released after the revolution.²⁰ Under the leadership of Băcanu the paper began to reflect the anti-communist tone of the revolution and the anger of the streets. On 31 December an article implored all those who ‘remind us of the nightmare’ of the Ceaușescu period ‘not to show themselves anymore’ and, shortly afterwards, Băcanu launched a series of articles, in which he publicly denounced a string of senior officials and ministers for their past activities.²¹ Amongst his first targets were Virgil Cazacu, a former member of the PEC and Secretary of the RCP CC, appointed head of UCECOM after the revolution, and Paul Niculescu-Mizil, the only member of the former Party leadership who seems initially to have been retained some degree of influence — according to Brucan because he knew the whereabouts of strategic food reserves.²² Then, shifting his target to the newly appointed government, the charges Băcanu voiced were so damaging that they appear to have directly contributed to the downfall of the Vice-President, Dumitru Mazilu, and Nicolae M. Nicolae, the Minister for Foreign Trade, and seriously embarrassed two others: Stelian Pintelie, Minister for Post and Telecommunications, and Mircea Angelescu, Minister for Sport, with the latter reportedly having his offer of resignation rejected.²³ These attacks seem to have been concentrated not so much on those who had been members of the former regime but rather those suspected of belonging to the Securitate — Mazilu and Pintelie were both said to have been Colonels and Nicolae to have entered the organisation in the early 1960s and to have risen to the rank of Major-General. Băcanu’s sources of information were obviously good and extremely detailed and, although his intentions may have been noble, the motivations behind the campaign have nonetheless never become entirely clear, since despite his connections with the Securitate Mazilu seems to have been on the reformist wing of the NSF, and unsubstantiated rumours circulating at the time of Nicolae’s dismissal also suggested he ran foul of more conservative forces when he attempted to introduce some changes in his ministry.²⁴ To a certain extent, the campaign in România Liberă was merely an extension of a phenomenon sweeping Romania at that time, which saw scores of people being denounced as either former members of the Securitate or their informers. However, by confirming the suspicions of those who suspected that the new government contained a whole barrelful of rotten apples, the campaign could only harm the standing of the NSF, whilst, at the same time, it also legitimised România liberă as a crusading newspaper of the opposition.
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Most significantly for the current analysis, the overthrow of Ceaușescu also heralded a return to political plurality, as in place of the monolithic RCP there appeared a plethora of organisations at both the local and national level, each claiming jurisdiction within their own sphere. Foremost of these new bodies was the ruling NSF and most of the organisations established at the factory and county level, following the lead of the centre, also took the Front name and affiliated themselves to the national body. However, at the same time a substantial number of political groupings and independent trade unions chose not to follow this path and, by 19 January, thirteen political parties had already been registered with the figure rising to nineteen by 25 January (table 4.3). Following patterns seen elsewhere in Eastern Europe, several of these new groups chose to avoid the use of party, although they were primarily political groupings. Principal amongst these was the NSF, but they also included various ethnic groupings, of which only the Hungarians were numerous enough to be a serious political force, the Ecological Movement of Romania and the Group for Social Dialogue, part of which was to eventually transmute into the Civic Alliance. In each case, the rationale behind the decision to eschew the use of the title ‘party’ stemmed not so much from a desire to avoid the use of a word tainted by past associations with ‘The Party’, but rather from a quest to establish new broader movements representing the interests of one particular group or addressing an issue of such importance that perforce a stance had to be adopted above the party-political fray. Thus, the Ecology Movement of Romania claimed to be speaking on behalf of the devastated natural environment, the GSD for Romania’s intellectuals, the HDUR for the Hungarian community and the NSF for the nation as a whole. The existence of these broader movements appears to have dovetailed with the Front’s idea of a representational body, under a NSF umbrella, and, generally, they seem to have initially been more generously received by the new authorities than those organisations who preferred to term themselves as political parties.

However, these organisations were the exception rather than the rule and the vast majority of the new political groupings readily adopted the epithet party. Most were soon to fade from the political scene, as, with few members and no party organisation, they were little more than platforms for their often vociferous leaders, who were in the most part totally untutored in the art of politics — the leaders of the Romanian Democratic Party, the most prominent of these proto-parties, were reported as being an actor and a Sanskrit scholar. Too weak to exercise much influence they did, however, serve as a voice for public concerns and a conduit for conveying this to the foreign media. References to the RDP regularly appeared in the Western press and one of its leaders, Nicolae Costel, seems to have
functioned most of the time from a sofa in the hall of the Intercontinental Hotel, the established residence of the foreign press corp.\textsuperscript{25} In the subsequent months, many of these first political groupings collapsed, whilst others entered into a frenzied game of musical chairs, in which acronyms and partners were changed with bewildering frequency. The fragility of many of these first parties was compounded by the fact that a fair proportion were regional groupings which never established any presence outside of their immediate locale and garnered few votes in the subsequent elections. All the major political groupings which eventually emerged, with the partial exception of the Hungarians and their Romanian counterpoint, the Alliance for the Unity of the Romanians, were centrally organised parties firmly focused on Bucharest with representatives to a greater or lesser extent scattered throughout other areas of the country.

In general, it might be said that the rapid emergence of so many political parties, even if it was not instrumental in directly forcing the hand of the Front towards a new model of democracy, did, at least, cement the return to political pluralism and helped raise levels of social politicisation. However, the many frailties of the new political parties combined with deeply ingrained popular suspicions of those unknown, who wished to proclaim themselves as new leaders, to throw the spotlight firmly onto three more recognisable political entities, which now reappeared after a long forced absence. These were the so called traditional or historic parties which had dominated Romanian politics before the communist takeover: the National Peasant Party, the National Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party of Romania, all of whom, as a legacy of their long heritage, possessed a defined identity and leaders, unequivocally, accepted as being untainted by the past.\textsuperscript{26} However, by a twist of fate this same history, that thrust them to the fore, came to often weigh heavily on the traditional parties circumscribing their horizons and preventing them from fully seizing the opportunities on offer.

The traditional political parties
The first of the traditional parties to appear in Romania after the flight of Ceauşescu was the National Peasant Party with five venerable survivors of the old pre-war party, including Corneliu Coposu and Ion Puiu, meeting swiftly in Bucharest to reactivate the party and draw up a draft proclamation. During the next few days, the party seems to have rapidly merged with two other groups with similar political leanings: the predominantly youth based Christian Democratic Party and the Christian National Peasant Party, which had been founded by intellectuals and clergymen, who sought ‘the nation’s moral recovery on Christian and peasant foundations’ and pledged to ‘promote openly Christian ethics’.\textsuperscript{27} After these
mergers, the National Peasant Party added the epithet Christian Democrat to its historic name and took up residence in the old villa of Nicolae Titulescu on Şoseaua Kiseleff. On 26 December 1989 a meeting of more than 100 veterans and younger supporters officially re-established the party and elected a provisional leadership including Coposu, Puiu, the theologian, Constantin Galeriu, and poet Ioan Alexandru. Early reports from foreign correspondents speak of scenes of chaos at the new headquarters in which veteran party members mixed with crowds of youngsters, and one claim is that the party inscribed over 30,000 new recruits during these first weeks. Within a month, this had allegedly climbed to 260,000 and, although the veracity of this figure may be doubted, it does appear that at this time the NPP received sufficient support for it to consider that it did have the backing of a substantial segment of the population. When this was coupled with the traditions of the party and the natural obduracy of some of its leaders, it was to produce a self-confident posture which produced a tough bargaining position in the coming negotiations with the NSF.

After the Second World War, the NPP refusing all blandishments to participate in the 'bogus coalition' of Petru Groza had been at the heart of the resistance to the communist takeover, and as a consequence, following the arrest of Iuliu Maniu and other senior members in 1947, it had been officially dissolved and banned. This tradition of resolute anti-communism and refusal to compromise was fully embraced by the 'new' leaders of the party, many of the more elderly of whom had endured long jail terms and suffered great persecution during the preceding forty years, producing a tendency for the NPP to project itself as the bastion of the struggle against all remnants of communism in Romania. This position, whilst proving undeniably popular with the more implacable foes of the past regime, was also something of a double-edged sword, since for many others everyday existence under communism had entailed some degree of compromise, however small this might have been, making few so free of sin as to be able to cast the first stone. The often absolute position of the NPP was further buoyed by the myth that the party had been the real victor of the 1946 election, only to be robbed of power when the communists reversed the vote. This not only produced a belief that the party had a legitimate right to accede to power, once the RCP fell, but also cast the last forty years as an illegal and disastrous interregnum, the malign effects of which could only be expunged by the return of a NPP government. The traditions of the past also seem to have been reflected in the political strategy adopted by the NPP, which had been since its earliest days in Transylvania under the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, with few exceptions, always a party of opposition. Indeed, after the Second World War, Maniu often
appears to have been content to remain in opposition rather than seize the mettle of leadership, and, it might be suggested, that at times the same temperament could be discerned in the NPP in 1990 as, unlike the NLP, its members refused to contemplate participation in the NSF regime.

Since its re-emergence the leadership of the party has remained firmly in the hands of Corneliu Coposu. Formerly Maniu's personal secretary Coposu had endured many years in prison and then, faced with further proscriptions on his release, he had chosen not to try and leave the country, but stayed and in a series of clandestine meetings with other party veterans worked to keep the spirit of the party alive. This background has secured for Coposu unchallenged legitimacy as leader of the NPP despite his age, and in his calm and dignified manner underlaid with great inner strength and conviction he does, indeed, stand as the very embodiment of his party. The only other member of comparable standing is Ion Raţiu, presidential candidate for the NPP in the May 1990 elections, whose status is reinforced by his considerable wealth, but these riches were gained during a long exile in London, and this absence from Romania during the years of communist hardship has attracted criticism from opponents undermining his authority in the domestic political arena. The strength of Coposu's position has been an important factor in maintaining the cohesion of the NPP and immunizing it from the suicidal fracturing of other groups such as the NLP. However, his evident age and those of many of the other senior leaders of the NPP led to jibes about a gerontocracy and this did not aid the party's cause in what is, fundamentally, a youthful society.

After so many years of interdiction, the provisional manifesto of the party, as might be expected bore all the hallmarks of a leadership long cut off from the political mainstream and was a disparate mixture of a search for traditional roots and an attempt to come to terms with the realities of post-communism. Indeed, in many ways, although later there was a significant parting of the ways as the NPP adopted a stance more in keeping with a Western Christian Democratic party, one of the most striking features of this first manifesto was the limits of its divergence from the core NSF programme, with differences largely being of nuance rather than substance. Thus, for instance, although the NPP envisaged a far larger private sector within a mixed economy, certain key sectors, such as energy and transportation, were still to remain under state control, and privatisation was to be spread over a period of ten years with, significantly, the form of ownership most favoured being worker-joint stock companies. This apparent commitment to a strong degree of worker participation in the management of enterprises was further buttressed by a suggestion, presumably influenced by demands voiced during the revolution, that
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all managerial and administrative posts should be subject to election by the workforce. Furthermore, during the difficult period of the transition a commitment was also given to the provision of a social safety net which would afford full protection to the workforce. As may be expected from its historic roots and its name the party also laid much stress on the peasantry. In the countryside, the policy was again to reverse the legacy of communism through the breaking up of the collective and state farms in favour of individual farmers and peasant associations, but, as with industrial privatisation, this was to be a gradual process spread over three years. Further pledges were also made that resources would be redistributed to the countryside and that agriculture would continue to receive state assistance. These last promises suggest that it was ideological rather than economic imperatives that were central to NPP policy with privatisation being primarily seen as a step towards the recreation of a property owning bourgeoisie, especially in the countryside, because only through the regeneration of the peasantry and the infusion of Christian teachings — the party promised to reintroduce religion into schools — could the moral renewal of Romania be secured by the reassertion of the old pre-communist value system. Finally, in what can best be interpreted as an act of realism, the party, whilst committing itself to the reintegration of Romania into Europe and promising a warm welcome for any investment from the West, gave assurances that it would maintain existing external commitments including the Warsaw Treaty.34

At first sight in their mutual stress on a mixed economy and continued state assistance there appears to be a considerable amount of convergence in the political programmes of the NSF and the NPP, but in reality they were looking at the same problem from entirely opposite viewpoints. For the NPP reforms were the first steps towards the recreation of the pre-communist social structure, but for the NSF, they were the means for building a more prosperous society whilst maintaining broadly the current structure, and overriding all and preventing any possibility of compromise was the ever present shadow of the past. The NPP saw the NSF as being the heirs of communism and as Grigore Brancuși, a seventy-nine-year old nephew of the sculptor and member of the NPP leadership, who had spent thirteen years in jail, baldly stated in an interview with a Western journalist: ‘We want ... compensation for the thousands of political prisoners and justice’.35

The other great political party of Romanian history, the National Liberal Party, had a history and traditions markedly different from the NPP. Firstly, it had been in office for much of Romania’s history as an independent state, breeding an expectation of power and a feeling that it was the natural party of government.
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This belief appears to have often prompted a greater readiness to compromise and participate in governments of various political hues, in an impulse which can most charitably be interpreted as a desire to serve the nation. The most recent and significant example of this practice being the participation by Gheorghe Tătărescu in the post-war communist dominated Groza government. These natural tendencies towards compromise were perhaps reinforced in 1990 by the fact that the party had fared badly in the 1946 elections — elder members of the party can remember Brătianu being ashen faced when he heard the result — and so had possessed no myth of victory to sustain themselves during the long years of communism. During this time the NLP had disappeared as a political entity with many of its members suffering equally as much as those of the NPP, but it never seems to have been formally dissolved and banned, rather it appears to have just faded away giving it overall a more ambiguous relationship with the communist past than the clean-cut experienced by the NPP. All this seems to have combined to give the NLP a slightly less belligerently anti-communist air than the NPP, and, indeed, Radu Câmpeanu in general seems to have favoured the idea that the party should occupy a distinct position in the centre of Romanian politics between the former communists and the hard line and militant language of the peasant party. The NLP’s tradition of alliance building chimed well with the NSF’s desire to build the broadest of coalitions, and shortly after the revolution, a number of members of the party entered the NSF administration, most prominently Mihai Marmeliuc became Minister for Labour and Social Security but also Nicolae Grigorescu held the post of advisor to the Prime Minister and, significantly, Radu Câmpeanu, the NLP leader, was later to be one of the NSF’s nominee for the Executive Bureau of the PCNU.*5 However, by the end of January the NLP as a party alongside the NPP had also moved to form the core of the opposition to the NSF and the inherent contradiction between these two positions continued to dog the party which failed to establish a clear political stance. Thus, in the 1990 election, it failed to establish a formal electoral pact with the NPP preferring instead to rely on a joint communique and a non-aggression pact.

In the first days after the overthrow of Ceaușescu the pace was set by the NPP, but, as January progressed, former members of the NLP also began to reactivate their party. Following two earlier meetings one of which seems to have designated Mihnea Marmeliuc as chairman, a committee of initiative was registered on 6 January 1990 with eleven members and an executive of five. Power was placed in the hands of a group of former ‘Young Liberals’, chief amongst whom was Radu Câmpeanu, who was made General Secretary of the party. Radu Boieran was placed in charge of the resurrected daily Viitorul and Dan Lăzărescu the weekly
Table 4.2 Votes polled in the May 1990 elections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Senate Votes Cast (%)</th>
<th>Seats</th>
<th>Chamber of Deputies Votes Cast (%)</th>
<th>Seats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSF</td>
<td>67.02</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>66.31</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDUR</td>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLP</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPP</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMR(^a)</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUR(^b)</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAPR(^c)</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REP(^d)</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDSP(^e)</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Ecological Movement of Romania  
\(^b\) Alliance for the Unity of the Romanians  
\(^c\) Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania  
\(^d\) Romanian Ecological Party  
\(^e\) Romanian Democratic Socialist Party

_Liberal._ The first programme of the party was broadly similar to that of the NPP with the subtle difference that less emphasis was placed on restoration, so that, for instance, under de-collectivisation land was to pass to those who would work it rather than to past owners. The Liberals also championed the idea of a dual speed privatisation seeking a rapid return of the retail, service and light industrial sectors to private ownership but a slower transition for heavier industry. Already, by the end of January, although it was slightly less prominent than the NPP in the demonstrations on the streets, the NLP was gathering considerable support so that during the elections of May 1990 it was actually to poll nearly three times as many votes as the NPP (table 4.2). However, when compared to the overwhelming figure gained by the NSF at the same election, the votes garnered by the traditional parties are a tiny proportion of the whole and, in order to understand why the NLP failed to make a greater impact in post-communist politics, it is necessary to look at some of the weaknesses which made it in reality rather a hollow structure. Indeed, the first months of post-communism were to be the high point of the NLP's political fortunes and, after repeated schisms, it was virtually wiped off the Romanian political map during the 1992 elections.

The divisions within the party have often been ascribed to personality and, indeed, too often the vanity of old men out of touch with younger generations seems to have been the spur. However, underlying these personality clashes there were a series of deeper more fundamental rifts. Firstly, a division can be traced
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between those who had remained in Romania during the communist period and those who had fled the country and gone into exile, mostly in France. Too much should not be made of this divide and, noticeably in September 1989, when the NLP reconstituted itself in Paris before the fall of Ceaușescu, one of the party elders from Romania, Dan Lăzărescu, had journeyed to France to reestablish contact. Nevertheless, two distinct lines of descent can be traced and those who returned to Romania after December 1989, even if they had earlier served jail sentences under the communists, lacked the moral authority of those who had remained in the country throughout the whole period. This especially applied in the case of Câmpianu, who, although he was the son of a NLP Prefect from Dimbovița and had served many years in jail alongside Coposu, had left for exile in France in 1974. This past, although it conferred on him considerable status within the NLP, also meant that his position was never as absolute or as unchallenged as Coposu’s in the NPP and, when this was allied to his more excitable and contradictory character, it made not only his own position vulnerable but also, given the tendency in Romania for parties to be identified with personalities, it seriously weakened the position of the NLP as a whole.

Secondly, the composition of the NLP leadership tended to be disproportionately dominated by Bucharest intellectuals. A future member who attended the first meeting of the resurrected NLP after the fall of Ceaușescu, which was addressed by Lăzărescu and Enescu, both of whom were over seventy years old, was surprised to find that instead of a meeting expressly concerned with the reactivation of a political party the gathering resembled more a political lecture, even containing wild and patently unfounded allegations that the NLP had conspired in the downfall of Ceaușescu. With the return of the exiles from abroad the party established a more structured organisation and serious face but, in reality, it remained little more than a club with only a small active membership and many of those who did join did so not out of any ideological conviction but because of historic links with the party, if not on their own part, then on the part of their parents. Indeed, it might be said that for some membership was almost a means of expunging the past and honouring the memory of their forebears. The traditional image of the NLP as a somewhat aloof party of the higher intellectuals and former aristocracy fitted badly with the needs of a Romanian society, which had been transformed by over forty years of socialist homogenisation. The result was a party with plenty of potential leaders but few technicians and foot-soldiers giving it only a limited local organisation, although the party was probably stronger than the NPP in Bucharest and in certain provincial towns. The preponderance of intellectuals did, in general, make the NLP less inclined to take monolithic positions
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and fostered an unwillingness to accept uncritical beliefs, but any benefits which may have arisen from this tradition of debate were completely obliterated by the resultant lack of predictability and frequent contradictions in policy which totally undermined electoral support.

Thirdly, the great families of the NLP have historically constituted the political, and, frequently, the actual, aristocracy of Romania. In 1990 the scions of these dynasties once more came to the fore reactivating the old political class. Each of these factions sought representation on the party's committees and in its search to accommodate the past — particularly the divide between the Brătianu and the Tătărescu liberals — the NLP was sometimes in danger of ignoring the present. Indeed, matters were further complicated by the fact that several laid claim to the Brătianu name.

Fourthly, unlike the NPP, by its very name the NLP laid claim to one of the chief ideological alternatives available in post-Ceaușescu Romania. Indeed, since 1989 several parties have appeared with the word liberal in their name including the Brătianu Liberal Union and the Social Liberal Party, founded by Nicolae Cervin, a more left leaning group which eventually merged with the NLP. In the prevailing atmosphere of ideological uncertainty in which no group seemed to offer a clear vision of the future, the appellation 'liberal' had a certain talismanic quality, drawing supporters including a number with no prior links to the party. The arrival of these often younger men led to a certain amount of generational conflict but this was underscored by a more serious ideological rift. For beyond a common belief in individualism and property rights two distinct interpretations of liberal doctrine could be found within the party. One generally espoused by older members looked back to the traditions of the party and the nineteenth century model of Ion Brătianu, which stressed state sponsored modernisation from above. In this largely paternalistic vision, which placed limited expectations on a populace still thought of as being essentially peasants, the need for authoritative leadership was accentuated and some of the adherents of what may be considered the Brătianu line have even expressed a sneaking regard for Iliescu, who might be seen as embodying this virtue. Competing with this world-view was another liberalism, espoused by the younger generation such as Dinu Patriciu, grounded in the historic free market liberalism of Western Europe as interpreted during the 1980s by Margaret Thatcher amongst others. In their view the application of a free market model with large scale privatisation would be the catalyst for the transformation of Romanian society. In January 1990 the full implication of these weaknesses, which were eventually to divide the party along multiple lines of fracture, were not yet apparent and the NLP retained the semblance of a symbolic
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unity. Nevertheless, the fundamental contradictions existed within its make-up and, in hindsight, they can be seen as being instrumental in blunting its message, as the baggage of the past prevented it from presenting a clear political vision.

The third of the traditional parties, the Romanian Social Democratic Party, has historically played a relatively minor role in a country, which until the advent of communism, had a limited industrial base and a largely non-unionised workforce. After the Second World War, the left-leaning RSDP was placed in a more ambiguous position vis-à-vis the RCP than the other traditional parties with a large segment of the party joining the Communists in the National Democratic Front, before eventually merging with the RCP in May 1946. However, an important remnant under the most distinguished RSDP leader, C. Titel Petrescu, remained outside the Communist dominated bloc and, instead, aligned themselves with the NLP and NPP, and it was as heirs to this heritage that some veteran members of the party gathered in Bucharest, after the fall of Ceauşescu, to resurrect the RSDP. Adrian Dimitru, a former RSDP minister, was declared honorary president, Sergiu Cunescu active president and Mircea Stănescu and Mira Moscovici secretaries.

All the newly formed or reactivated political parties to a certain extent faced similar problems. Whatever the figures they chose to announce, the general consensus is that they lacked mass memberships and particularly dedicated party activists, with the consequent absence of an established party organisation seriously hampering attempts to mobilise their potential electorate, especially outside the urban centres. These weaknesses were compounded by a shortage of money — the NSF passed a law forbidding the foreign financing of parties which appears to have been specifically aimed at the wealthy exiles of the NPP and NLP — and this meant a corresponding lack of offices, typewriters, photocopiers and election literature. This lack of funding gave rise to charges from the traditional parties that they were unable to adequately present themselves to the county but in this matter, any lack of cash was more than compounded by their lack of political experience.57

Since the emphasis in this study has been on the transformation of Romania’s political institutions during the revolution, the stress in considering the various political groupings that arose has been centred on the ruling NSF and its most intractable opponents, the traditional parties. This is not to say that there were not other important political developments within Romania at this time, particularly significant being the growing tension in Transylvania, which eventually in March 1990 boiled over into the Tîrgu Mureş riots. However, since it can be plausibly argued that these only minimally impinged on the overall dynamic of the revolution
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in the county as a whole at this time, they and the formation of important political groupings such as the HDUR and Vatra Romaneasca have not been considered in this study. The same may also be said of the two ecological groupings, the Ecological Movement of Romania and the Romanian Ecological Party (which can rather simplistically be represented as being respectively pro and anti-Front). Their existence was an important acknowledgement of the return to political diversity but their direct impact on events limited.

The roots of conflict: January in Bucharest

Peace seems to have more or less descended on the city of Bucharest by the end of December, although there were reports of isolated outbreaks of shooting well into the new year. Immediately after the fighting had died down, the crowds on the streets thinned markedly as the onset of much colder weather seems to have been sufficient to curb the enthusiasm of all but the most ardent of revolutionaries. There may still have been occasional sporadic protests, but the first major demonstrations of the new year did not take place until 7 January. On that day, meetings of students took place in a number of cities including Bucharest, Timișoara, Galați and Băcău and the NPP youth section held a demonstration in the centre of the capital. Immediately after the violence had ceased, the old communist student organisations seem to have made some attempt to reorganise themselves under new names, but they had been quickly passed over in favour of new bodies including the Students' League and the Students' Union, which was also known as the Free Trade Union of Students. Of the two the League was reported as being the more radical, although rather than being an overtly political grouping, it appears to have considered itself akin to a trade union with individual members being free to decide their own political affiliations. The concrete demands voiced at these student meetings were largely concerned with the educational system, as an eleven point programme was presented calling for the granting of autonomy to all academic institutions, student representation on bodies at all levels, awards and posts to be granted on the basis of merit and for an end to compulsory job assignment after graduation. The latter and some of the other demands, such as a call for the ending or reduction of compulsory military service, carried considerable political ramifications and underlying the meeting there was a more bitter note, because, although they felt empowered by the revolution, the students considered themselves to have been largely passed over by the new leadership and openly distrusted their 'representatives' co-opted onto the Front Council. Marian Munteanu was reported as saying that 'All the students in the country agree with the fronts' program but disagree with those students serving on the front and how they were
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chosen. These suspicions hardened, when one of these, Marian Mierlă, declared that in fact they were little more than 'marionettes' and that their participation in the discussions had no more relevance than a 'piece of furniture'. As calls were made for the free election of new representatives for the CNSF, a more radical note entered the gathering with speakers voicing the fear that the NSF had hijacked the revolution and was monopolising power 'like another form of communist party' adding 'We are afraid of their socialism with a human face. We don't want any kind of socialism' and 'Communists must go. We don't know who should replace them but they must go', and, ominously, the NSF was warned by students from Timișoara that, if it did not postpone examinations, they would repeat the revolution.

The growing tension was eventually to come to a head a few days later, on 12 January, on what had been officially declared a Day of National Mourning for the victims of the revolution. After thousands had thronged the churches and streets of Bucharest paying homage to the fallen, a rowdy crowd gathered outside the Front headquarters in the former Foreign Ministry building overlooking the huge open expanse of Piața Victoriei. The size of the crowd seems to have ebbed and flowed as the day progressed, making it difficult to gauge its strength — official figures put the number at no more than 1,000, whilst Western journalists speak of 7–10,000. Amongst those present, were many who had journeyed from towns the length and breadth of Romania in the hope of airing their grievances directly to the leaders of the Front, and, throughout the day, groups of these petitioners continued to enter the building for talks, as did, at one stage, a delegation from the traditional parties.

Outside in the square, as the day passed, the waiting throng became more restive and a tank posted to guard the building was transformed into an impromptu rostrum with members of the crowd scrambling on top to harangue the assembled mass. The demands they voiced, although they were often confused and inarticulate, seem to have encapsulated many of the wider fears and doubts that beset the country with three main areas of concern being prominent. Firstly, they wanted a fuller and more accurate and honest picture of the revolution, which was to include the publication of official casualty figures and detailed information about the terrorists, including the exact numbers held in detention and the setting of a date for their public trial. Secondly, further clarification was demanded over the exact nature of the relationship between the new Front Councils and the former Communist Party, both at an institutional level and as regards the political orientation of individual members. Unsatisfied by previous assurances, the crowd brayed for the legal dissolution of the RCP and the distribution of its
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assets amongst the other political parties. Thirdly, showing the degree to which
the Front had already become compromised in the eyes of some sections of the
population, there were calls for the freedom of the forthcoming elections to be
guaranteed by the presence of impartial UN observers.

Seeking a response to these demands, the crowd chanted for the leaders of
the Front to come and answer their grievances in person, and, around 17.30, they
were eventually rewarded by the appearance of the Prime Minister, Petre Roman.
Under constant barracking Roman parried questions relating to the democratic
credentials of the Front, but reassured the crowd that the NSF was a transitional
body, which would only hold power until the elections. Pressed by persistent
questioning about the future of the Communist Party he apparently pledged that
the RCP — which he described as a manifestation of the Ceauşescu dictatorship
— would be abolished by law. Upon his withdrawal Roman was replaced shortly
afterwards by Dumitru Mazilu who, amidst chaotic scenes in which he could barely
make himself heard, reassured those assembled that the Communist Party was
outside the bounds of legal election, continuing in a fashion bound to curry favour
amongst the protesters: ‘Fellow citizens, I beg you together with us, do all you can
and see to it that the elections are truly free, honest and not falsified by anybody.’
Then, stepping beyond the bounds of any pledges made then or afterwards, he
further promised that the funds of the Communist Party would be redistributed
equally amongst other parties, and that the soon to be drafted constitution would
be subject to public scrutiny.42

Despite Mazilu’s promises the crowd remained restless with its members bick­
ering amongst themselves and openly unhappy because Iliescu had still not ap­
peared. At last, shortly before 19.00, the President of the CNSF himself emerged
and amongst boos and constant interruptions began to speak. At first, he tried to
defuse the situation by reiterating that the Front was only a temporary structure
and that its sole political task was the organisation of elections. Then, directly
addressing the second demand of the protesters, he promised that all those accused
of crimes during the revolution would face public trial on television, but this still
seems to have left unsatisfied the more vocal of the crowd and the meeting rapidly
degenerated into something of an interrogation with Iliescu fending off a number of
hostile questions relating to his past and current political beliefs. At one point, in
a question prefiguring the later formation of the PCNU and indicating that even at
this early stage widening political representation was under consideration, he was
specifically asked that each party should have three representatives in the Front
and replied that he had ‘nothing against this’. Iliescu, then, withdrew inside to
open negotiations with a delegation drawn from the ranks of the protesters, with
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the proceedings being relayed to the waiting crowd outside by loudspeaker, and at 21.45 the members of the leadership emerged for a second time to announce to the waiting throng, who in the biting night air had dwindled to a few thousand in number, that as a result of their deliberations a number of decrees would be issued to outlaw the RCP, hold a national referendum on the reintroduction of the death penalty and to establish a national commission to resolve all complaints and requests from citizens of the country who had suffered under the dictatorship.\(^{43}\)

This declaration seems to have more or less satisfied the crowd and brought the long days proceedings to a close, although the negotiations between the two delegations seem to have continued for a while longer, and, in an ominous pointer to the future, one report speaks of large numbers of ‘students’ and workers flocking to the square, as midnight approached, to stage a counter demonstration in support of the Front.\(^{44}\)

This demonstration of 12 January 1990 offered clear confirmation of several important trends in the development of the revolution. Firstly, it fully revealed the weakness of the Front. Before the whole nation watching excerpts from the proceedings live on television, the leaders of the NSF had apparently capitulated to the demands of a small number of rowdy demonstrators, and the fact that this had been able to occur so easily without intervention from any of the security forces underlined to the watching public the isolation of the new regime. It seems that the experience of the revolution had so traumatised the various branches of the security forces that none felt able or willing to intervene in the political struggle. Having finally come on the side of ‘the people’ during the revolution, the army seems to have been loath to jeopardise its newly exalted status — it gained a 97% approval rating in an opinion poll of the time — by springing to the defence of an apparently unpopular and visibly weak political regime, even if the resources could have been mustered for such a task, which seems unlikely, given the strains present within its ranks, which were soon to break to the fore in a series of mutinous demonstrations by military personnel in the streets of Bucharest calling for reform of the armed forces.\(^{45}\)

Likewise, the militia was totally demoralised and remained under such a cloud of suspicion, that, throughout this period, it appears to have been unable to conduct all but the simplest policing duties, and the open deployment of any units of the Securitate, now absorbed into the army, even if it were feasible, given the extensive restructuring then taking place and persisting doubts as to the loyalty of some units, would have been tantamount to political suicide on the part of the new leaders.
After the 12 January demonstration Brucan gave an explicit warning, 'We were taken by surprise then..., we will no longer be taken by surprise I can assure you', and so, apparently, unable to turn to the regular security forces for support the new regime, in the long tradition of Romanian communism and directly following in the footsteps of Ceauşescu, began to mobilise other forces in its defence. Perhaps already prefigured in the reported counter-demonstration during the night of 12 January, these were to be largely crudely armed workers, especially miners, initially mobilised through the NSF factory councils. Growing evidence also suggests that some branches of the Securitate were secretly reactivated at this time in support of the new regime. However, by the same token, the apparent reluctance of the security forces to intervene to keep public order, and the ease with which concessions seem to have been extracted from the Front, prompted many within the opposition to draw the conclusion that a policy of direct confrontation on the streets might pay ample political dividends. These two contrasting lessons drawn from the incident set the stage for six months of increasingly bloody confrontations on the streets of Romania, which only ended with the bloody rampage of the miners through Bucharest in June 1990.

The live television broadcast of the scenes from Piaţa Victoriei closed with the words: 'I think we will all agree that we have all regretfully noted that we still do not know what to do with this freedom, won with the blood of all those who were killed only a few weeks ago'. In voicing these sentiments of disappointment the television commentary probably fairly accurately reflected the general mood of the country, especially, outside the capital. The ugly scenes from Bucharest appear to have heightened distrust in the new political process and merely served to confirm many in their support of the established authorities. Certainly, the Front's propagandists seem to have leapt at the opportunity to extract maximum benefit from the incident, and the next day the newspaper Adevărul carried a large number of telephone messages, all from supposedly 'concerned citizens', voicing their disgust at the scenes from the square and their unwavering support for the NSF — the tone best being caught in the contribution from the improbably named Speranţa Spiloaca, a medical assistant from Galaţi: 'I have been without a father since the age of four. I have never felt parental warmth. I consider Mr Iliescu to be my father. His smile inspires belief. We must not harm him. He is a good man'.

The capricious manner in which the Front's leaders had capitulated to the demands of the crowds also drew criticism from within the NSF with Brucan in stating that it would be a practical impossibility to organise a referendum before the planned date, describing the whole affair as a 'monumental mistake'. This
brought a harsh reprimand from Adrian Sirbu, who after objecting to such a public airing of feelings without authorisation continued 'Brucan is a senile old man who got carried away'. However, it may be that Brucan's angry comment had deeper roots, because during the demonstration Roman is popularly supposed to have made a gesture towards supporting demands by the crowd that he be removed from the NSF, and, generally, the incident does seem to have publicly aired some of the tensions simmering within the Front. In particular, Mazilu is widely believed to have used the occasion to make an unsuccessful attempt to unseat Iliescu as leader. According to Iliescu, the First Vice-President had originally been sent to address the crowd because he knew some of those present and, presumably, it was these same supporters, who later, whilst Iliescu was speaking, had begun to loudly chant Mazilu's name and demand that he head the interim administration. Mazilu was afterwards to publicly recant and to admit that he had been asked to take sides and that, having made the 'wrong' decision in a 'facile manner', he had repeated over the microphone some of the slogans chanted by the crowd — presumably against Iliescu. In fact, the demonstration was to prove to be Mazilu's nemesis, because during the tumult a woman in the crowd had voiced allegations that he had previously been a member of the Securitate, and the next morning this was taken up by România Liberă, which carried a front page article demanding his immediate resignation, as he had 'prepared and led a serious attempt at the policy of national consensus' and 'used as personal political capital the day of national mourning trying to take over power' The article contained a detailed curriculum vitae of Mazilu's career and on an inside page there appeared — in fine communist fashion — a clutch of letters and telegrams from 'concerned citizens', all of whom seem to have a remarkably similar knowledge of his past. Similar messages also appeared in Adevărul and over the coming weeks România Liberă was to keep up the pressure with a string of articles denouncing Mazilu, until he was eventually forced to resign on 26 January.

The next day, the leaders of the Front began the tricky process of extracting themselves from the pledges of the previous night. Firstly, they announced that the measure to outlaw the RCP would also be subject to a referendum on the 28 January, at the same time as the proposed vote on the death penalty, and then later in the same evening Iliescu, Roman and Mazilu appeared on TV for a lengthy exercise in damage limitation. Repeatedly stressing the unity of the Front, they sought to offer reassurances to the nation over the most contentious issues of trials, enterprise councils and the freedom of the forthcoming elections and, then, engaging in self-criticism, they chided themselves for yielding to the pressure of a small minority and pledged they would draw heart from the large number of
messages, telephone calls and letters they had received urging them to stand firm against such unrepresentative groups. Finally, four days later, on 17 January, the retreat was completed, when the CNSF met and annulled the decrees by 108 votes to nil, with 4 abstentions, calling them an 'unprincipled capitulation to pressure that ran counter to democratic principles'. At the time, added pressure to reverse the decision over the Communist Party was widely reported by diplomatic sources to have come from the USSR and some support for this interpretation comes from an interview with Brucan in Adevărul, in which he attacks the move as undemocratic adding that there were communist parties in all neighbouring countries and that by 'taking such a measure they were offending those parties and posing them problems'.

Participation in the elections

On 23 January 1990 after a lengthy debate the CNSF formally decided by 128 votes to eight, with five abstentions, to participate in the forthcoming elections in all but name as a political party. At the same time by 139 votes to nil, with two abstentions, it was decided to postpone the elections until 10 May, a fraction of the delay requested by the opposition, but probably sufficient to allow the Front to put in place the rudiments of a national organisation. Finally, perhaps, as something of a sop to the opposition, in a bid to gain international credibility, the CNSF also voted to accept UN observers at the polls by 135 votes to four, with two abstentions.

This decision of the Front to participate in the elections was the keystone around which the post-communist history of Romania has been built. As has already been stressed, under Consensus from the outset the CNSF on the basis of legitimisation gained from the revolution seems to have been fully determined to play a permanent and active role as a political umbrella body. The abandonment of the political project of Consensus and the tacit acceptance of a Western pluralist model necessarily brought the end of this idea, and, instead, the CNSF became a temporary body awaiting replacement by a parliament, legitimised through popular elections, which the NSF as a broader organisation would contest. However, Iliescu and the other leaders of the Front seem to have done little to clarify this crucial distinction between the two, and, instead, as they came under increasing attack, the tendency grew for them to deflect criticisms by stressing the transitional nature of Front, by which they implied the CNSF, without making clear the long-term intentions of the NSF. This gave the impression in some quarters that the Front, as an entity, was about to withdraw from the political arena, and, when
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this was revealed not to be the case, it brought charges of duplicity against the new leaders and a perceptible rise in the political temperature.

The decision of the Front to stand in the elections was broadly welcomed by the traditional parties, presumably because it clarified the political landscape and provided an issue around which they could unify, but they qualified their acceptance by demanding that the coming electoral contest must take place on a level playing field. To this end, they argued that the Front had to renounce the levers of power, giving up its acquired assets and replacing the current administration with a more neutral body, drawn from all the political groupings, the youths, who had fought on the streets, and various other ‘prestigious personalities’, who had acquitted themselves in the struggle against the ‘communist dictatorship’. They also wanted guarantees of equal media coverage for all parties, especially, on the TV and radio, and curbs placed on the activities of local Front Councils in enterprises and institutions. Launching the first blows of what was to be a long and bitter election campaign, the traditional parties played upon the weaknesses of the NSF by contrasting the ambiguous careers of many of the members of the new regime and their latter-day conversion from communism with the genuine suffering of their own leaders. An attempt was also made to wrest the symbol of the revolution from the Front by exploiting to the full growing doubts about the true nature of the events of December. Thus, in a communique, the traditional parties conspicuously avoided the word ‘revolution’ in preference to the more neutral term ‘anti-communist insurrection’, directly challenging the Front’s claim to be the very embodiment of the revolution by stressing that victory belonged to the whole people and that ‘Nobody can appropriate it in order to claim legitimacy or monopolise political power’.57

In order to achieve their aims, the opposition began to harness the radicalism of the streets, and in Bucharest and elsewhere there now followed a wave of protests which brought an immediate response from the authorities in the shape of a much tighter ruling on public demonstrations.58 On 24 January hundreds were reported to be marching on the Front headquarters in Piaţa Victoriei with a dozen representatives of the crowd being allowed to enter the building to air their grievances.59 Next day, amidst further protests the NPP, NLP and RSDP announced that they are forming a ‘resistance front’ against the NSF and called for massive demonstrations on 28 January 1990 against the Front’s decision to run in the elections.60 The stakes the opposition parties were playing for were obviously high with one member of the NPP even being quoted as saying that they could mount a second revolution.61 As the tension mounted, on the day before the proposed demonstration, 27 January, after the first all party round-table talks
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on a new electoral law, a series of meetings were held between the NSF and the traditional parties, at first, separately and, then, jointly, in a last ditched attempt to thrash out a compromise and to try and avoid confrontation. Any protest would technically be illegal, since it would not conform to the stipulations of the new law on meetings, but the NSF appear to have accepted that de facto a demonstration would occur and to have made efforts to reroute it from the seat of government in Piața Victoriei to Piața Universității.62

The demonstrations of 28 and 29 January 1990

As the morning of 28 January 1990 dawned, hours before the planned demonstration, crowds began to gather outside the headquarters of the traditional parties remaining there until shortly before midday, when they began to march towards Piața Victoriei. Some reports speak of them numbering as many as 40,000, whilst others give a more conservative figure of 15,000. The official tally was a miserly 8,000. Meanwhile, outside the Town Hall of Sector 1 on Banu Manta in another area of the city, a much smaller crowd of mostly workers had gathered to hear a number of demagogic speeches in favour of the Front.63 As the supporters of the traditional parties chanting 'Down with Communism!', 'Down with Iliescu!' poured into Piața Victoriei, some of the members of this smaller counter-demonstration also seem to have moved to the fringes of the square, but they were so heavily outnumbered, that few seems to have noticed them and the demonstration began peacefully, if rather noisily. At one end of the square the government building was cordoned off by a large contingent of troops, supported by a number of armoured vehicles with their machine-guns symbolically turned skyward to reassure the gathering throng that they would not be used in anger. As the crowd began to assemble, shortly after 13.00, a delegation from the three traditional parties headed by Coposu, Cămpeanu and Cunescu entered the Front headquarters to begin talks with a NSF team headed by Iliescu, Roman and Ionescu, but, as time began to pass and they failed to emerge again, tension began to rise and around 16.20 on the right of the square a group of NPP supporters seem to have broken the guarding security cordon of soldiers and made as if to rush the government building. Scuffles broke out, and whilst the crowd was pushed back in an attempt to bring order to the proceedings, some representatives of the opposition climbed onto a tank and began to address the gathering. Shortly afterwards, members of both the Front and the traditional parties appeared on a balcony to announce the commencement of detailed negotiations between the two sides but, despite this apparently successful conclusion to the day's events, it seems that some within the
NSF had decided that the time was ripe for the regime to mount a telling counterblow against its opponents, because with both the radio and television carrying appeals for people to rally to the Front’s support, it was announced that 200,000 workers were approaching the square to mount a pro-Front demonstration. The workers seem to have been told that ‘foreign elements’ and ‘bands of hooligans’ were trying to destroy the Front and destabilise Romania. Chanting slogans such as ‘We are with the Front!’, ‘The Front is with us!’, and ‘We are the people!’ they roughly pushed and shoved the opposition demonstrators to the further limits of the square, so that by the time Iliescu appeared on the balcony in the early evening, the supporters of the Front were in the ascendant and he was warmly received by the crowd. As the night progressed the scenes around the square seem to have become uglier as opposition demonstrators were seen fleeing with ‘bruised limbs and bleeding faces’ and Western journalist began to report that Bucharest had passed under mob rule.

The next morning, 29 January 1990, found the streets under the control of the partisans of the Front, as thousands of workers were bussed into Bucharest from as far afield as Iaşi, Fălticeni, Constanţa, Medgidia, Giurgiu, Năvodari, Călăraşi, Piteşti, Ploieşti and Alba. In Piaţa Victoriei large crowds chanting ‘We are with the Front!’ and ‘They provoked, we won!’ were addressed by the leaders of the NSF, including Roman and Iliescu. Others gathered outside the offices of the traditional parties shouting hostile slogans before storming the NLP building, and at the NPP offices only the arrival of Petre Roman, who had been summoned by telephone, with a detachment of soldiers secured the safety of Coposu, who was escorted away in an armoured car. Amongst the ranks of the protesters outside the NPP building that afternoon, there seems to have been some miners and, later that evening, 5,000 more were reported as arriving in the capital fresh from their shifts at the coalface. Following three hours of talks with Roman and Iliescu, they, eventually, left for home but not before they had made the chilling promise that, if the Front was ever to be threatened again, they would descend in their thousands on the capital in its defence.

Following hard on the heels of the disturbances of 12 January, the demonstrations of 28 and 29 January can be seen as a turning point of the revolution, for, even if they were not the catalysts of the change, alongside the formation of the PCNU, they symbolically marked both the conclusion of one phase of the process and the beginning of another. Henceforth, the political scene in Romania was to remain deeply polarised and the bloody pro-Front counter-demonstrations were merely a foretaste of more violent conflicts to follow, as the opposing sides battled for political supremacy. They also brought a sharp change in international
perceptions of the regime as following heavy criticisms from the United States and Sweden, amongst others, the NSF leaders were transformed from dashing heros of the revolution into malevolent relics of the communist past. However, at the same time, in a pattern which was to become familiar during the coming months, violence was also to be the immediate precursor to compromise, since, within a matter of a few days after the strife, the NSF announced the official dissolution of the CNSF and its replacement by the all party PCNU.

The formation of the Provisional Council of National Unity

From the beginning of their negotiations with the NSF the principal demand of the traditional parties seems to have been representation in the new governing bodies and now, following the demonstrations, on the 1 February 1990 at a meeting between representatives of the Front and twenty-eight political parties it was finally announced that a new supreme body, the Provisional Council of National Unity, was to be established with full legislative powers and including representatives from all registered political groupings.

Although this declaration marked the formal acceptance by all parties that the long rumoured PCNU would be established, there still remained some confusion as to the size and structure of the new body. As might be expected, given its dominant position within the revolution, half the members of the new council were to be nominated by the CNSF, whilst the other half were to come from the various political parties with each grouping, irrespective of its strength or standing, allowed three representatives. Nine organisations, representing national minorities, were also each allowed to nominate a member. Whilst the basic fifty-fifty division seems to have been readily conceded by the opposition parties, the main bone of contention was over the number of political parties that would be allowed to nominate representatives. On the one hand, the traditional parties wanted to restrict the number of parties to the twenty-eight that had participated in the 1 February negotiations, whilst the Front, on the other hand, argued that the Council should have a more flexible structure, allowing for the inclusion of any political groupings newly established. This position may in part have been shaped by the fact that the Front itself was not officially registered as a political grouping until 6 February, when it also claimed three seats amongst the party representatives. Eventually, the argument was decided in favour of the Front and the number of political parties subsequently admitted into the PCNU were thirty-seven together with the Association of Former Political Prisoners (table 4.3). The rapidity with which many of these parties were formed, once the foundation of the PCNU became widely mooted, led members of the opposition parties to charge
A marked lack of consensus

Table 4.3 Political groupings participating in the PCNU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Name</th>
<th>10 May Elections</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counties contested</td>
<td>Seats gained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deputies</td>
<td>Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registered before 19 January</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Peasant Party – C D.</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Movement of Romania</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Democratic–Socialist Party</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Liberal Party</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic–Christian Union</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Cluj</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Romania</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Democratic Party</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Ecological Party</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Union Party of Romania</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Party</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Social–Democratic Party</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National–Democratic Party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Party (of liberty) of Romania</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registered after 19 January</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological Humanist Party</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Democratic Party of Moldavia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist–Liberal Partya</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Peasant Party</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Democratic Party</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Registered after 23 January</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Social Democratic Christian Party</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Agrarian Party of Romania</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Republican Party</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free Democratic Party of the Youth</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic Party of Work</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Salvation Front</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional Democratic Party of Romania</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist Party of Justice (Independent)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Party</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian Independent Party</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice Party, Free–Democrat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Party</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Party of Liberty and Democracy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Party</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Democratic Party</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Fraternal Trade Union of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers and Peasants of Romania</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian Democratic Front</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Former Political Prisoners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Merged with the NLP before the election.
A marked lack of consensus

that a number of ‘front’ parties had been deliberately established by the Front in order to assure its control over the new body. Given the close relations several of these new groupings subsequently developed with the Front and the fact that a suspiciously large number failed to field candidates at the coming election, there may be a grain of truth in these allegations. If so, it seems possible, that the Front adopted the strategy with the aim of not only creating a number of reliable satellite allies but also of maximising the size of the CNSF delegation under the prevailing ‘fifty-fifty rule’. This was necessary because the Front delegation was neither a homogeneous block nor entirely dominated by those who can be considered adherents of the Iliescu line, since it also included a number of figures from what may be considered the ‘liberal’ wing of the CNSF — Gabriel Andreescu, Ion Caramitru, Mariana Celac, Mircea Dinescu, Dan Deşliu, Dan Petrescu and Andrei Pleşu amongst others. The presence of the forty-one presidents of the county PCNU within the CNSF delegation also seems to have been considered mandatory and, as these ranged from a former Ceauşescu minister to inexperienced young technocrats, it seems probable that in most cases they remained an unknown quantity — indeed, it is striking how few were seen as worthy of being nominated for a parliamentary seat at the May 1990 elections (table 4.6). It, therefore, seems likely that the Iliescu group in pushing for the admittance of as many parties as possible was trying to boost the size of the CNSF delegation in the PCNU, sufficiently to allow for the widening of its own key support faction to include several members of the ‘Trocadero Group’ — Severin, Paşcu and Secărescu — as well as a number of representatives from large industrial combines so as to cement their alliance with the industrial workforce.

The first meeting of the PCNU, mainly devoted to procedural matters, was held on 9 February. The new body of 253 members had an Executive Bureau of twenty–one, which was to be responsible for day-to-day decision making when the council was not in session. In line with the main council, the Executive Bureau was also chosen on a fifty–fifty basis with half being nominated by the CNSF and the rest being selected through an election in which each party, including the NSF, was allowed to nominate up to ten candidates, those securing the greatest number of votes being duly elected (table 4.3). Like its predecessor the CNSF, the PCNU was also supported by a number of specialist commissions. Broadly these were the same as before, although a number were subdivided and two new commissions added to consider the abuses of the communist regime. The replacement of the CNSF by the PCNU was mirrored at county and local levels by similar transformations, as representatives of the other political parties were introduced into the
Table 4.4 Composition of the Executive Bureau of the PCNU.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Political Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Ion Iliescu (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Presidents</td>
<td>Căzimír Ionescu (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ion Caramitru (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Károly Király (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radu Câmpeanu (NLP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ion Mânzatu (Republican Party)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Members</td>
<td>Corneliu Mănescu (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dan Haulica (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radu Nicolae (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mircea Dinescu (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alexandru Birlădeanu (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gheorghe Manole (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nicolae Dumitru (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Toma George Maiorescu (EMR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ion Diaconescu (NPP)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Serghei Meszaros</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Virgil Andrei Văţa (Democratic Party of Cluj)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Radu Ciuceanu (Association of Former Political Detainees)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constantin Guriă (Ecologist Humanist Party)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Iaño Ş Vincze (Independent Hungarian Party)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Dan Mărtian (NSF)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

territorial bodies, supposedly in the same proportions as at the national level. Although it seems likely this did occur within the county councils, and in many of the larger towns, at the lowest level, where representatives of other political parties may not have been so easily found, it seems probable that in a large number of localities the old councils simply recast themselves once again, this time in the guise of the local PCNU.

Through the creation of the various PCNU Romania had at last gained a proto-parliament which reflected most of the political currents present in the country and, symbolically, the new body met not in the Front headquarters but in the old parliament building in central Bucharest. The wider foundation of the new body conferred upon it greater legitimacy and it was to remain effectively unchallenged until replaced by an elected parliament. However, this first step towards parliamentary democracy was not without its problems, because the lack of a parliamentary culture and the inexperience of most of the new politicians made the PCNU both at a national and a local level notably rowdy and they frequently degenerated into a chaotic shambles, as the various factions traded mutual accusations. As Iliescu noted, December might have brought momentary genuine national consensus but January brought differentiation and acute political confrontation.75
A marked lack of consensus

Tactically, although the formation of the PCNU gave the traditional political parties and other groups their first taste of power, it was probably most beneficial to the NSF, which still retained effective control of the political mechanism, whilst at the same time distancing itself from the deteriorating economic situation and, thus, preserving its electoral appeal.

This narrative of events has so far focused almost exclusively on the demonstrations which shook Bucharest during the first weeks after the fall of communism, but, whilst the pressure exerted by the opposition was an important determinant in spurring the NSF to replace the CNSF with the PCNU, it is doubtful if this alone was sufficient to force the change and a number of other factors should also be borne in mind. Firstly, the revolution had pushed Romania firmly into the spotlight of world scrutiny, and, after years of diplomatic isolation, the first month after the fall of Ceaușescu was to see a steady stream of Western visitors to Bucharest, including such senior figures as the German and French Foreign Ministers, Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Roland Dumas, as well as Frans Andriessen, the European Community Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, and William Waldegrave, British Minister of State at the Foreign Office. The presence of so many foreign dignitaries bolstered the domestic standing of the NSF and gave it a useful seal of international respectability. However, within their discussions with the Front’s leaders it might be presumed that these visiting statesmen were explicit as to the political system Western Europe expected to see put in place in Romania and the steps that would have to be taken if the country was to fully return to the European fold and establish a sound trading position with the European Community. Amongst the foremost of these expectations was that Romania would establish a form of democracy conforming to a recognisably Western model, and, as a step towards this, voices seem to have been raised in support of the opposition parties being given a greater role. During his two day visit, in the middle of January, Waldegrave was reported as expressing the opinion that talks with the opposition parties were ‘...the absolutely essential next step’ and, as the catastrophic state of the Romanian economy became more apparent, this pressure to accord to Western expectations was to further intensify, as it became clear that substantial foreign credits would be required to rebuild the country’s shattered economic base. Secondly, it seems likely that the NSF was influenced by events in the neighbouring Soviet Union, since, at the same time as the Front was establishing the PCNU, Gorbachev also launched a series of reforms aimed at breaking the monopoly of the Communist Party’s hold on power and allowing other political groupings greater voice — ideas which were noticeably couched in terms of consensus. Although no
direct causal link between the two is necessarily suggested, it seems likely that the acceleration of the reform process within the Soviet Union increased the latitude available to the NSF, as they also constructed new structures in Romania.

Thirdly, as has previously been suggested, by the end of the first week of January, the political project of Consensus had already been abandoned, and in place of the dream of single party pluralism, the most obvious alternative form of political organisation was some form of multi-party system. Thus, from the middle of January, the Front seems to have accepted that it would have to participate in a competitive political arena and that, before then, it would have to enter into some form of power sharing agreement with the other political parties. Such a shift required considerable changes in political strategy, so grafted on to the old themes of the NSF being the embodiment of the revolution and the saviour of the nation through its defeat of the terrorists, there was a new stress on the Front being the only practical alternative to chaos, anarchy and a return to dictatorship, with a concomitant warning that the traditional parties, greedy for power, would put the gains of the revolution at risk. It was stressed that the Front's participation in the elections was not only justified but a veritable moral obligation, since only through the long-term vision of renewal, which was its programme, could the best interests of the nation be assured. However, to secure its position at the helm the Front had to both identify its natural electoral base and develop a clear strategy to mobilise this constituency in its support, and so, as January progressed, the NSF leaders began increasingly to focus their attention towards the industrial workforce and the technical intelligentsia, having apparently given up on the urban intellectuals and on the peasants, who they seem to have initially mistakenly abandoned to the NPP. Thus, in the communique which announced its participation in the elections, Iliescu especially emphasised that the decision had been made only after talks with '...numerous workers,... with miners in the Jiu Valley, in Maramureș, with workers in large works in the capital, with representatives of local organisations of the Front, of free trade unions, of youth organisations as well as of some parties that have adhered to the Front's platform,...' and now, as January turned to February, the leader of the Front made the first of several visits to factories to speak directly to the assembled workers. With the ending of the need to cater to the eclectic tastes of the intellectuals, the leaders of the Front, perhaps naturally, turned to the tried and trusted methods of the past to mobilise the workforce and began to increasingly resort to the language and slogans of the Ceaușescu era. At the simplest level, this involved little more than reinforcing crude stereotypes from the communist past and playing on the fear of change with often vicious caricatures of the traditional parties. At the Front meeting of 28 January, one
speaker, after declaring that the leaders of the Traditional parties had done great
damage to the country in the past, accused them of being only interested in grasp­
ing power for its own sake, whilst another raised the traditional spectre of foreign
capitalism, linking this in a rather strange juxtaposition with the recently deceased
communism, when he announced ‘we don’t want exploitation or communism and
we don’t want exploitation from abroad’. Following the traditions of the Romanian
political discourse, accusations of foreignness were again being used to try and
delegitimise opponents and at the same meeting it was also mischievously charged
that the leaders of the traditional parties had never suffered the hunger and cold
of the Ceauşescu years, a sentiment later echoed in the NSF slogan ‘Whilst we
were suffering here under Ceauşescu, they had coffee and croissants in Paris’.80

However, there was also a more important ideological shift as, in place of Con­
sensus, there appeared a new keyword, ‘unity’.81 The semantic difference between
the two might appear slight but their bases were entirely different, Consensus be­
ing essentially voluntary and inclusive in concept, whilst ‘unity’ was more coercive
and exclusive. The Front still claimed to be the embodiment of the revolution and,
therefore, the voice and will of the people, but the people from being the whole
population who rose against Ceauşescu were now subtly redefined to more selec­
tive bounds. The theme was fully announced by Iliescu in his resounding and
passionate speech to Front supporters gathered in Piaţa Victoriei on 29 January.
‘The Front has gained the trust of the people through everything it has proposed
to do in order to promote a true democracy, the people’s democracy! . . . The
Front holds nothing more sacred than serving the interests of the Romanian peo­
ples! . . . Our force lies only in people and the unity of the people around the Front
is our guarantee of victory!’82 By Iliescu’s definition, the people had, thus, become
those who unified around the Front, leaving those who chose to escape its embrace
not only beyond the political pale but outside the very bounds of the polity, and,
ominously, the NSF leader warned that ‘Anybody who detaches himself from the
people will represent nothing in this country’.83 It was a simple but compelling
logic. The Front was the embodiment of the people, all those who opposed the
Front must, therefore, oppose the people, and as such, in fine communist tradition,
were enemies of the people. The grounds were being laid to legitimise the violence
of the coming months against the opposition parties, students, and urban intel­
lectuals. The return to a more nationalist rhetoric inherent in ‘unity’ also further
alienated the non-national Hungarian community, heightening the sense of unease
already evident in Transylvania, and beginning a process, that would eventually
see the Hungarians desert the NSF en masse and solidly back Radu Câmpeanu as
Presidential candidate in the coming elections.84
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It must be stressed that the NSF was not a homogeneous grouping and that it was more than capable of speaking with several voices at once. However, the general drift in the political line of its leaders at this time is clear, as reform socialism was increasingly replaced by a more conservative populism, which drew on the language of Ceaușescu's national communism. However, this change of tack posed its own problems, because, whilst it might be a successful mobilising tool, nationalism has relatively narrow bounds, and with it proving unable to fill the ideological void left in the wake of the abandonment of Consensus, the political space was created for the influx of an eclectic mix of influences stretching from communism to free market liberalism. As these ideas were taken up in differing proportions by the individual members of the NSF, they began to space themselves out along the political spectrum and the grounds were laid for the divisions which were later to convulse the ruling regime.

Amongst the more conservative sections of the Front, the reversion to the language of Ceauşescu also seems to have heralded the return of elements from the old 'protochronist' school, as a prominent front page editorial in *Adevărul* presented the NSF and the very revolution itself in terms of Romanian exclusivity. Starting from the premise that the revolution was a unique event unmatched in world history, the article argued that it derived its singularity from the fact that it embodied the unique historical experience of the Romanian people. Then, moulding this idea to the familiar theme that the NSF was the embodiment of the revolution, it declared that the Front had become the 'model of our life', a creation from 'our' life embodying 'our' own experience and, since it was a unique event with no historical parallel, the Romanian Revolution, therefore, could not follow any other model, but had to find its own exclusively national path to the future. Through this formulation, the 'Third Way' doctrine of reform socialism was wedded with the unmistakable nationalist language of the 'protochronists' to produce a creed with an important political subtext, both as regards the past and the future, because, if only a completely new solution was applicable in Romania, then this effectively ruled out as illegitimate the programmes of those parties which would resurrect old forms of government, and these were principally the chief opponents of the NSF, the traditional parties.

With its acceptance of a competitive political arena and the creation of the PCNU, the NSF seems to have abandoned all attempts to preserve its own diffuse party unity, although attempts to peer behind the façade of the Front at the jockeying for power within are fraught with difficulties, since many of the chief protagonists, despite the fact that they are now long estranged from each other,
A marked lack of consensus

still have plenty of political axes to grind giving their accounts a frequently self-justificatory air. Reports of the time often divided the CNSF into crude reform and 'anti-reform' wings and such a division would appear to have some basis, although the alleged composition of these factions seems to have varied with viewpoint. For instance, in the Western press Mazilu and Lupoi were often painted as being standard-bearers of reform, championing the proposed electoral law and the legislation on passports, which was seen as something of a benchmark by which to judge the intentions of the new regime, but, in fact, this law appears to have been largely drafted by Adrian Severin, who remained a prominent member of the Front long after Mazilu and Lupoi had departed. There were splits within the Front, but, whether ideological considerations were to the fore or other criteria remain unknown, but what is certain is that now, with the need to forge tighter party discipline before the election campaign, two of the four figures who publicly fronted the Romanian Revolution, Brucan and Mazilu, disappeared from the political limelight, leaving Iliescu supported by the young and inexperienced Roman as unchallenged leader.

As has already been noted, Mazilu's public standing had already been badly eroded by the campaign in România Liberă and, at the time of his departure, some Western journalists even argued that his continued presence had become such a liability to the Front that he was purged to restore the regime's increasingly battered image. The rift was probably deeper rooted and in his resignation communiqué Mazilu tried to present himself as the victim of communist hard-liners, bitterly commenting 'It is with profound pain and deep bitterness that I have noticed Stalinist methods... based on Securitate files are still in use', but critics charged that he fell because he was too prepared to bend with the prevailing wind. The motivations behind Brucan's decision to resign from the Executive Bureau of the NSF on 4 February 1990 and withdraw from politics have long been shrouded in mystery, although, perhaps significantly, he too was being openly castigated in the pages of România Liberă at this time. Over the years, he has suggested a number of reasons for his decision, ranging from a wish to return to more academic pursuits to altruistic desires to let the revolution be fronted by more youthful figures and to spare the Front the embarrassment of having such a prominent Jewish member. None of these rings particularly true, especially given Iliescu's age and Roman's ancestry, and, at the time, Brucan hinted at a greater sense of resentment when he said he was withdrawing because 'The honest people stay at home,... leaving the political arena to be dominated by personal ambitions, careerism and political opportunism' leading the focus of the electoral campaign to be not on ideas and strategies for the future of Romania 'but on personal recrimination and character
assassination, threatening to bring the political discourse to the lowest traditions of pre-war elections. Brucan's harsh words may well relate to his ongoing public polemic with Octavian Paler at the time, but he does also seem to have had his differences with other members of the regime, and it is still not clear whether he left because of policy differences or because it was thought that his authoritarian and ill-disciplined views were an electoral liability.®

The resignation of Mihai Lupoi on 6 February from his post of Minister of Tourism, allegedly because of the 'dictatorial practices' of Roman, received some prominence in the Western press, but he appears to have only been thrust into the limelight by the revolution and his departure made little long-term impact on the Romanian political scene.®® Considerably more significant was the resignation from the CNSF of Doina Cornea, the most widely known Romanian dissident under communism. She had been voicing sharp criticisms of the predominant position taken by former communists within the Front from early in the month, and the declaration at the time of her eventual departure, triggered by the Front's decision to stand in the elections, in which she spoke of a revolution betrayed, seriously dented the moral authority of the new regime both on the international stage, with detailed reports being carried in most leading Western newspapers, and, internally, where she gave a number of critical interviews to România Liberă.®® Following the bloody clashes of 29 January, she was joined by a second prominent liberal dissident, Ana Blandiana, who on her resignation from the CNSF told România Liberă 'My presence in the Council has become incompatible for a writer who has always been against the aggressiveness, hate and intolerance generated by power struggle'.®

The revolution outside Bucharest

Any attempt to piece together the history of the events outside Bucharest at this time, given the lack of available sources, is fraught with even greater difficulties, but it seems that by and large at the local level the revolution more or less mirrored the national picture. However, within this overall impression there were variations and, in general, the revolution seems to have been more marked in certain geographical regions — principally in Transylvania, Crișana and the Banat — and in the larger cities and towns. Here, in particular, the politicisation engendered by an often violent revolution spilled over into a prolonged political struggle long after the shooting had ceased, although, as in the capital, during January these conflicts also tended to become slowly subsumed under the more narrow political contest which matched the NSF against the traditional parties. By the end of the
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month, from cities as distant as Bacău there came reports of authorised demonstrations organised by the three traditional parties being broken up by bus-loads of workers from local factories shouting slogans in favour of the NSF and against the opposition parties.\(^{93}\)

The afternoon of 22 December had found huge crowds on the streets of many of Romania's urban centres and, as news filtered through of the momentous events in Bucharest, groups of these demonstrators stormed and occupied the public buildings that most symbolised the power of the old regime. In this way the length and breadth of the country, countless Securitate headquarters and municipal and county council buildings were occupied by groups of excited protesters who often, again on the lead given by Bucharest, proceeded to establish their own local NSF councils. With their members chosen from those who had been at the van of the demonstrations, these councils can justifiably be said to have been a genuine expression of the revolutionary enthusiasm of the crowd, and the ad hoc nature of their formation was later underlined by Iliescu, when he stated that they had been created 'spontaneously' and that there had been 'a lot of improvisation in the way they were set up'.\(^{94}\) Subsequently, despite the independent basis of their creation, all these local bodies seem to have willingly subordinated themselves to the national CNSF, although in some areas, such as Timișoara, there may have been some initial confusion with earlier revolutionary bodies briefly coexisting alongside the new Front councils.

Within a week of the overthrow of Ceaușescu, at the same time as it established its national organisation, the NSF also laid down the framework for local government, thus, on paper, creating a complete structure of power.\(^{95}\) In fact, the new regime in its local structures, as at the national level, broadly replicated the previous order and, indeed, the articles establishing local administrations prescribed continuity when they stated: 'The apparatus of the executive committees and bureaus of the former people's councils, the apparatus of the local specialised bodies of state administration and the apparatus of local social and cultural institutions will carry on their activity in their current structure.'\(^{96}\) The new councils were to have variable memberships, depending on the size of the community served, with county and Bucharest municipality councils having 35–51 members; municipal councils 15–27; town and Bucharest sector councils 11–21 and communal councils 9–15. For everyday business each council was to elect an executive bureau consisting of a chairman, two deputy chairmen, a secretary and three to five members. All decisions were to be made by a simple majority and on paper the councils were to have broad areas of responsibility, including the development
A marked lack of consensus

Table 4.5 Opinion poll on local officials still holding power after the revolution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local officials still in power after the revolution</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
<th>Don’t know (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local Party Secretary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayors</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Local Securitate</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Câmpeanu, De patru ori în fața urnelor, p. 187.
* No explanation is given as to why these sets of figures fail to amount to 100%.

of economic trade, medical care, education, cultural and administrative activities, defence of civic rights and maintenance of public order.

However the real story in many places was far more chaotic and confused than this simple picture would suggest. At the county level and in the larger urban centres, the revolution seems to have swept away most traces of the existing political leadership, with mayors and councils being ejected, but, at the lower level in smaller towns and in communes, the picture was more confused. David Kideckel from his fieldwork in the area around Făgăraș in Southern Transylvania suggests that even in rural areas the aftermath of the fall of Ceaușescu was marked by an explosion of political activity, as in many villages ad hoc assemblies were convened which, scrupulously following procedures often conforming to older traditions of communal democracy, proceeded to elect new councils. However, in other instances the new Front leadership (who may or may not have included representatives from the old regime) seems to have met secretly often to reinstate previous officeholders. In general, the prevailing pattern seems to have been one of graduated change, with more occurring at the top of the pyramid than the bottom, but with important regional variations. In the absence of any detailed statistics, some gauge of the extent of the change of personnel in the local administration of the country comes from a later opinion poll which asked respondents whether three prominent officials from the old regime still held posts in their locality (table 4.5). Whilst bearing in mind the poll reflects perceptions rather than reality, the predominant picture presented is one of considerable change, with the only group showing any resilience being those who held the less politically sensitive post of mayor. Most higher local party secretaries and Securitate chiefs appear to have disappeared from the scene, although in all cases the large number of ‘don’t knows’ suggests
A marked lack of consensus

a degree of ignorance, if not disinterest in politics, even at the local level. The enthusiasm which had greeted the immediate post-Ceaușescu era in many areas of the country manifesting itself in a rash of popular political activity, with assemblies gathering in many villages to discuss and vote on decollectivisation and press for government action on local issues, such as the breaking up of multi-village communes established during the Ceaușescu era in favour of more organic units, fast dissipated within the first months of the revolution, as disillusion set in with the national political scene and the NSF moved to reestablish order in the local councils, arranging for the 're-election' of new leaders when necessary.99

In many of the cities and towns, where the revolution had seen the seizure of the local county council building or other municipal offices by the crowd, the right to lead the new regime was claimed by those who had first entered the premises and established some kind of popular forum. Amongst many other places this pattern of events can be observed in Timișoara, Iași, Brașov, Craiova and within some of the sectors of Bucharest.100 However, these 'new men' who claimed political office were often largely unknown, even within their own native localities, and soon, amidst the atmosphere of uncertainty which prevailed across Romania, rumours were rife about murky pasts and doubtful presents. The result was that the legitimacy of many of the new leaders came under sustained challenge from both above and below, as political forces of all hues struggled for control of the new councils. The central authorities seem to have sought to bring some order by removing the more revolutionary elements with Iliescu in a speech stressing: 'It is important for us to ensure that there are in all bodies of the Front people with complete moral authority who will enjoy the trust of the citizens. We have to avoid infiltration of accidental elements such as upstarts, careerists and demagogues, who in moments of confusion and haste try to sneak into leading positions'.101 These strictures were followed by a number of newspaper articles challenging some local council members over their lack of competence or moral probity. Thus, the head of the Craiova council was said to be 'locally renowned for his immorality', a member of the council in Focșani was forced to resign, after having apparently played a prominent role in the revolution in that town because he was said to have been a Securitate informer, and in Sector 6 of Bucharest the head of the council was alleged to be nothing more than a common criminal with ten convictions to his name, who had secured his position only through his early entry into the building and the skillful cultivation of the persona of a 'hero of the revolution'.102 However, amongst the crowd on the streets other concerns usually predominated with doubts centering on lurking fears that many of the new leaders had deeply compromised pasts within the RCP and often links with the
Securitate. The overall result was that, although nearly everywhere the new NSF councils were readily accepted as being legitimate, their membership was often not, and over the coming month this was to give them a highly fluid composition, as many were reshuffled, often several times. Sometimes the struggle for power remained within the new body, as in the case of Sector 6 in Bucharest, where the council seems to have submitted itself to new internal ‘elections’ in order to secure a more ‘acceptable’ composition. Elsewhere, the process all too readily boiled over into open demonstrations, public unrest and occasionally wider consultative exercises. This is not to say that all the county or leading municipal councils came under such sustained attack as those of Timișoara and Brașov which are considered at length below — the developments in these towns must be considered exceptional — but there is considerable evidence of unrest and unhappiness in a number of other cities and counties, including Iași, Tigoviște, Baia Mare, Ploiești and Gorj and, in some places, such as Galați, the circumstances surrounding the factional infighting are so complex that they defy understanding. In each of these cases, pressure was exerted through demonstrations and newspaper articles to force change, although the response elicited remains difficult to gauge. But, some indication of the persistence and extent of the problems within the county councils comes from Roman, who, as late as the middle of January, admitted that no firm links had yet been established between the Government and the local NSF councils, because the latter were in a state of constant flux.

The lack of any clear channel of authority between the national CNSF and county councils appears to have been fully replicated in relations between these intermediate bodies and the lower strata of local administration, which also remained ill-defined throughout this period. The main task of the county NSF councils was the establishment of local administrations throughout the area under their jurisdiction and, especially, the replacement of mayors and deputy mayors. All candidates for these posts were supposed to be nominated by the local NSF council with names being passed to the centre for approval, but the chief problem appears to have been that the new county councils frequently had no idea who might be suitable to occupy these posts. Thus, whilst candidates were supposedly selected on the basis of criteria such as professionalism, youth, and not having a deeply compromised past, all too often, being acquainted with those who had come to power was the main determinant. Whilst this does not necessarily mean that they were unsuitable for the job, selection by such a criterion did leave the new office holders open to challenge and heightened the prevailing unrest during this period. In a case where a newly appointed mayor was held to be unsuitable, local councils appear to have had the power to dismiss the incumbent, and this
Table 4.6 Presidents of the County Provisional Councils for National Unity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>President of County PCNU</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Date of Birth</th>
<th>Elected in 1990 election</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alba</td>
<td>Octavian Borza</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arad</td>
<td>Valentin Voicilă</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argeș</td>
<td>Visarion Chirilă</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bacău</td>
<td>Gheorghe Popa</td>
<td>Actor</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihor</td>
<td>Constantin Bozintan</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bistrița-Năsăud</td>
<td>Pamfil Moisil</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botoșani</td>
<td>Petre Curcă</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brașov</td>
<td>Emil Stoica</td>
<td>University assistant</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Deputy DNSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brăila</td>
<td>Nicu Preda</td>
<td>Sub-engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bucharest</td>
<td>Sorin Botnaru</td>
<td>Sociologist</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Deputy NLP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzău</td>
<td>Paul Știrbu</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caraș-Severin</td>
<td>Dumitru Vlădulescu</td>
<td>Artist</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Călărași</td>
<td>Doru-Ioan Tărăcilă</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Senator DNSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluj</td>
<td>Octavian Buracu</td>
<td>Geologist</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constanța</td>
<td>Barbu Dănescu</td>
<td>Chief of port pilotage</td>
<td>no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covasna</td>
<td>Arpad Orban</td>
<td>Economist</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimbovița</td>
<td>Constantin Taitzeclis</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolj</td>
<td>Radu Berceanu</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Deputy NSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galați</td>
<td>Ilie Plătică–Vidovici</td>
<td>Officer(^a)</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Senator DNSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giurgiu</td>
<td>Ion Popescu</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorj</td>
<td>Artemiu Vanca</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harghita</td>
<td>Emeric Pataki</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunedoara</td>
<td>Mihai Chețan</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Senator DNSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ialomița</td>
<td>Constantin Sava</td>
<td>Officer(^a)</td>
<td>1949</td>
<td>Senator DNSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iași</td>
<td>Dan Gâlea</td>
<td>Engineer/Professor</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maramureș</td>
<td>Gheorghe Popa</td>
<td>Officer(^a)</td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>Senator NSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mehedinți</td>
<td>Simion Drăcea</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mureș</td>
<td>Ioan Scrieciu</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neamț</td>
<td>Florin Buruiană</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olt</td>
<td>Nicolae Grădinăru</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Senator Ind.(^b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prahova</td>
<td>Corneliu–Const. Ruse</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Deputy NSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satu Mare</td>
<td>Nicolae Popdan</td>
<td>Technician</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sâlaj</td>
<td>Toader Mănăilă</td>
<td>Officer(^a)</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Deputy NSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibiu</td>
<td>Mircea Tomuș</td>
<td>Writer</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suceava</td>
<td>Mihai Iacobescu</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>Senator Ind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleorman</td>
<td>Timotei Stuparu</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Deputy DNSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timiș</td>
<td>Alexandru Roșcovan</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulcea</td>
<td>Barbu Popescu</td>
<td>RCF Official</td>
<td></td>
<td>Senator Ind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaslui</td>
<td>Marian Enache</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Deputy DNSF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vlcea</td>
<td>Mihai Dumitrescu</td>
<td>Officer(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vrancea</td>
<td>Ioan Liviu Stoiciu</td>
<td>Writer</td>
<td></td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^a\) Officer denotes a military officer of any service

\(^b\) Later Prefect of the same County
does seem to have occurred in one case in Bucharest, when an architect appointed as the Mayor of Sector 1 was replaced by a lawyer.

Eventually, as was the case at the national level, with the creation of local PCNU and the absorption of representatives from the other political parties, the county councils appear to have become more stable. The best available indication of the final form taken by these councils comes from a study of the details of the incumbent presidents at that time of the formation of the county PCNU (table 4.6). As might be expected, since they were created under the 'fifty–fifty rule', after the formation of the PCNUs the NSF still continued to dominate the local councils, but, what is particularly striking is the similarities in profile of many of the office holders. Firstly, nearly all in political terms appear to have been previously unknown, with the only two who had achieved any prominence under the old regime being the writer Mircea Tomuș, who came to head the council in Sibiu, and Barbu Popescu, President of Tulcea Council, who had enjoyed a prominent career in the RCP during which, amongst other posts, he had been Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Ambassador to Canada and Ethiopia, a full member of the Central Committee and, significantly, also First Secretary of Tulcea County Party Committee and Chairman of the county’s Peoples’ Council. Secondly, most were relatively youthful with eleven out of the fourteen whose age is known being between thirty–four and forty–one when they took office. All of these have subsequently enjoyed national political careers underlining the generational shift at the heart of the revolution. Thirdly, nearly all the presidents were members of the creative or technical intelligentsia (stretched to include military officers) with no fewer than fifteen describing themselves as engineers, whilst most of the remainder were University or Polytechnic Professors, actors, artists, writers or lawyers, the most important of whom was to be Doru–Ioan Tărăcila, a later Minister of the Interior. Finally, the strong presence of the army is noticeable with serving members of the military heading the Councils in Galați, Ialomița, Maramureș, Sălaj and Vâlcea, as well as temporarily in Brașov, Timiș, Botoșani and probably elsewhere. However, as will be argued below, it seems that this temporary prominence was mostly a consequence of the instability brought about by the revolution and did not prefigure any general move by the army into the corridors of power, although it is striking, that all but one of those army officers, who came to head county councils, subsequently secured places in the new parliament.

Brașov

An example of the multiple problems surrounding the local NSF councils was the situation in Brașov. By virtue of its large size and proximity to Bucharest this city
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attracted sufficient attention both from the international and national Romanian media to allow an attempt to be made at understanding what was a particularly complicated situation, further clouded by the legacy of the 1987 riots and their brutal aftermath, which imparted an extra degree of anger into the post-Ceaușescu political struggle.

On 22 December in Brașov, after most of the army and Securitate units guarding the County Council building had been withdrawn, around 14.00 in the afternoon, following news of the flight of Ceaușescu and the take-over of the TV in Bucharest, the crowd had streamed into the building and shortly afterwards a new ruling body known as the Romanian Democratic Front seems to have temporarily arisen, although its composition never appears to have been firmly established. Around 21.00 — again following the appearance of images on the television — rumours that terrorists were in the vicinity seem to have started to circulate alongside the, by now familiar, fears that the water supply had been poisoned and industrial plants had been mined. In consequence, the armouries at the County Council building appear to have been broken open, so that guns could be handed to the civilian defenders, and appeals were made to the army to send reinforcements to help defend the building. The local garrison responded to these requests by dispatching troops into the centre of the city with, the bulk of these apparently arriving early in the morning of 23 December, perhaps not entirely coincidently at around the same time as the first outbreaks of shooting were reported, sometime between 2.00 and 3.00 a.m. Large numbers of Patriotic Guard units also seem to have been mobilised to help meet the ‘terrorist threat’ and there followed, as in Bucharest, several days of swirling and confusing conflict in which no clear enemy came to the fore, although there are reports of armed civilians being captured. The violence continued until 24 December and sporadically beyond with at least one army officer being wounded on 25 December.

The collapse of the Ceaușescu regime in Brașov seems to have been as total as it was in Bucharest, with the previous leadership either fleeing the Party headquarters building or being taken home and placed under house arrest. To replace the local RCP Peoples’ Council, during the evening of 22 December, a local NSF Council was established which presumably also subsumed the stillborn Romanian Democratic Front Council. In the words of one cynical observer, the first council of thirty-four mostly unknown members was largely comprised of those ‘who pushed their way to the front’ when the crowd had stormed the building. The new Council was a child of chaos and the fighting that followed in the next few days seems to have been sufficient to arrest all further political development, and, when two rival candidates were suggested for the post of President, it produced such a rift in the
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body that as a compromise the local army commander Major-General Ion Florea was proposed and unanimously accepted as leader. Given the levels of unrest in Brașov during the revolution and the importance of the army in bringing order to the situation, it may be argued that the appointment of Florea was only a case of the real centre of power taking over the nominal centre of power. However, in the light of rumours circulating at the time of a possible military take-over, it should be stressed that the army does not seem to have sought its projection centre stage in the city and, in fact, neither it nor General Florea were adequately prepared for their new roles.

Despite the election of Florea, the Council appears to have remained half-formed with even the deputy head reported as not knowing the other members, and at all times during these first days communication with Bucharest seems to have been at a virtual minimum. Indeed, the council was to prove particularly unstable, as there now followed a confusing series of apparently never ending reshuffles, the first of which, on 30 December, seems to have resulted in the Council taking on board a number of figures who had been prominent under the old regime. The fact that this was done apparently without the barest nod at democratic norms appear to have generated considerable unease within the city and resulted in so much factional infighting within the Council that, on 4 January, some of the more tainted of the new appointees seem to have been replaced by other candidates in yet more changes. On 6 January a full list of the members of the Council was published in the local Gazeta de Transilvania, but this seems to have just confirmed local suspicions that it was stuffed with remnants from the old regime, and a letter written to România Liberă at this time denounces the presence of the heads of several local enterprises, who they alleged had held high positions within the local RCP and acted during the revolution to prevent workers from leaving their factories to join the demonstrations. In calling for changes in the composition of the council the workers in their letter noticeably did not demand direct elections on the basis of a universal franchise, but, rather limiting democracy to the workplace, they asked that the factory delegates on a ‘representational’ body should be chosen by a free ballot of the whole workforce.108

Simultaneously, to the growth of these doubts over the credentials of members of the council, there seems to have arisen a growing unease in the city over the role of the army in the revolution and, in particular, over the position of Florea as the head of the Front. Rumours circulated in the town that those who had tried to see Florea to report the whereabouts of terrorists had been brusquely turned away and that as leader of the Front he was surrounded by a circle of former members of the nomenclatura and Securitate. Army units had remained
A marked lack of confidence. The aura of secrecy that continued to surround its meetings and the lack of information about its activities, even in the local newspaper, bred a climate of suspicion and distrust and a feeling that there was a lack of 'dialogue' between the new leaders and the populace. However, it seems to have been the council's failure to assure a continued plentiful supply of foodstuffs and the reintroduction of rationing which was the straw that finally broke the camels back, sparking renewed large scale popular demonstrations in the city. Thus, the National Day of Mourning in Brașov also turned into a mass demonstrations against the NSF, with 2,500 - 3,000 protesters gathering in the centre of the city shouting amongst other slogans: 'Without communists and communism!' and 'Down with the directors from the Front!'.

The next day the demonstrators gathered again before the Front's headquarters and when several of the new leaders, including Florea, came to address the crowd they were roundly booed. Eventually, talks began between the authorities and representatives of the crowd, partly it seems because the Mayor and some other members of the Council came to support the protesters' position, and an agreement was concluded by which it was agreed that there would be changes in the personnel of both the local NSF Councils and the leadership of local enterprises with some of the most compromised figures standing down. Promises were also made that the supply of provisions would be improved through the release of stockpiled food and that the local press would better inform the populace of the Councils' deliberations. However, the lack of cohesion amongst the protesters, who were reportedly a disparate bunch of workers, youths and pensioners with no clear leadership, prevented them from effectively pressing home these concessions and, instead, the Front only seems to have made a half-hearted attempt to reform itself with a meeting of delegates assembling in secret and reshuffling the body. This did little to calm public anxiety, and, ironically, this was to grow in intensity, when the authorities fulfilled one of the protesters' main demands and released casualty and arrest figures from the revolution. Aside from the fact that the figure of ninety-nine dead was lower than expected, more damaging for the image of the leadership was the revelation that the vast majority of those arrested during the
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conflict had subsequently been released ostensibly due to a lack of evidence.\textsuperscript{111} This apparent reluctance to prosecute the guilty ‘terrorists’ when taken with the other failures of the Front sparked off yet more protests, and, on 19 January, the Provisional CNSF of the University, taking matters into their own hands, placed an advertisement in the \textit{Gazeta de Transilvania} calling for delegates from all the local Provisional Councils of the Front to meet and choose a new County Council. Technically, the University Council possessed no such powers and, when the delegates did gather, they were so unprepared that the forum seems to have been neither particularly democratic nor lucid. However, the legitimacy of the sitting Council had been effectively challenged and arrangements were soon made for another assembly to choose a new council.\textsuperscript{112} On 23 January 270 delegates from local councils of the NSF gathered and, in the apparent absence of Florea, the existing County Council at the last moment appears to have come round to supporting the assembly making any decision reached binding. Sixty candidates seem to have stood for election, with each presenting a short biography to the assembly before the voting, in which many members of the previous Council including the Vice-President lost their seats.

The situation in Braşov was so complex as to defy easy analysis and it still remains impossible to draw any firm political lines within the unrest of January 1990. However, broadly, it seems that a weak revolutionary Council of figures largely unknown to the city’s population became infiltrated by prominent figures from the old regime, so that it never gained sufficient legitimacy in the eyes of the people to stabilise its rule. Amidst divisions within its ranks, challenges from public demonstrations and quite probably under pressure from the central authorities, the Council went through a number of reshuffles before eventually submitting itself to a slightly broader electoral process by which it secured a solidly technocratic base — 70% of the new membership were reported as possessing higher education — under the leadership of Emil Stoica, University Assistant, who after the May general election was to become a Deputy in the Iliescu wing of the NSF.

\textit{Timișoara}

In Timișoara, with many of the same forces at work, the situation was broadly analogous to that appertaining in Braşov. Reports from the city at this time also speak of demonstrations amidst an explosion of political activity, as people congregated for informal ‘dialogues’ and clustered around posters announcing forthcoming meetings or handwritten replies to articles in the local press.\textsuperscript{113} However, amongst all this enthusiasm, with rumours of 4,000 or more dead gripping the local imagination, there still loomed the unanswered questions of revolution:
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‘How many people had really died?’ and ‘When would the guilty be brought to trial’?

Above this seething mass of popular politics sat, rather uneasily, the local Front Council. From its inception divisions had been evident in its ranks, and time had merely served to deepen these cracks, as feeding on the atmosphere of mutual suspicion and distrust, personality clashes had been fuelled by growing political differences. These internal divisions within the Council were mirrored by a growing rift between that body and the people it claimed to represent. In Timișoara the euphoria of the revolution had bred universally high expectations for the future and the varied make-up of the Council had merely sustained these hopes, its heterogeneous composition allowing it to be seen as all things to all people. However, when the Council failed to meet these expectations, public faith in the body correspondingly plummeted. Those who sat on the Council, felt that they had earned the right to do so through their exploits in the revolution, but others considered them little more than opportunists, and, soon, the ‘folklore of Timișoara’ abounded with often less than flattering stories about Sorin Oprea, Ion Marcu, Lorin Fortuna and the other new leaders. The standing of the Council was also further undermined by the appearance of several members of the former regime in its ranks and, although Radu Bălan had rapidly left the scene, public disquiet seems to have later been heightened by the appointment of Eugeniu Râdulescu, a former Minister of Construction, as Mayor of Timișoara. As aspersions, often voiced in terms of competence, were increasingly cast about the suitability of the ‘revolutionaries’ as rulers, so calls for the election of a new Council rose.

As in Bucharest and Brașov the religious services held to mark the Day of National Mourning in Timișoara were followed by a large gathering in which thousands of mostly young demonstrators, workers, students and school pupils, assembled before the Front headquarters to protest at the composition of the Council. Amidst slogans such as ‘Down with the liars!’, ‘Down with the careerists!’ ‘Down with censorship!’ and ‘We want free elections!’ the President of the Council, Lorin Fortuna, after being shouted down when he tried to address the crowd, proffered his resignation. He was replaced by the commander of the local military garrison, Major-General Gheorghe Popescu, who declared that he was only taking temporary control of the administration and that there would be new elections for the Council ‘respecting the will of the collective majority’. As in Brașov, the status gained by the army during the defeat of the ‘terrorists’ was sufficient for the local military commander to be popularly recognised as an impartial umpire, enabling him to assume the leadership of the local civil structure. Under the leadership of Popescu the local councils appear to have continued to function much as before,
and, so, it does not seem possible to equate the civil–military construction that arose with any form of military take-over. Instead, Popescu's actions seem to have been determined by a soldierly desire to end the instability and demonstrations racking Timișoara, so as to secure a full restoration of order. However, as in Brașov, both the General and the army seem to have been totally unprepared for their new roles and during Popescu's brief tenure in office the military was to be increasingly drawn into the maelstrom of local politics. Indeed, it may be that the intervention had a deleterious effect on military discipline, since, shortly afterwards, troops from Timișoara were to play a prominent role in the demonstrations calling for reform of the armed forces. When it came to organising the local elections, Popescu seems to have been no more adept than his counterpart in Brașov nor, to have possessed any clear concept of what constituted democracy, judging by the numerous delays which occurred and the bewildering array of formulations and ratios of representation suggested. When the elections did take place, the local Front councils from factories and other organisations once more appear to have played the most prominent role, but, by the end of the poll, nearly half the population of the district seems to have been accorded some form of vote, even if this was only indirect.

In Timișoara, as in Brașov and Bucharest, the fall of Ceaușescu had only brought turmoil and unrest, with public unease about the composition of the ruling NSF council, in each case being fuelled by persisting doubts over the nature of the revolution and, in particular, the true number of deaths. In Timișoara, the very crucible of the revolution, this issue was particularly sensitive and lies at the heart of an incident which highlights the ambiguity of many of the currents at work in post-Ceaușescu Romania. In the middle of January, the local newspaper, Renastera Bănățeană, published a series of articles about the death toll during the revolution in Timișoara. The first of these on 16 January reported that a secret cemetery had been found and raised expectations that the casualty figures would exceed the 4,000 dead already widely rumoured, but, then, on the very next day, the same paper printed new official figures for the dead and missing, which suggested that less than 100 had died, and this revised figure was supported, a few days later, in a detailed article by a local physician, Dr Milan Leonard Dressler.

Instead of dispelling doubts, the apparent contradictions within these articles only seem to have further stoked public confusion and anger and, on 22 January, about 100 protesters broke into the offices of the newspaper demanding the resignation of the editor and several journalists. The protesters, according to a local radio broadcast, calling themselves 'Young writers and publicists', had supporters
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within both the local military garrison and the County Council with Claudiu Iordache, who may be seen as being on the radical side of the body, being mentioned. The exact motivations for their actions remain difficult to distinguish, but, the next day, in place of Renastera Bănățeană there appeared another newspaper, entitled Timișoara which, at least to one observer, seemed to be superficially little more than an organ of the local Front, with the first page carrying decisions of the Council and a declaration of principles and the second page two communiques signed by Popescu. The new paper announced that Renastera Bănățeană due to popular demand had been closed for spreading misinformation, and because some journalists from the old communist organ, Drapelul Roșu, were still present on its staff. However, this was not to close the matter because the rest of the local press promptly rallied to the support of the banned newspaper, threatening that they would also cease publication until it returned and a new local NSF Council had been democratically elected. In the face of these threats, Popescu was forced to backtrack and at a meeting, on 25 January, attended by 122 Presidents of NSF enterprise councils, he announced that the previous paper would reappear.118

The Renastera Bănățeană incident demonstrated not only how confusing the battle-lines had become in Timișoara and that the drum of anti-communism could apparently be sounded by all sides, but also many of the problems faced by the press at this time. For years, many papers had been obliged to write only what they had been instructed and, after the revolution, it naturally took journalists some time to adjust to the new environment, with few having any concept of the responsibilities arising from a freeing of the press. For instance, should they print the declarations of the local NSF or would that align it too much with the new body? As the month of January drew to a close, it became clear that there were no easy solutions to the many problems facing Romania and within the bewildering mixture of old and new that emerged from the violence of the revolution, there were still many lessons to be learnt.
Notes

1. Their appearance even prompted newspaper articles. See, for instance, Constantin Priescu, ‘În magazine există și carne, și portocale’, Adevarul, 29 December 1989, p. 2. Tropical fruit often seen to bear a surprisingly political message in South Eastern Europe. In Greece for many years bananas were associated with the Colonel’s dictatorship when they became freely available after years of scarcity.


5. For instance Iliîescu spoke of ‘our wonderful youth, whose blood has restored our sense of national dignity’, quoted in Carmen Pompey, ‘Students and the revolution’, Report on Eastern Europe, 1:9 2 March 1990, p. 26, and Alexandru Bîrlâdeau declared: ‘What is unique about it [the revolution] is that it was made by the youth, the working, learning and military youth, a youth that had been robbed of its future.’ BBC EE/0655, B/12:48, 6 January 1990, Rompres in English, 1228 gmt, 3 January 1990.

6. On 25 December a delegation of young people submitted a declaration to the newspaper Adevarul which included amongst a stream of other requests a demand that ‘In the memory of the victims [of the revolution], ... the word “communism” no longer appears in the free press’. Adevarul, 26 December 1989 quoted in Pompey, ‘Students and the Revolution’, p. 28.

7. BBC EE/0649, B/4, 29 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1420 gmt, 26 December 1989. The demonstration seems to have comprised a few hundred protesters who were reported to be chanting ‘Without communism!’ and expressing disquiet with the new leadership and the rapid execution of Ceaușescu. See Blaine Harden, ‘Romanian broadcast shows dead dictator’, The Washington Post, 27 December 1989, p. A.14.

In fact, the degree to which the Romanian Democratic Party ever really was the voice of the protesters must be doubted. When it made no bones about its broadly social democratic orientation and its willingness to accept former communists, who had a ‘clear conscience’ into its ranks, it rapidly seems to have aroused suspicions, and on 2 January 1990 another of its leaders, Nicolae Costel, felt the need at a press conference to state that he had not been a member of the RCP and that his party was not a false façade of the Front. BBC EE/0654, B/15, 5 January 1990, Rompres in English, 1824 gmt, 3 January 1990. By the May elections the party had virtually dropped off the political map (see table 4.3).
8. Hours broadcast by the television increased from 795 in 1989 to 8,135 in 1990 with news programmes rising from 547 hours to 1,349. The hours of radio broadcasting also increased, but less sharply, from 30,148 hours in 1989 to 52,309 in 1990. *Anuarul statistic al României, 1992* (Bucharest: Comisia naţională pentru statistică, n.d.), pp. 236–238.

9. On the avid viewing of television see Kligman, 'Reclaiming the public', p. 413.


11. A prominent Romanian cultural intellectual, Aurel Dragoş Munteanu seems to have held a number of editorial positions on literary periodicals, including poetry editor of *Luceafărul*. Shortly after the disturbances in Braşov, he handed in his party card, and in a resignation letter to the branch secretary at *Luceafărul*, voiced open disagreement with Ceauşescu’s policies and particularly the atheistic stance of the state. He also criticised systematization, and in a complaint that an article he had written about Mircea Eliade had been subject to censorship managed to cite both Abraham Lincoln and Plutarch, underlining his known attachment to ‘globalist’ thinking. During the Ceauşescu era he had spent several periods in the United States, and after his resignation as head of the television, he was subsequently appointed, first, Romanian representative at the United Nations and, then, Ambassador in Washington. See Crisula Ştefanescu, ‘A Romanian writer’s letter of protest’, *Radio Free Europe Research*, Romanian Situation Report/13, 9 November 1988, pp. 29–30, and for a reproduction of his letter of resignation ‘A prominent writer resigns from the communist party’, *East European Reporter*, 3:4 (1989), p. 25.

12. The numbers of separate newspapers, magazines and other periodicals produced increased sharply rising from 495 in 1989, which included thirty-six daily newspapers, to over 1,444 in 1990, with sixty-five daily newspapers. *Anuarul statistic al României 1991* (Bucharest: Comisia naţională pentru statistică, n.d.), p. 210. The figures given cover only those entered into the holdings of the National Library and as many of the magazines were ephemeral, lasting no more than a handful of issues, it seems likely that the true number of publications was even higher.

13. For these titular changes see BBC EE/0648, B/13, 28 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 0933 gmt, 23 December 1989.


18. The open polemic between Silviu Brucan and Gheorghe Apostol about the latter’s behaviour after the publication of the ‘Letter of the Six’ can be interpreted as being some kind of sign of official sanction for greater openness and debate in the press. For details see chapter three.

19. Until 1979 a former alternative member of the CC, Paler, a well-known writer, lost his post as editor-in-chief of *România Liberă* after Ceauşescu’s so-called ‘Mangalia Speech’ in 1983 but continued to produce controversial works including in 1986 a novel *Un om norocos*. This attracted fierce criticism from Corneliu Vadim Tudor amongst others and, subsequently, a ‘literary tribunal’ of the ‘working people’ was convened at the Bucharest Mechanical Enterprise for Chemical
Equipment, where Paler was accused of distorting the realities of socialist Romania. Carmen Pompey, 'Back to literary show trials', *Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report* /2, 3 February 1986, pp. 15–18.


25. Anatol Lieven, 'Sudden birth of parties trying to beat deadline', *The Times*, 4 January 1990, p. 8. By the 15 January the Romanian Democratic Party claimed to have had 1,000 members. For a negative but probably realistic assessment of this party which 'would have difficulty running a village in the Carpathian mountains, let alone a crisis–ridden country of 23 million' see Christopher Walker, 'Chaos and fear dog path of revolution', *The Times*, 15 January 1990, p. 8.

26. Throughout this study the term 'traditional' has been preferred to the frequently encountered 'historic', when describing these parties, since this is the term used by the parties themselves at the time and because there has been a tendency for
the word 'historic' when used in reference to the parties to become invested with slightly derogatory overtones.

27. Vladimir Socor, 'Political parties emerging', Report on Eastern Europe, 1:7, 16 February 1990, pp. 30–31, quoting from the NPP journal Renaserea. A statement carried by Agerpres on 26 December reported that the leadership committee of the new party included Doina Cornea, Ioan Alexandru, Ion Caramitru, Bishop Justinian Maramuresanu, Ion Mânzatu, Aurel Dragos Munteanu, Marin Sorescu, Bishop Ioan Robu, Sandor Kanyadi, Paul Schuster and Alexandru Zub. However, as few of this rather eclectic list of names subsequently played much of a role within the party, it can only be presumed that they were in some way associated with the Christian National Peasant Party. BBC EE/0649, B/8, 29 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 1141 gmt, 26 December 1989

28. For the sake of convenience and because of historic convention the abbreviation NPP has been retained in this work rather than the more cumbersome NPP–CD.


31. 'Romanian's opposition cautious about offer to share power', Financial Times, 1 February 1990, p. 2.

32. 'Salami tactics' only netted the relatively insignificant Anton Alexandrescu whilst the only dissident voice of any stature within the party, Dr Lupu, continued to keep his own council. Maniu was later to die in jail.


34. Socor, 'Political parties emerging', pp. 30–31; 'Partidele politice se prezintă: Partidul Național Țăranesc (democrat și creștin)', Adevărul, 10 January 1990, p. 3.


37. Few of the NLP members in exile in France, with the exception of Ioana Brătianu, seem to have actively engaged in French politics at a grass roots level and, so their time abroad did not furnish them with the political skills needed to rebuild a strong party when they returned to Romania.

38. 'Romanian roller coaster', East European Newsletter 4:1 8 January 1990, p. 2; Pompey, 'Students and the Revolution', p. 27. The League was reported to have a five man council the most prominent of whom were Marian Munteanu, Vlad Niculescu and Radu Ghesaru. It soon claimed a membership of 10,000.

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40. Pompey, 'Students and the Revolution', p. 27, quoting Der Speigel, 8 January 1990. Mierlă was to quit the CNSF on 24 January.


43. BBC EE/0662, B/17–18:57, 15 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1945 gmt, 12 January 1990. Helen Womak, 'Romania bans communists', The Independent, 13 January 1990, p. 1. The abolition of the death penalty had been announced on 7 January 1990 'in order to emphasise the profound humanist nature of the regime' BBC EE/0658, B/14:24, 10 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 2000 gmt, 7 January 1990. Note that the decrees were said to have been issued 'upon the people's general request'.

44. For descriptions of this day see: 'Mitingul din Piața Victoriei: dialogul membrilor Consiliului Frontului Salvării Naționale și ai guvernului cu reprezentanții participantilor', Adevărul, 13 January 1990, pp. 1, 5; Ion Marin, 'Adevărul despre mitingul din Piața Victoriei', Adevărul, 14 January 1990, pp. 1, 2.

45. For the results of the poll carried out by the French BVA organisation using Romanian interviewers see Philip Jacobson, 'Executions win mass support in Bucharest poll', The Times, 18 January 1990, p. 6. For the Romanian army generally at this time see Watts, 'The Romanian army in the December revolution', pp. 95–126.


49. Ion Lăzăr, 'Opiniile despre democrație și libertate transmise în cursul nopții de 12 spre 13 ianuarie redacției ziarului “Adevărul”', Adevărul, 14 January 1990, pp. 1, 2. It would seem likely that the campaign was highly orchestrated but one factor in Adevărul's favour is that it had been publicising a telephone number through which readers could give their opinions, as had România liberă.


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64. Dumitru Mazilu was later to say (after he had lost office) that the leaders of the Front had discussed the possibility of mounting a counter demonstration on 25 January 1990. Michael Shafir, ‘The Provisional Council of National Unity: is history repeating itself?’, Report on Eastern Europe, 1:9, 2 March 1990, p. 21.


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69. Aside from the argument over membership, the shape the new forum was to take also seems to initially have been the subject of debate. At first, it appears that the Front proposed to establish two forums: the CNSF, renamed the National Provisional Council and augmented by members drawn from the other political parties, and above this a second body based on the representatives assembled at the 1 February meeting. Both the National Provisional Council and the government would report to this body and it would have the power to decide on the main normative acts — it would thus be a second chamber of parliament. BBC EE/0679, B/8:20, 3 February 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1400 gmt, 1 February 1990. A second report suggested that the second body would contain three representatives of every party and the right of simple veto over decisions of the council. Further talks resulted in this plan being dropped in favour of the straight replacement of the CNSF by the PCNU.


71. Articles in the Western press match the differences of opinion and indicate some of the various formulations suggested. See, for instance, Judy Dempsey, ‘Romanians at odds on council’, *Financial Times*, 10 February 1990, p. 2, where it is suggested that the PCNU will be a relatively small body comprising ninety representatives of the Front (forty from the counties, thirty from the front’s old council and twenty from the youth and students movements) together with representatives from forty-five political parties and ten ethnic groups.


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On 26 January having apparently already visited the I.M.G.B works in the morning, Iliescu held meetings with the members of the administrative councils, Front Councils and Free Unions from 'Republica', '23 August', I.M.G.B, I.O.R, Regional C.F.R. and other large enterprises in Bucharest. Iliescu asked the collectives of workers to nominate the most representative of figures with impeccable moral authority to stand as candidates for the NSF at the election. Radu Bogdan, 'Dialog cu muncitorii', Adevarul, 27 January 1990, p. 5.

80. See the report on the meeting in I. Stefan, C. Varvara, Gheorghe Ionită & A. Papadiuc, 'Două zile care au zguduit ţara, duminică, 28 Ianuarie: multe nelinişti şi întrebări al căror răspuns nu se va găsi, totuşi, în piată', Adevarul, 30 January 1990, pp. 1, 3. For the later slogan see Michael Shafir, 'Schópflienian realism and Romanian reality', Report on Eastern Europe, 2:7, 15 February 1991, p. 35. The sentiments of this meeting were graphically and crudely shown in a front page cartoon in Adevarul of 28 January 1990. In this a blindfolded 'ordinary' citizen surrounded by caricatures of the other parties (the NLP is represented in crown and ermine, the ecologists as innocent babies and the NPP as old peasants and grasping capitalists) is seen desperately searching for the isolated and gagged figure of the Front (dressed in the suit of a technocrat).

81. Miniscule u since it can not be considered to be an ideology.


84. Câmpeanu polled 76.58% in Harghita against 19.56% to Iliescu and 65.69% in Covasna where Iliescu managed a more respectable 32.12%. These were the only two counties were Câmpeanu secured a higher proportion of the votes than Iliescu.


86. See Judy Dempsey, 'Romanian radicals press case for electoral law', Financial Times, 8 January 1990, p. 2. Mazilu argued that in a free country people would return whilst opponents of the law said it would lead to an exodus of talent. Eventually, a ten year passport was guaranteed within twenty days of application, Judy Dempsey, 'Romanians given freedom to travel' Financial Times, 10 January 1990, p. 2. The text of the decree on passports can be found in BBC EE/0658, B/13:23, 10 January 1990, Rompres in English, 1949 gmt, 8 January 1990. Passports could be withheld from those engaged in acts which 'upset public order'.


89. Patricia Clough, 'Brucan resigns condemning “opportunism” ', The Independent, 5 February 1990, p. 8. It may be significant that the Front's election programme was presented two day's after Brucan announced his intention to withdraw from politics and it seems he did not play a great role in drawing up this document.
90. Roman had apparently ordered the Ministry of Tourism to hand twenty-one hotels back to the army and a restaurant to the Academy of Sciences. For one interpretation of the circumstances surrounding Lupoi’s resignation see Mihai Sturza, ‘How dead is Ceau§escu’s secret police force?’, Report on Eastern Europe, 1:15, 13 April 1990, p. 31.

91. BBC EE/0672, B/5:5, 26 January 1990, Rompres in English, 1626 gmt, 24 January 1990. From the beginning of the month Cornea had been reported voicing concern that the revolution was ‘in danger’ and that the leadership included too many former communists. See Jonathan C. Randal, ‘Romania asks U.S. for trade status’, The Washington Post, 10 January 1990, p. A.15. See also the reservations voiced in Harvey Morris, ‘Changing of the guard for Doina Cornea’, The Independent, 15 January 1990, p. 12. In an interview in Liberation on 24 January 1990 she was to state that the revolution was ‘in the process of being betrayed’ and that ‘The present regime has taken over the spontaneous popular movement, which was very clearly directed against communism.’ Cited in Devlin, ‘Romanians use foreign interviews to debate country’s future’, p. 28.

92. ‘Romania’s opposition cautious about offer to share power’, Financial Times, 1 February 1990, p. 2.


94. BBC EE/0655 B/8:35(ii), 6 January 1990.


98. Note this poll was conducted in 1992 and in the intervening years it seems quite likely that as in Romanian politics in general some members of the local élite had been able to effect a rehabilitation and re-enter politics.


100. For Craiova see the complaints in Bogdan Ficeac, ‘Şi la Craiova funcţionează principiul “cine a intrat primul pe uşă...”’, România Liberă, 12 January 1990, p. 5. For an example, in the capital see the stories originating from Sector 6. Constantin Priescu & Gheorghe Ionita, ‘Pu§căria§ de drept comun pe scaunul puterii’, Adevărul, 10 January 1990, p. 2.


103. In Sector 6 of Bucharest the Provisional Council of forty–one met and selected a new nine man Executive Bureau from a list of fifteen candidates.

104. One side of what appears to be an extremely complicated situation in Gala§i appears in Octavian Dicu, ‘Un caz din care se pot trage învâ§âminte’, România
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Libera, 11 January 1990, p. 2. Dicu, a Priest, seems to have been amongst the first members of the new county NSF Council, alongside army officers, several local heads of the Patriotic Guard as well as the usual assortment of Professors and engineers. With the growth of rumours and suspicions about the new leaders, local activists seem to have moved to place this group under arrest, with their release only been secured through direct appeal to Iliescu by their families. Eventually, Paul Jerbas and General Nicolae Rizea were sent from Bucharest to carry out an inquiry and they found they had been falsely arrested. In Tîrgovişte there was so much confusion that Dumitru Mazilu had to come twice in one day to sort things out. Mircea Bunea & Cristian Toma Mocanu, ‘Tîrgovişte, ziua a XIX-a: cine e cu noi?’, Adevărul, 12 January 1990, p. 2. In Baia Mare it was reported by Doina Cornea that the chief figures of the old regime had tried to reform themselves as the local CNSF, but they had been opposed by the miners who had encouraged a sympathetic lawyer to read out a list of the proposed membership of the Council from the balcony of the County Council building asking the assembled crowd to pass judgement on each name. Of the forty-five names on the list only two were reported to have withstood this test of popular democracy, with the other places being filled by representatives of the ‘people’. Harvey Morris, ‘Changing of the guard for Doina Cornea’, The Independent, 15 January 1990, p. 12.

106. For the domination of the Front within the local PCNU see Kideckel, ‘Peasants and authority in the new Romania’, p. 74.
111. This figure was about 30% higher than those later reported. See chapter two.
114. See chapter one.
116. The question also found its way in to the national press see Emil Munteanu, ‘Unde sint morţii Timişoarei?!’, România Libera, 7 January 1990, pp. 1, 3; Emil
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117. See also Philip Jacobson’s interview with Dr Dressler ‘Mourning Timișoara tries to reckon cost of liberty’, The Times, 7 February 1990 p. 8, discussed in chapter six.

Why the mămăliga did explode*

The momentous events which marked the exit from communism in Eastern Europe during 1989 have often been assessed as a collective entity, leading them almost by default to acquire as a group the generic name 'revolution', with both academic and popular literature readily bearing titles carrying that term. Yet, revolutions, at the best of times, are highly complex phenomena and, although the countries of the region were all starting from a common base point, in so much as they collectively renounced communism, there were obvious differences in the process of renunciation, particularly in the case of Romania. Indeed, elsewhere in Eastern Europe, and in marked contrast to Romania, the events were so lacking in the violence and tumult usually associated with 'true' revolutions that a whole new class of seemingly oxymoronic epithets was coined to label them with names such as 'velvet revolution' and 'negotiated revolution'. It was, obviously, always going to be difficult to fit such events into the traditional revolutionary canon and some scholars, to circumvent the problem, have even suggested that they should be seen as the first post-modern revolutions breaking the revolutionary pedigree inherited from the French Revolution of two hundred years before; an end to the epoch of revolutions to match the end of history widely foretold at the time. These 'self-limiting' revolutions still sought radical change but deliberately eschewed the coercion usually associated with the process in favour of the peaceful evolution of established institutions and practices. However, although such ideas might hold true for elsewhere in Eastern Europe, they are less obviously applied to Romania, where the events in many regards bore more than a passing resemblance to other recent examples of the genre, especially the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Indeed, at first sight, the obvious need is to explain why the events in Romania were so 'revolutionary' compared with elsewhere in Eastern Europe. For only in Romania was the blood and passion traditionally associated with revolutions deployed amongst the full panoply of revolutionary symbolism. The storming of the Central Committee building in Bucharest on 22 December 1989 could be and was easily equated with the seizing of the Bastille and Eisenstein's interpretation (if not the reality) of the storming of the Winter Palace in October 1917. The flight of Ceauşescu by helicopter was merely the Twentieth Century equivalent of the coach-bound dash to Varennes, and in his subsequent execution the Romanian leader met the same fate as both Louis XVI and Nicholas II. Yet at the same time in Romania, where the events most readily conformed to the accepted stereotypes of revolution, the idea that they should be termed as such has come under so sustained an attack that many, both inside and outside the country, now deny this appellation. This chapter will examine these two key questions: whether from a theoretical point of view we can justifiably speak of a Romanian Revolution, and why the events took such a violent turn so different from elsewhere in Eastern Europe. To do this, it is necessary to look at the causes of the revolution and particularly the objective conditions pertaining in the country because, although the states of Eastern Europe from their position within the Soviet Bloc faced a broadly similar external environment in 1989, structural and cultural peculiarities within Romania appear to have been sufficient to presage a violent outcome to its exit from communism.

It is customary to introduce at this point a definition of revolution as the basis for further discussion, but in this work there will be a conspicuous lacuna. Since this is a work of contemporary history, the initial temptation on taking such a stand is to hide behind Jaroslav Krejčí's observation that 'Since they [historians] like to see all historical events as unique phenomena, it is for them of no particular importance to stick to rules concerning the use of generic concepts.' However, upholding the concept of uniqueness to wiggle out of the problem, whilst still employing tools of analysis derived from comparative studies of revolution, would seem to be more than a little disingenuous and, so, before brushing aside the issue so completely, it seems pertinent to offer some further remarks on the vexatious question of definitions of revolution. The first and most obvious problem that appears is choosing from the large number of definitions available with a cursory reading of the literature revealing over a dozen widely cited. Many of these arise from limited studies of the few events widely accepted as being Great Revolutions — usually the French, Russian and Chinese cases — and to a large
extent these three, and particularly the French example, are the prism through which all revolutions are viewed, bequeathing the repertoire and semantics associated with the event, such as the mass storming of symbols of the old regime, the onset of a 'terror' and the presence of future orientated systems. This tendency to rely on the three Great Revolutions as the yardstick against which others are to be measured, in many ways, lies at the heart of the definitional problem, since as the definitions are drawn from the very phenomena they seek to define, they are bound to be unduly restrictive and historically specific. The tautology that lies at the heart of such definitions makes them of limited use when assessing whether other irregular transfers of political power should be considered as revolutions, although it does not in itself render them invalid, since, as Rod Aya has noted, definitions cannot be 'right' or 'wrong' as they state no fact nor explain anything, rather, they promise consistent word usage and provide a guide to what must be explained. The word 'revolution' is merely a label used to describe an event people have come to believe should be termed as such because it fulfills their expectations of what a revolution should be. In considering revolutions, therefore, it seems equally, if not more important, to address besides the question 'what constitutes a revolution' also 'why it has come to be termed as such', and to do this it is necessary to take into account the views of those who apply this label, and these are, first and foremost, those who participate in the events and, secondly, those who propagate the message of revolution to the wider world, the international media.

Typical of the earlier definitions drawn from the French and Russian cases is that of Sigmund Neumann who held that revolution was: 'a sweeping, fundamental change in political organisation, social structure, economic property control and the predominant myth of a social order, thus indicating a major break in the continuity of development'. The widely cited definition of Samuel Huntington closely follows in the footsteps of Neumann and the more recent and, hugely influential, initial definition of Theda Skocpol also arose from a comparative study of the three Classic Revolutions. However, as noted above, so narrow and potentially restrictive were these definitions that they allowed few events into the select club of revolutions, and in response to this, as the study of revolutions has prospered and the number of events clamouring to be accorded such a status has increased, a counter trend has arisen of loosening the definitional straitjacket, thereby permitting a wider net to be cast. Thus, two recent studies of revolutions offer markedly broader definitions, and Theda Skocpol's definition has also been substantially adjusted as will be seen below. Michael Kimmel sees revolution as '...an attempt by subordinate groups to transform the social foundations of political power. It
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requires confrontation, probably violent with power holders and must hold a reasonable chance of success' and Jack Goldstone has suggested it is '...the forcible overthrow of a government followed by the reconsolidation of authority by new groups, ruling through new political (and sometimes social) institutions'. This trend to inclusion has also been accompanied by a significant shift away from emphasis on the singularity of the revolutionary process towards an embracement of variability, although with an understanding that at the same time revolutions can be regular and intelligible. In short, the growing consensus seems to be that, although they may have widely different causes, display many different features, and lead to a host of different outcomes, the revolutionary process amongst this 'fascinating variability' does display 'surprising commonalities'.

This variability can largely be explained in terms of the historical and cultural specificity of individual revolutions. For the mechanics of revolution have varied over time in keeping with changes in social and state structures. Tilly has pointed out how in France forms of protest changed with industrialisation, as locally orientated land invasions, food riots and tax revolts gave way to frequently broader based strikes, demonstrations and social movements. In Romania such a contrast reflecting deep social changes can be seen between the 1907 peasant Jacquerie (which it could be argued was an unsuccessful revolution) and the 1989 urban revolution. The consequences also change over time, since what is deemed revolutionary varies as regards both time and space. For instance, the demands made by Solidarity in Poland during 1981 were deemed to be revolutionary in the context of the political system then in place, but, by 1989, with the collapse of communism, such ideas were viewed as being markedly less radical. So also in the case of Romania, the ideas embodied in Consensus would have been highly revolutionary in the context of the Ceauşescu regime, but, once that regime had fallen, they became reactionary relics of past thinking. Revolutions are also country specific and any analysis of the Romanian Revolution has to firmly anchor the structural causes of revolution within the prevailing cultural milieu, because this shapes the language and the symbols employed in mass mobilisation and plays a critical role in fashioning the eventual outcome of the revolution, which is largely determined by the ideology of the new leaders.

By the late 1970s, as the Great Revolutions in centralised agrarian bureaucratic states had given way to a number of revolutions in smaller, modernising and often colonial states, a belief had arisen that modern revolutions were an exclusively Third World, largely peasant affair often manipulated by the Great Powers which require destitution and professional revolutionaries. The popular,
largely spontaneous, urban based Iranian revolution had first challenged these assumptions and the events in Eastern Europe were to overturn them completely, prompting one theorist, Robert Dix, to suggest '...the political events of the late 1980s in eastern Europe require students of revolution either to stipulate that they do not fall under the rubric of revolution (and to specify why not, since they are clearly more than mere reforms), or to modify in certain respects the very definition of the term revolution'. The aforementioned tendency to add various epithets to the word 'revolution' is symptomatic of the second strand of redefinition, and the process can also be clearly seen in the evolution of the definition of the most influential of the so-called 'third generation' of theorists, Theda Skocpol, who in 1979 defined social revolutions as 'rapid, basic transformations of a society's state and class structure; and they are accompanied and in part carried through by class-based revolts from below'. Skocpol's argument by stressing the role of the state as an autonomous actor was that objective factors triumphed over agency — neatly summed up in the aphorism: that revolutions 'happened' rather than were 'made'. However, following the Iranian Revolution of 1979, she was compelled to both admit that revolutions could be 'made', and also to subtly refine her definition by adding the proviso that the 'dominant ideology' must also be transformed and dropping the term 'class-based revolts' in favour of 'popular revolts'. Following the revolutions of 1989 in Eastern Europe, Skocpol's definition has been further refined by Jeff Goodwin to read 'a relatively rapid process in which a society's state structure, economic institutions, and transnational relations are fundamentally transformed; these changes, furthermore, are initiated and/or propelled, at least in part, by mass mobilizations, including armed movements, strikes and/or demonstrations'. This rather inelegant formulation with its various caveats and alternatives has given Skocpol's relatively sparse definition the appearance of a multiple choice question, but, since it is the only definition of revolution which has been consciously shaped in response to the events in Eastern Europe, in keeping with the tautological characteristics of definitions outlined above, it might be expected to be particularly apt for the Romanian case and, indeed, with a certain amount of argument, especially as regards changes in economic institutions, it can be construed to more or less fit — the absence of any reference to the need for a clear political succession, frequently found in other definitions, and the lack of any mention of ideology being particularly useful. Goodwin's definition could be taken as a base point for assessing whether the events in Romania should be considered a revolution, but the danger (or advantage) of following this particular path would seem to be that the definition of revolution will be moulded to fit every new occurrence which acquires popular acceptance as being a revolution and, taken to
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its logical conclusion, this would seem to suggest that revolutions as phenomena will remain to a large extent self-descriptive, named by the actors involved and propagated to the world as such by the international media.

Turning to the first point of Dix's observation two interrelated questions arise: what do we mean by revolution and how does the Romanian Revolution, if we are to term it as such, differ from other related phenomena? Addressing the question of what we mean by revolution first, by and large, it seems possible to agree with Krejčí that the word is associated with two popular metaphors. The first is that it is a relatively quick violent single incident — to borrow the term of Peter Calvert 'the revolutionary event' — the violent overthrow of a government. Conventionally, in history these events have been distinguished by a time related epithet, such as 'The October Revolution' in Russia, the 'February Revolution' of 1848 in Paris and, indeed, this work will suggest that 'The Romanian Revolution of December 1989' might be added to these. Secondly, revolution can embrace a longer process of social change often spanning many decades, in which case, it is usually referred to in more general terms, as in the Russian, French or Chinese Revolution and, of course, there is nothing to prevent several revolutionary events occurring within this process.

These two popular metaphors have been developed in a more theoretical form by Charles Tilly to give his well-known division between revolutionary situations and outcomes. For Tilly, revolution is just a more extreme manifestation of 'normal' politics — seen as a competitive process — and, drawing directly on Lenin and Trotsky's concept of Dual Power, he visualises it in terms of a struggle for political sovereignty, so that revolutionary situations are characterised by multiple sovereignty when 'two or more blocs make effective, incompatible claims to control the state, or to be the state'. The struggle in such situations is usually violent and is often associated with some element of unexpectedness or surprise (distinct from spontaneity). The qualification arising from the fact that it is often not so much the downfall of the regime that is unexpected but the manner and consequences of its fall.

Adopting his model to Eastern Europe, Tilly has suggested that the events of December 1989 in Romania do correspond to a revolutionary situation and, indeed, it is possible to suggest that the transfer of power from the RCP to the NSF did represent some kind of rupture in sovereignty. The most frequently cited examples of the multiple sovereignty upon which Tilly's revolutionary situation model depends are the French Estates General and the Russian Soviets. From these alternative foci of influence opponents of the regime were able to launch their campaign, but, in the case of Romania, such dual power is only discernable for
two days inside Timișoara, between the Romanian Democratic Front established in the Opera House and the remnants of the Party organisation within the County Council building, although, since the protesters effectively controlled the city, it could also be said that such a condition equally existed between Timișoara and the rest of the country as a whole. That multiple sovereignty did not last longer can be explained by two, at first sight, rather contradictory conditions; firstly, high levels of coercion prevented the appearance of an effective opposition and, secondly, at the same time, such was the advanced level of state breakdown in Romania that in the end the regime needed only a limited challenge before it collapsed.

Turning to other possible forms of irregular political challenge, in assessing revolutionary situations the chief need would seem to be to distinguish between them and the two related phenomena of coup d'état and rebellions. Of these by far the most common are coup d'état, with an estimated 586 occurring in the world between 1945 and 1986. Both coups and revolutions are extra—legal takeovers of power, but compared with a revolution a coup has a certain ring of illegality being perceived as conspiratorial rather than ‘open’ and ‘spontaneous’. Ostensibly, coups are far simpler affairs than revolutions, but distinguishing between the two is often a matter of degree rather than absolute differences. For Krejčí, a coup d'état is a relatively mild affair involving a sudden attack on a government, but usually restricted in its objectives and in the degree of ensuing change. A coup generally lacks connotations of mass mobilisation and often passes with minimal bloodshed to be followed by a relatively quick return to what is perceived as normality, since — unlike revolutions — as they are not necessarily associated with state breakdown they lack the deep—seated chaos and turmoil of revolution. Mark Hagopian distinguishes several different types of coup by using the two variables of agency and degree of change instituted. Of the four forms of agency he discusses, two could be construed as having some relevance to the Romanian case. The first of these, on the basis of historical precedent, Hagopian rather confusingly terms palace revolution, although he clearly means palace coup. This low—stakes oligarchical coup results in the direct substitution of an all powerful leader by one or more conspirators drawn from the ranks of the ruling regime. Other than death this can be said to have been the traditional form for leadership change in communist states, during 1989 the leaders of East Germany, Erich Honecker, Bulgaria, Todor Zhikov and Czechoslovakia, Miloš Jakeš, all fell victim to palace coups, and it has become a commonplace in Romania that Ceaușescu’s removal should also be seen in the same light. If the other members of the Party leadership had taken the opportunity to remove Ceaușescu after the 17 December
PEC meeting, it would have been fitting to speak of a palace coup, but his departure from the Central Committee building, just minutes in front of a vengeful crowd, and subsequent flight to Târgoviște seems to accord more with the imagery of revolution than coup d'etat. The other category with some relevance to this case is the military coup, where the military either seizes power or intervenes to secure the succession of another group which they favour and, since there was no direct take-over by the military, it could be argued that in Romania the army acted in support of the Iliescu group, perhaps because they continued to believe in the underlining legitimacy of RCP derived rule.

In the degree of change they institute coups may vary. The simplest form — often seen in the palace coup scenario — is a struggle in which all that is at stake is power and the replacement of existing leaders. Other coups may look for limited reform of policies and administrative practices, aims, sometimes but not exclusively, associated with military coups, whilst others might seek fundamental changes in social institutions. The latter may be termed revolutionary coups, an example being the Portuguese military coup of April 1974. The occurrence of a coup within the revolutionary process does not, therefore, in itself, negate the idea of revolution, and the manner of the removal of the other East European leaders in 1989 is not said to have invalidated their revolutionary experiences for, as Hagopian correctly suggests, a coup within a revolution is just the ‘surface manifestation of much deeper currents of change’. When opponents of the regime charge that Romania experienced some type of coup d'etat, what seems to be at stake is not so much the manner of Ceaușescu's downfall but rather more vexed questions relating to change and, especially, the political succession after his departure. The material presented in this study would suggest that, if the irregular transfer of power in Romania in 1989 was not by revolution, it was through a popular uprising and not a palace coup, because the Iliescu group did not so much as seize power as walk into the vacuum created by the fleeing Ceaușescu. Likewise, the mass mobilisation, widespread violence, spontaneous creation of revolutionary institutions, breakdown of the revolutionary coalition and subsequent fierce struggle between the revolutionary contenders on the streets of Romania's cities, all belong to the repertoire of revolution rather than palace coup. Similarly, the limited scale of the pre-revolutionary conspiracy within the ranks of the military, their continual repression of demonstrations until 22 December 1989 and, then, their somewhat haphazard movement before the fall of Ceaușescu to a position of enforced neutrality, rather than outright defection to the side of the protesters, would seem to preclude talk of a military coup. The military were to acquire their status in the new NSF regime, not so much for their role in the overthrow
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of Ceaușescu, but on account of their prominence in the events after his downfall, and the lack of alternatives in a situation of complete state breakdown.

Quantifying other alternatives to revolution is even more fraught with difficulties, but sometimes distinguished are rebellions, revolts or uprisings. The three will be treated as being synonymous, but, as the words 'rebellion' and 'revolt' both conjure up images of the pre-modern period, the more contemporary sounding 'popular uprising' will be preferred. Indeed, this term is also often used to indicate mass mobilisation within a revolutionary situation and this duality of usage graphically underlines the problems inherent in trying to distinguish between the two. Moreover, since the difference often appears to be a matter of degree rather than substance, over recent years there has been something of a trend to recognise the similarities between such revolutionary and 'revolutionary-like' political processes. The debate over the revolution in Romania often seems to have been artificially conflated for political ends and, broadly, the findings of this study would support this trend towards convergence, as the events can be construed as displaying some of the characteristics of all three of the phenomena under discussion: revolution, popular uprising and coup d'état. Still, in searching for what the Romanian Revolution was or was not, it may be helpful to offer some basis for distinction between a popular uprising and a revolution, with the former again perhaps carrying a 'whiff of illegitimacy'. One way of distinguishing between the two is to follow Tilly who suggests that the former, unlike revolutions, do not lead to a major transfer of state power. However, such a distinction by focusing on success or failure downplays any other distinguishing traits and would imply that, at least in Romania, where there was a transfer of sovereignty, it is not possible to talk of an uprising alone. As an alternative, it may be better, rather than seeing uprisings as being essentially revolutions which did not meet their initial goals (events better termed as failed revolutions), to consider them as distinct entities in their own right. Expanding the success/failure dichotomy, it is possible to suggest that the two phenomena may also vary in geographical spread, since uprisings are frequently (but not always) confined to a relatively limited locality, whereas revolutions, because they invariably involve the attempted seizure of the state, are more often fought out on the national stage. However, this in turn suggests there may be underlying differences in the aims of the two movements, and adapting the model advanced by Hagopian three further indicators may be suggested.

Firstly, it would seem, that the stakes at risk in an uprising differ from that of a revolution. Hagopian suggests that an uprising does not call the social order into question and, specifically, that there is no attack on the class structure. However, in a socially homogeneous state, such as Romania, such an observation
has less validity, and it may be better to see the prime aims of an uprising as rectification and those of a revolution as redistribution. Thus, although demands for the rectification of grievances often feature prominently in the early stages of a revolution, within the process there will also occur a wide scale redistribution of political and economic power, leading to major shifts in social structure. Secondly, in contrast to uprisings, normally discernable at all times within the revolutionary process is an overall purposiveness, which can take the form of a steady ideological commitment, but is more likely to lie within a broader future orientated trajectory. This enables a revolution, once power is gained, to rapidly pass beyond the largely destructive urges associated with the identification of scapegoats, which characterises uprisings, and, instead, move to exit state breakdown (which in itself appears to belong to revolutions rather than uprisings) through a considered political strategy. Thirdly, in order to effect these aims a revolution is more likely to throw up leaders from within the ranks of the established élite, whilst rebellions tend to be headed by 'natural' but inexperienced leaders thrown up by the crowd. Apart from the last point, which is clearly seen in Romania, the other issues are more complicated and will be considered at greater length later in this chapter. Suffice it to say at this point, that, as has already been suggested within chapters three and four, a broad 'globalist' trajectory can be discerned within the élite revolutionary coalition in Romania and, although the initial impetus of the revolution was for rectification, the NSF was pushed, admittedly it seems rather unwillingly, towards first a redistribution of political power and then, subsequently, a very piecemeal redistribution of economic power.

Accepting that it might be possible to characterise the events of December 1989 in Romania as a revolutionary situation, what about the outcome? For Tilly the outcome of a revolution is marked by the 'transfer of state power from those who held it before the start of multiple sovereignty to a new ruling coalition', by which he implies the triumph of one group over another or a settlement between belligerents which restores sovereignty, allowing the state once more to command a monopoly of violence, taxation and justice. In Tilly's model it follows that, if a revolutionary situation is going to lead to a revolutionary outcome — and the most radical of situations do not necessarily lead to the most radical of outcomes — then some degree of political succession is necessary. However, what constitutes a political succession other than a change of faces in the upper echelons of the regime remains highly contentious; indeed, Tilly noticeably feels constrained to continue his very definition of revolutionary outcomes with the proviso that the new group in power 'may, of course, include some elements of the old ruling coalition'. In a
colourful idiom, Calvert makes exactly the same point when he notes that ‘Unlike boxers, fallen politicians find it relatively easy to make a successful comeback’, and Krejci soberly cautions that ‘To my knowledge there has been no successful revolution in which the revolutionary leadership has not been to a substantial extent recruited from the cultural élite of the ancien régime’. Revolutions seldom bring as clean a break with the past as their protagonists would like to suggest or hope, and any effort to determine the extent of political succession — as in all questions relating to degrees of change in revolutionary situations — is liable to be highly subjective. Indeed, Calvert suggests that revolutions, because they hinge on such a subjective and politically charged variable as change, are fundamentally contested concepts incapable of definition.

Some indicia of the degree of political succession might be established by mapping office holders before and after the event, but, even if such information was readily available, the results of such an exercise will still largely be determined by both the spatial and temporal parameters chosen for such a comparison. Moreover, since the legitimacy of post-revolutionary regimes largely rests on being seen as a ‘true’ political succession, such an exercise is necessarily highly politically charged. Many revolutions after initial periods of radicalism do appear to close in some form of Thermidorian reaction and, certainly, in terms of personnel changes, Romania, five years after 1989, no longer looks so out of place in an Eastern Europe which has seen a string of neo-socialist parties returned to power, and one country, Hungary, elect a former Foreign Minister under the previous regime, Gyula Horn, as Prime Minister. Since change is largely culturally specific, evaluations can only really be made within the appropriate domestic context, but at the time of the revolutions in 1989, Romania was often invidiously compared with elsewhere in Eastern Europe when the downfall of the Ceauşescu regime brought to the fore not charismatic new faces, such as Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel and Zheliu Zhelev, but a clutch of rather grey former senior RCP apparatchiks.

Aside from the obvious problems of deciding the time frame of any comparison and the number and type of posts to be compared (direct equivalents not being easily established after the changes instituted by the revolution), such an exercise to gauge the degree of political succession, would also have to tackle the thorny question of what constituted the old regime. In Romania, at their broadest, the lines of demarcation have been extended to include all former members of the RCP, but since this numbered nearly four million, this is judged as unfeasible by all but the most obdurate of anti-communists, and an intermediary measure, more widely promoted by opponents of the new regime, has been membership of the nomenclatura estimated at 200,000. However, the bounds of such a body are
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also notoriously difficult to circumscribe and, even if they could be ascertained, many within the NSF would have argued that, given the concentration of power in the hands of Ceaușescu and his followers, the only useful measure was those who held sufficient power to influence in some way the executive policy decisions of the regime — that is largely the members of the Central Committee and others within the upper echelons of the RCP who, according to all the available evidence, were effectively ousted from power by the revolution. Whilst many of the most prominent members of the NSF did come from the second and third echelons of the Party, the position of leaders such as Iliescu, Brucan and Bîrlădeanu was more ambivalent since, although they all had previously held high political office, by 1989 they lay well outside the boundaries of power, and it is salutary to note that, in an article written in 1987, one of the foremost Western commentators on Romanian affairs found it positively absurd that someone as far distant from the centre of power as Iliescu should be considered as a possible future leader of Romania. From the evidence available about the composition of the NSF, this study has argued that there was a definite political succession in Romania which saw the old communist bosses replaced by a younger generation of technocrats, nearly all of whom were from the second and third echelons of the Party, but few of whom had been able to wield as much influence as they wished during the later Ceaușescu years.

Although it is possible to see revolution as being essentially a political phenomenon, it seems that to be placed in the ranks of the Great Revolutions, an event has to incorporate as well as some degree of political succession, a complex matrix of political, cultural and socio-economic change. To distinguish them from political revolutions, where only governmental institutions are changed, these revolutions have been termed social revolutions, since they involve not only a thoroughgoing transformation of the polity but also of the very social basis of political power; although in the case of Romania, where the state and the incumbent elite were so central to the ownership and the control of the economy, it would be difficult, anyway, to differentiate between the two forms of revolution. The changes required for such a revolution to occur necessarily take time and, indeed, if socially homogenised Romania is to experience a full-blown social revolution, then many would argue a new social class, the bourgeoisie, will have to be (re)constructed, and building such a group will perform take far longer than the destruction of the Kulaks ever did. Krejčí sees such revolutions involving fundamental change as necessarily being strung out over many decades — he dates the French Revolution as lasting from 1776 to 1884 — and even Skocpol, whose very definition
of revolution includes the word ‘rapid’, visualizes the process spanning a number of years, dating the French Revolution from 1787 to 1800 and the Chinese from 1911 to 1949. It would seem that the end points of revolutions are as difficult to pin down as the processes themselves, but, broadly, it seems possible to divide between ‘short-term’ political orientated endpoints and ‘long-term’ views which emphasise the playing out of all the wider consequences of the process. Amongst the advocates of the former view may be rated Tilly, and also Samuel Huntington, who suggests that “complete revolution involves the creation and institutionalization of a new political order” into which an “explosion” of popular participation in national affairs is channeled.’ This view is also endorsed by Skocpol, who perhaps somewhat surprisingly, chooses a political endpoint for her social revolutions, as she stresses the reconsolidation of power under a new élite, by which she implies reconstruction of coercive and administrative structures. In keeping with his view of revolution being a long-term process, Krejci casts a far wider net and endorses Edwards’ view that ‘a revolution dies out in a curiously insignificant and inconsequential way.’ The end is a ‘process of accommodation’ culminating in ‘an arrangement…whereby the different factions in the revolutionary society have their reciprocal relations defined, and their spheres of action worked out…. The main principles which the revolution has established cease to be matters of controversy’. If a revolution is to be a true turning-point in the national history of a state, then it does seem its importance will only become fully visible in considerable retrospect, suggesting that whatever criteria are employed to determine the end of the process, it is still far too early after the passage of only five years, since the events of December 1989, to pass a final judgement on whether the process as a whole should be accorded the status of a revolution. Indeed, whether Romania will ever reach a ‘true’ revolutionary outcome has often been called into question, with Tilly, for one writing in 1992, expressing doubts even after the potentially radical revolutionary situation which developed in 1989 that such a stage will ever be reached. Certainly, the time frame covered by this work, 15 December 1989 until 1 February 1990, would seem, at first sight, to be far too short to register any clear indications as to the eventual outcome. However, it does appear, that some form of ‘short-term’ political ending can occur before the culmination of the ‘long-term’ process, because taking the criteria outlined above regarding the reassertion of political sovereignty and the reconsolidation of power and moulding them to Edwards’ idea of settlement, it would seem possible to suggest, in hindsight, that by the beginning of February 1990 the NSF was well on its way to consolidating its hold on power. More importantly, the consensual agreement of territorially based
Western democratic forms together with the establishment of the PCNU meant that the future shape of Romania's political institutions had broadly been decided even before the adoption of a new constitution and the elections of May 1990. To a substantial degree by this early date the political institutions established by the revolution had already ceased to be a matter of contention, bar the issue of the King which still remains on the political agenda of some parties, and, thus, one outcome of the process had been decided which in Romanian terms was 'revolutionary' in form, if not yet in content. However, the formation of new political institutions did not mark the termination of the socio-economic changes and the revolution as a political process continues and, indeed, given the extremity of the socio-economic strains within the system, it may be that rather than being totally closed the door for the development of alternative political institutions remains ajar, with the situation lingering in a condition of only temporary stasis. Certainly, with the victory of Iliescu at both elections and the continuing strength of the DNSF within parliament, Romania has not yet had to negotiate a peaceful and legal transfer of power to an opposition grouping, a process which arguably will be the full test of political maturity.

Before closing this section, although many of these conclusions will be further amplified within this and the next chapter, a general statement on the argument to be advanced may be useful so as to aid nomenclatural clarity. This study seeks to show that Nicolae Ceaușescu was toppled through an irregular political action which exhibited more the characteristics associated with a revolutionary situation than a coup d'état or uprising. Thus, throughout, the term 'Romanian Revolution' has been used specifically in relation to the revolutionary situation that arose between December 1989 and January 1990 and, since this period has been the main subject of study within this work, the title 'The Romanian Revolution of December 1989' conveys this relatively narrow interpretation of revolution. As far as the Romanian Revolution as a process and the eventual revolutionary outcome are concerned, although it can be argued that an apparent political settlement of the revolution was reached at the beginning of February 1990 with the creation of the PCNU, it nevertheless seems too early to pass an overall verdict, since the parameters of change still appear to remain open to radical reinterpretation.

The causes of the Romanian Revolution

Having circumscribed the field of discussion and proposed that the events which swept Romania in December 1989 can be considered as a revolutionary situation, it now seems possible to turn to the questions of why this situation developed in the country and, particularly, why the revolutionary event took such a relatively
violent form. Relatively, because, despite a death toll exceeding 1,000, compared with many revolutions, the Romanian Revolution was not particularly violent and only in juxtaposition with the other ‘peaceful’ Eastern European Revolutions of 1989 did it appear so. Indeed, even within the confines of the fall of communism the Romanian experience now, five years later, no longer seems so exceptional, as a succession of conflicts, some large other small, have flared across the bounds of the former Marxist–Leninist sphere from Yugoslavia to Tadzhikistan and even onto the streets of Moscow itself.

When considering the causes of revolutionary situations it does not seem to be possible to construct a rigid aetiology, rather they appear to result from the conjunction of a number of background conditions and casual mechanisms which vary from case to case. In each instance different combinations of context and causes lead to the same outcome. However, put at its most simple, a revolutionary situation needs the appearance of individuals or more probably a group or amalgamation of groups — a revolutionary coalition — willing to challenge the ruling regime, and for a ‘true’ revolution to occur, most would hold that this group should draw its strength from ‘below’ rather than ‘above’, although elements of the elite are usually present. Indeed, since the new leadership is normally drawn from the old élite, this presupposes a division within their ranks prior to the revolution. Then, in order for these revolutionary contenders to succeed, the authorities have to be incapable of meeting their challenge. These two prerequisites may be termed mobilisation of revolutionary challengers and state breakdown, and to them can be added a third necessity, a permissive international environment. A consideration of the causes of the Romanian revolution has to be built around the complex interaction of these three factors since, although successful mobilisation is not possible without state breakdown, the latter will only result in paralytic stasis if no political contenders emerge; and, neither mobilisation nor state breakdown will lead to a successful revolutionary outcome if a neighbouring power is determined to prevent such an event — as occurred in Hungary in 1956.

A successful revolutionary situation does not just require the appearance of revolutionary contenders who have the intention and capability of acting but also the acceptance — frequently given through passivity — by a large proportion of the population that these revolutionary challengers have a legitimate right to supplant the ruling regime. Even in Romania, where the revolution drew thousands onto the streets, many more remained at home watching the events on television, but, crucially, these onlookers were sufficiently alienated from the regime not to rise in its support, and in contrast to a few days earlier, when Ceaușescu through the County Party Secretaries had been able to send 10,000 Oltenian workers to
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Timișoara, the Party machinery by the 22 December had so collapsed that the state was no longer able to mobilise the workers in its cause.⁴⁸

For the regime to lose the support of the population, allowing the possibility of popular mobilisation, there has to be a widespread sense of discontent. Reflecting social and ethnic diversity the roots of this discontent may be many and varied, affecting the whole population or just certain specific groups and locales. Such diversity does not lend itself easily to analysis, but a model advanced by Krejčí presenting grievances in terms of a number of disproportions or contrasts, which bring about a state of multiple dysfunction, allows for the broad outlines of discontent to be mapped.⁴⁹ However, this is not to say discontent in itself is sufficient to fuel a revolution, for as Aya notes 'grievances are as indispensable to revolution as oxygen is to combustion'. Yet grievances no more explain revolutions than oxygen explains fires and for mass mobilisation to occur during a revolutionary situation these discontents have to be focused through an organisational base.⁵⁰

The most obvious cause of grievance in Romania during 1989 was the economic catastrophe sweeping the nation. The country was not alone in facing problems, as all the command economies of Eastern Europe were by the 1980s entering terminal decay, but in Romania the crisis was particularly acute due to a number of policy options chosen by Ceaușescu. The factors behind the economic crisis are complex, but, at its heart, lay the stifling rigidities of a system in which all transactions were politically determined by plan — in the case of Romania this was so complicated that by the 1970s it comprised over 10 million indicators — with little account being paid to questions of supply and demand or to international and domestic market forces.⁵¹ Within this system it was impossible to measure 'efficiency', since there were no real prices and money played a purely passive role as a unit of account following politically determined allocations rather than acting as a constraint.⁵² The overriding rationale was not the provision of goods and services but the procuring and, then, controlling of resources. Thus, central bodies accumulated resources to generate further resources — for the 'inner logic of socialism was to accumulate means of production' — factory managers hoarded and padded their budgets so as to be able to fulfill the dictates of the plan and consumers struggled to extract scarce goods from 'grouchy' shop assistants.⁵³ The result was an endemic economy of shortage in which competition was only seen in terms of maximising bargaining power and goods were invested with a high degree of political significance. Within this politically driven system the economy became fossilised and perpetually locked into a Stalinist dream of heavy industrialisation,
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more suited to the late nineteenth century than the close of the twentieth. Fur­
thermore, this autarkic extensive growth model of Stalinist development had been
shaped in the resource rich Soviet Union, and when it was imposed on Romania,
it proved to be fundamentally unsuitable for the country, producing a fatal imbal­
ance between inputs and outputs. This model of dependent development, aside
from producing an intrinsically dysfunctional economy, was also to prove highly
resistant to reform since it created intractable spheres of self-interest which led all
attempts at modifying the system to founder on bureaucratic obduracy.

Of all the economies of Eastern Europe the Romanian was particularly out-
moded, as Ceaușescu, steeped in a Stalinist vision acquired during his formative
years, constructed a succession of heavy industrial white elephants which were
little short of ecological and economic disaster areas, far behind Western levels of
technological development. During the 1980s, as the obvious discrepancy between
West and East became more apparent, the regime had adopted a defensive pos­
ture insisting on an intensification of autarky, limiting modernisation and cutting
don down on the flow of information so that contact with the outside world effectively
ended, a state of affairs most strikingly seen in Ceaușescu's prohibitions curtailing
communications with foreigners. However, this strategy had only antagonised
the technical intelligentsia, who becoming totally alienated from the ideals of the
regime, sought instead to eliminate the technical gap and catch up with the West
so as to enter the information technology age.

The dysfunctions within the Romanian economy were further exacerbated by
the balance of payments crisis which arose in the early 1980s and, in particular,
by Ceaușescu's drastic response to the exigency, which saw domestic consump­
tion slashed to the bone in order to finance a crash debt repayment programme.
The critical situation in part arose because of excessive borrowing and bad invest­
ment decisions made in previous decades, but Romania’s debt ratio was no worse
than many other Eastern European countries at the end of the 1970s, and the
crisis of the early 1980s largely stemmed from two adverse developments in the
global economy, both of which lay outside the control of the Romanian authori­
ties. Firstly, building on Romania's traditional interests in the oil industry a great
deal of investment under Ceaușescu had poured into facilities for the processing of
secondary petroleum products. However, after the second oil crisis of 1978, when
the price of these secondary products failed to rise proportionately in relation to
the cost of imported crude, it was estimated that the country was losing $25 on
every tonne of refined products sold in the West. Secondly, in the same period
the country was also caught in the backwash of Poland's potential default of out­
standing loans and unexpectedly found Western bankers unwilling to refinance her

debts. At the same time, an unexpected slump in agricultural production, partly caused by adverse weather conditions but basically resulting from years of neglect in favour of the industrial sector, had also brought shortfalls for both the domestic and important export markets.

The extreme measures adopted meant that by the mid 1980s the debt crisis was largely overcome, but Ceauşescu remained unwilling to change policy over repayment or to make the necessary shifts from extensive mobilisation of ever greater resources to intensive growth based on technological innovation and efficient use of these resources. His reluctance to countenance such changes may well have stemmed from fears of the political consequences, since not only could such a reversal, if undertaken, have been construed as an admission of previous domestic policy mistakes, but also it would have amounted to an unacceptable political shift from the workers towards the technocratic intelligentsia. Instead, the rhetoric of mobilisation continued unabated, coercion remained the only sanction deployed for not fulfilling the plan, money poured into a series of grandiose schemes, the most gross of which was the large-scale redevelopment of the centre of Bucharest, and the domestic economy was squeezed until the pips squeaked to pay off all foreign debts.\(^57\) The rationale behind the continuation of the debt repayment programme, long beyond the point when it was sensible or desirable, remains difficult to fathom. Within the framework of the overall quest for autarky, it may have been undertaken to secure the aim of complete national independence of action, although, as time wore on, freedom from interdependence increasingly came to resemble nothing short of isolation. Alternatively, it might have been in part rooted in Ceauşescu's (re)embracement of peasant notions such as 'limited good' — the idea that the cake is only so large — in place of mainstream economic policy.\(^58\) Whatever the case, the result was an economic catastrophe, in which the Romanian economy, no longer capable of self-reproduction, atrophied to the point of total collapse. Any meagre improvements recorded in standards of living during the previous decades were swept away. Everyday life became one of shortage and rationing, with long queues forming outside shops, as consumer goods and even basic foodstuffs disappeared from the shelves. In this bleak world power cuts were frequent to conserve electricity and a crumbling infrastructure brought deteriorating health and welfare provisions.

The initial response of the Romanian people to this economic decline was to seek ways to bypass the system, as in time-honoured fashion, they turned to an informal secondary sphere which was almost entirely parasitical on formal institutions (in contrast with countries such as Hungary where the second economy to a certain extent functioned independently from formal structures). Through the
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trading of mutual favours, bribery, and even petty theft from the workplace, many scarce goods were secured by those who knew the 'right people' — a situation well caught in the popular paronomasia that the initials PCR stood not for Romanian Communist Party (Partidul Communist Român) but for connections, acquaintances and relations '(pile, cunoștiințe și relații). The long-term consequences of this excessive use of the informal sphere may have been socially disastrous, as it led to anomie, falling public standards and increased social atomisation (at least to the family level), but short-term, during the first half of the 1980s, it seems that only the ability of formal institutions to provide the required goods was questioned, and enough resources remained available in the informal sphere to satisfy the needs of sufficiently large numbers of the population to ensure quiescence. Indeed, Sampson suggests that inability to obtain scarce resource at this time was interpreted not in terms of a failure of the system but rather as personal ineptitude, as he noted at the time, the system malfunctioned but continued to 'muddle through' or stagnate. However, during the later 1980s, the shortages seem to have become more acute and, when fewer and fewer people even with the requisite connections were able to acquire the resources they required, the system began to topple over into crisis as the vast majority began to question their ability to find solutions even within the informal sphere.

Likewise, within the industrial sector, shortages and the complications of the plan had initially merely introduced a flexibility into the system, allowing for the worst of the bottlenecks to be bypassed. Again, although it permitted the system to function, such a strategy had long-term pernicious consequences, since it bred a 'softness' which produced a tendency for official policy and directives to be ignored or only partly enacted and for failures to be covered by false indicators, often to maintain salary levels once they had been linked to plan fulfillment. The system from top to bottom came to rest on a huge lie of such monumental proportions that, effectively shorn of all reliable statistical indicators, planning targets came to be set completely without rhyme or reason. Only after the revolution was the full extent of the fraud exposed, as NSF spokesmen revealed that much trumpeted triumphs, such as the 1989 record harvest of 60 million tonnes, were empty boasts covering the grim reality of a pitiful yield of only 17 million tonnes. Within the confines of the plan the Romanian economy was visualised as being a 'single factory', an intricate whole interconnected by a complex net of chains, but, as the shortages grew, the links began to snap and the system plunged towards complete breakdown. As elsewhere in Eastern Europe the RCP had sought political legitimisation through continued high levels of economic growth, claiming its right to rule partly on the basis of its capability in running the economy and, despite the
rigours of the 1980s, the myth of technical development continued to sustain the official ideology of Marxism–Leninism, although in Romania the picture was complicated by Ceauşescu’s linking of economic growth to the political aim of national independence. However, by the twilight of the Ceauşescu years, no amount of false statistics could hide the extent of the economic crisis and, once it became clear that the regime was failing to meet even its own self proclaimed goals, the official ideology was eroded and, ultimately, the very legitimacy of the regime.

The depth and high visibility of the economic crisis places it at the heart of any analysis of the causes of the revolution, both as a source of popular discontent and as an important factor contributing to state breakdown. Indeed, the economic roots of the crisis, somewhat ironically allow, what eventually became a revolution against Marxism–Leninism, to become partly explicable in terms of Marxist analysis, and, importantly, this was how some of the leaders of the revolution, most noticeably Brucan, apparently imparted an intellectual rationale to their actions. Marx had argued that the main precondition for the outbreak of a revolution was the existence of a contradiction between productive forces and the mode of production, that is, between the state of technology (‘technical possibilities’) and the socio-economic system (‘the utilisation of those possibilities by a particular socio-economic formation’). Placing social classes into this equation, revolution was seen as stemming from the clash of antagonistic interests: one seeking the preservation of the existing mode of production, the other striving for its transformation. Applying a traditional Marxist class based analysis to a homogenised society such as Romania was clearly impossible, so Brucan was forced to recast the antagonistic social groups. On the side of those seeking change he placed most of the technical and cultural élite, whilst, ranged against them, was the central bureaucracy, the main force striving for the preservation of the status quo. The working class were ascribed an ambiguous role, being fundamentally conservative, but with the possibility that they could be won to the side of the ‘progressive’ forces. Through envisaging a palace coup triggered with a popular uprising in terms of the Marxism in which they apparently continued to place some belief, the incoming leaders of the NSF were able to invest their plans to remove Ceauşescu — who could be cast as an impediment to rational development on the Marxist model — with an intellectual legitimisation which aided self-belief and allowed them to justify their actions to their peers within the customary ideological framework. Such a belief also opened up the possibility of an ideological continuum beyond the revolution, since the motive forces prompting the change
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of regime could be seen as conforming to the inexorable passage of the wheel of history as refracted through the Marxian dialectic.66

Moreover, if the ‘Marxian contradiction’ is seen in terms of productive forces rather than classes and, then divided into endogenous and exogenous variants, it was possible to further place the Romanian Revolution within Marxist terms of analysis. In this reading of the situation, the ‘contradiction’ lies between advanced foreign technology and obstructive local institutions, and since a discernable motive force behind the Iliescu group, as they seized power, was the desire to bridge the gap between Romanian and Western levels of development; the Romanian Revolution can be said to be in some ways a ‘catching up revolution’ with a dominant leitmotif of emulating foreign levels of modernisation — a characteristic shared with many other revolutions including the Russian, Chinese and Turkish cases.67

In Romania during the late 1980s the economic crisis meant that to an outside visitor conditions at time appeared so bad that they could be said to be approaching the ‘state of immiseration’ Marx saw as being a necessary precursor of revolution. However, although conditions did deteriorate within the last decade of Ceauşescu’s rule, the informal sector appears to have continued to function sufficiently to insure there was no famine and, in fact, probably more inimical to public health, were the breakdown of medical services and the frequent absence of winter heating.68 However, poverty in itself does not posit revolution, for, as Trotsky remarked, ‘...if it were, the masses would be always in revolt’.69 Thus, although the economic situation in Romania played an important part in fomenting discontent, the situation had not newly arrived in 1989 and, indeed, during much of the 1980s outside commentators continued to be puzzled by the apparent quiescence of the Romanian people in the face of such adversity.

Instead of absolute destitution it may be a sense of relative deprivation that is more important in galvanizing revolutionary mobilisation. The famous J-curve of James Davies holds that revolutions are likely to break out when economic or social improvement are followed by reversal leading to a gap between expectations and achievement.70 Davies’ ideas were further adapted by Ted Robert Gurr, who produced a number of models plotting various ratios of relative deprivation, denoting the tension between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction, with the most explosive combination, in which rising expectations are met by falling capabilities — as in the J-curve — being termed ‘progressive deprivation’.71 At first sight, this model seems to fit Romania particularly well, with the economic advances of the 1960s and 1970s being followed by a sharp reversal during the 1980s. When placed against an external measure, the reversal was particularly striking,
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since after seemingly being in reach of Western levels of development, the decline of the last decade when matched against a spurt in Western growth — which marked the introduction of a new accelerated, computer driven, flexible and specialised capitalism, a world away from the rigidities of heavy industrialisation — produced not only an unbridgeable gulf but also a total asynchronisation of systems. Relative deprivation would also seem to be potentially most destabilising when it is accompanied by a belief that it is the regime itself which is either responsible for the disastrous mess or incapable of rectifying the situation. And this was particularly evident in the totalising monolithism of Eastern European socialism where the Communist Party's claim to a monopoly of power laid it open to blame for all of society's ills, and, in the case of Romania, the cult of the supreme leader meant that the buck really did stop with the semi-deified Ceaușescu. However, economic relative deprivation would still seem to explain discontent rather than revolution and, arguably, progressive deprivation has been even sharper in Romania since 1989, when the gap between hopes and reality has at times approached a crushing abyss.

Despite the appalling socio-economic conditions during the late 1980s, it seems that more destabilising in terms of relative deprivation was the popular perception that a considerable gap had arisen between the moral values of the 'people' and the regime, although this perception derived to a certain extent from an economic base. Moral relative deprivation is also subject to endogenous and exogenous variants and has a particularly complex interaction with political culture. To quote Trotsky once again 'It is necessary that the bankruptcy of the social regime, being conclusively revealed, should make these [economic] privations intolerable,...' If a society is to hold together and keep to its own rules through conviction or imitation rather than due to the unrestrained exercise of coercion, as by an occupying army, then the ruling élite has to enjoy a certain amount of moral authority. Succinctly put, there has to be a belief that the incumbent regime is worthy to rule, and if the moral authority of the leaders falls, and the disparity between society's expectations of its rulers and the reality grows, then social cohesion will collapse. In Romania, the Ceaușescu regime was widely perceived as being totally morally bankrupt well before 1989. As already observed, the 'softness' of the system brought widespread corruption and petty theft, but, more crucially, as economic conditions deteriorated and the 'us' without access to resources swelled in direct proportion to the degree to which the 'them', that still could gain scarce goods, shrank to include only the higher members of the Party élite and a small number of black-marketeers, then public anger mounted. After passing through the corrupted informal information channels this sense of
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outrage emerged in the form of exaggerated rumour and gossip, which cast the leadership as nothing less than grasping and debauched tyrants surrounded by sycophantic and parasitical minions — an image given extra resonance when held up in comparison with the egalitarian ideals of socialism. Such impressions were reinforced by the worst excesses of the cult, which often portrayed the Ceaușescus as being akin to royalty. Nicolae Ceaușescu to a limited extent appears to have been protected prior to 1989 from the worst of these stories, perhaps by virtue of his second cult image as a hard-working and somewhat puritanical revolutionary, but his wife and children, especially Nicu, were subject to the full gamut of public innuendo. Zoia Ceaușescu was said to possess pure gold scales for weighing the meat of her dogs (meat which most Romanians could only dream of eating), Nicu Ceaușescu was portrayed as a debauched playboy presiding at bacchanalian orgies, and Elena Ceaușescu as a second Imelda Marcos in her love of opulence and finery, an image reinforced by her habit of sporting the latest haute couture in a country in which only old fashioned and shabby clothing was available from the shops. Although the reality in every case appears to have been rather more prosaic and shabby than the lurid tales so often reproduced in the Western press suggested, the stories of excess in a land of poverty, fatally undercut the last remaining shreds of legitimacy enjoyed by the regime.

The impact of the fall in the moral authority of the regime was felt throughout the country, but it had a particular bearing in those regions which considered they held a more developed civic culture — principally, the former Austro-Hungarian lands and the larger cities. Specifically, within the seat of the revolution, the Banat, Traian Birăescu has stressed the higher civic culture of the area, writing that Homo Timisensis is characterised by tolerance, understanding and a predisposition to civic harmony. Traditionally, Timișoarans have taken pride in their orientation westward and other Romanians have tended to view the region with respect for its identification with Western values. The isolationism and moral failings of the Ceaușescu regime were the diametric opposites to these traditions, and this has led Miodrag Milin to note that the Romanian Revolution did not break out where the misery was greatest but where the shame was strongest. The measure of relative moral deprivation was, thus, not just confined to Romania, but extended across the frontiers of the state to embrace an often unrealistically utopian vision of life in the West. However, comparisons with the West had always been made and they had remained consistently unflattering throughout the 1980s. What changed in 1989 was that, as the boundaries of the East-West divide started to dissolve, the Romanians suddenly found themselves in an invidious position vis à vis not only the West but also the other states of Eastern European with
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even Bulgaria (whose television could be received in Bucharest) on 10 November 1989 removing the elderly Todor Zhikov from power. In the case of Timisoara the contrast was even more striking, since Hungary — a state with which the ethnic Hungarian population of the area could obviously identify — lay just across the border. Great changes were taking place across Eastern Europe, was Romania to remain the only country in the Bloc (Albania overlooked) shackled under an enfeebled neo-Stalinist dictator? The prospect was too hard to bear and this was the shame that drove the dynamic of revolution and the realisation voiced by many of the revolutionaries that it was 'now or never'.

In Romania, popular perceptions of the moral failings of the Ceaușescu regime allied with economic hardship to fuel a widespread sense of wrong, leading a large segment of the nation to search for an alternative vision of justice which would bring both political and economic gains — most commonly expressed at its simplest level in terms of basic human rights and consumer goods. Commitment to such an alternative vision naturally varied with perceptions of injustice being greater within some groups than others. It was, for example, particularly high within the ethnic Hungarian minority, which considered it had been subject to illegitimate assimilatory pressures. This made them potentially highly volatile as a group and may partly explain why the revolution caught fire in Timisoara amongst the Hungarian population, although, as noted previously, their protest was soon lost within broader ethnic Romanian disturbances. These popular alternative conceptions of justice were invested by members of the marginalised élite with an intellectually based moral rigorism — often expressed in terms of a collective need to cleanse the nation’s soul. Through this they were able to both define the gap between themselves and the debased Ceaușescu regime, which they presented as being the incarnation of tyranny in its barbarous oppression of the ‘people’, and present an aura of moral rectitude, which both fuelled their anger and imparted an air of actual authority. Projected back onto society, this alternative conception of justice produced a stark black and white picture of a battle between good and evil, raising the stakes of the revolutionary struggle and, by placing Ceaușescu and his Securitate henchmen outside the moral pale of normal society, it marked them out as targets for extra-legal retribution.

This alternative set of moral values may be supportive to a wider package of utopian reforms in the shape of a radical new ideology which offers a different paradigm for the structuring of society. The belief that revolutions have to be ideologically driven changes in world-view arose from the Jacobins, is central to Marx, and has recently been re-stated by Walzer, who defines revolutions as ‘an
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attempt to seize power in order to "establish a new moral and material world and to impose, or evoke, radically new patterns of day-to-day conduct". According to this view, revolutions are marked not just by conflicts for power but by a definite intention on the part of one group to bring a radical ideologically driven change to state and society. By this definition, the events in Romania would fail to cross the threshold of revolutions, since the incoming NSF apparently lacked radical intentions and certainly failed to enact an ideologically driven programme of transformation, with change, instead, often occurring in a reluctant and piecemeal fashion. However, these strongly voluntarist views of revolution have been robustly challenged by structuralists, such as Skocpol, who initially found little space for ideology in her argument that revolutions ‘happened’ rather than ‘were made’ and, although she has subsequently somewhat modified her position, her interpretation still remains essentially ‘nonintentionist’. For Skocpol the leaders of a revolution are not ‘master planners’ but members of the ‘marginal élite’ who amidst the chaos of state breakdown, and often fierce revolutionary conflicts set about building new ‘state organisations’, with the victors in the struggle being not those with ‘the most coherent or innovative ideologies’ but those who ‘most successfully used popular political mobilisation for state building purposes’. Such a characterisation of revolution fits the Romanian case well and, in broadly adopting it, three points may be further amplified.

Firstly, revolutions do not occur in a vacuum outside the prevailing international or domestic environment, and what constitutes a radical ideology is largely determined by the historico-cultural context. The ideology of Consensus espoused by the NSF, as it seized power, was closely related to perestroika and took many of the forms of what has been dubbed ‘constitutional communism’. Set within the context of the Ceauşescu regime, it can be argued that these ideas embracing a return to ‘true socialism’ were ‘revolutionary’, but by the time they were presented to the nation, not only was Ceauşescu gone but the RCP had collapsed and the road to a post-communist future lay open. The goalposts had moved and the degree of change promised by Consensus was not sufficient to satisfy the more vocal revolutionaries on the streets of Bucharest.

Secondly, it is difficult to see revolutions as following a smooth linear progression from the ideological intentions of the first revolutionaries through to a ‘successful’ outcome. Instead, the goals of all the Great Revolutions have tended to evolve as the process continued. The idea that revolution is a single logical and coherent event is a Jacobin myth, and interpretations which subscribe to such a view, are usually teleological tracings casting the revolution solely in terms of the ‘inevitable’ victory of the triumphant ideology over its vanquished opponents.
Such works, as any student of Eastern Europe under communism will know, usually do little more than reflect the prevailing myths of the official ideology, presenting history in terms of a series of stepping stones towards a preordained destiny. In truth, as De Tocqueville noted, revolutions bring about far less change than revolutionaries claim and revolutionary intentions are rarely clearly discerned during the early stages of the process. Instead, as Doyle has suggested in relation to the French Revolution, the process is more likely to have been 'the product of a series of accidents, chances and mischances, choices (unfortunate but real enough), and fateful miscalculations; and that, thanks to all these things, events moved in certain directions that nobody could have foreseen or, in many cases, even desired or dreamed of.' The eventual revolutionary outcome may, therefore, be radically different from that intended by the first actors, even if they manage to survive the revolutionary process. Napoleon was not on the revolutionary horizon in 1789 and radical social revolutions were not seen as being necessarily 'on the agenda' when Qing rule collapsed in China and Romanov in Russia. The radical outcomes of these latter revolutions were brought about by the implementation of particular programmes by vanguard groups who seized power during the revolutionary process. Revolutions do not enact the most radical ideas, but the ideas of the victors, and it is not unknown for more radical ideologies to be defeated during the revolutionary struggle. Indeed, it may be argued, that it could well be inimical to their cause for the eventual victors to clearly spell out their ideology at any early stage because, in order to build the widest possible revolutionary coalition, it is advantageous for them to present themselves as a broad church, and, indeed, successful mobilisation appears to require the fusing and condensing of "several ideological discourses into a single major theme, usually, expressed in a single slogan" — encapsulated in the Romanian case by the omnipresent 'Liberty!' Therefore, rather than one narrow carefully prescribed path there is often discernable within the revolutionary process an altogether broader trajectory, 'a certain line of development, an image of orientation or a sense of socio-historical direction which links the beginning and the end of the revolutionary process.' In Romania such a broad trajectory can be traced within both the embryonic élite revolutionary coalition and the broader popular movement — a pattern also seen in the Iranian Revolution, where popular urban demonstrations were loosely coordinated under an Islamic moralist rhetoric. However, this broad orientation was to be little articulated before the revolution due to the difficulties of communication within such a coercive regime and the extreme potency of the overriding mobilising issue of Ceaușescu as scapegoat, under the banner of which groups harbouring very different grievances such as workers, cultural intellectuals and ethnic
Hungarians were able to bury the hatchet in an inverted cult of personality. To the extent that it was shaped, as shown in chapter three, this ‘globalists’ trajectory encompassed a programme for moderate change based on competence and a return to ‘rationalism’ and included a platform of moral renewal at the heart of which was a rhetoric embracing such values as ‘truth’ and ‘honesty’. Intimately connected to this revitalised moral code was a rejection of autarky and isolation in preference to an opening towards the outside world, together with a general, if sometimes vague, embrace of elements of the European cultural mainstream, including a commitment to human rights and political ideals such as the separation of powers within the state and the free and open exercise of the universal franchise. However, because this general trajectory was largely given shape, not through a positive attachment to new ideas but in negative reference to the perceived ideological position of the Ceauşescu regime, rather than taking a rigid and binding form it was notably open and imprecise, providing sufficient political space for a number of ideological strands, from the perestroika influenced Consensus to variants of Western European free market liberalism. At the time of the revolutionary event, nobody thought much about the future, because they were too concerned with the present and the past, but after the removal of the unifying symbol of Ceauşescu, an often bitter struggle for political power rapidly ended any hope for the creation of a long lasting coalition to oversee the transition, and, indeed, instead, there was an apparent sharpening of ideological differences in order to emphasise political identity. Although, arguably within Romanian politics, from the ‘conservative’ NPP to the ‘socialist’ DNSF it is still possible to identify the remnants of the broad globalist trajectory of ideas that inspired the revolution.

Consensus soon disappeared from the scene and, subsequent to its departure, the ideology of the NSF appears to have been remarkably fluid, being constantly modified by changing circumstances. The apparent reticence on the part of the NSF to map out a clear ideological direction may be ascribed to an unwillingness on the part of the leadership to enter into an ideological debate that might cause divisions within the Front. It may also derive from the essentially technocratic (non-ideological) background of many of the members of the NSF and, perhaps, be a further reaction against the over politicised system they had replaced. However, it could also hide a lack of alternative policies as well as a reluctance to admit to a continuing attachment to socialist values. Certainly, no great interpreters of ideology arose from the ranks of the NSF (and one who tried, Brucan, rapidly departed from the political arena) and this, as much as the absence of prolonged struggle during the revolutionary situation, may explain why the Romanian Revolution remains apparently devoid of any great revolutionaries.
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Thirdly, rather than being the epitome of radicalism it may even be argued that revolutionary situations rest on a fundamentally conservative base. The revolutionaries espousing radical change, only form the highly visible tip of the iceberg, below them, stretching to the waterline, are the many who take to the streets, not in the hope of radically transforming society but of finding solace for their grievances, because, holding revolutionary intentions is certainly no prerequisite for participating in a revolution, as Iliescu would presumably vouch. Beyond these groups, often forgotten and invisible below the waves of protest, sit the greatest mass waiting in passive anticipation. These are not necessarily counter-revolutionaries, although a few may reject all change, most are probably supportive of mild reform, but all are fearful of radical turmoil. The inherent conservatism of most forms of protest has been addressed by Aya, who argues that ‘collective violence in revolutionary situations makes sense as rational action only on certain premises about the relevant actors’ choice situation — namely, that their intention was not to “revolutionize” society, but to get (or keep) things they felt rightfully entitled to.’

Likewise, Craig Calhoun has stressed the ‘paradoxical conservatism of revolution’, which contains an uneven amalgam of yearnings to return to a better past with usually dimly perceived visions of an emancipated future. In Romania, lacking formal institutions through which to channel their protests, the popular mobilisation, bereft of effective leadership and without anything but the vaguest political platform, shared many of the attributes of what Eric Hobsbawm has termed a ‘pre-political’ state, in which the people ‘have not yet found, or only begun to find, a specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world’ and the political allegiance and character of such movements is often ‘undetermined, ambiguous or even ostensibly conservative’ or, in the words of Craig Calhoun, ‘ideologically uncertain and ephemeral, rather than ... analytically sound and historically transformative’. The great mass who take to the streets, rather than revolutionaries, might better be described as ‘reactionary radicals’ who mobilise in an effort to meet a vague matrix of ‘traditional’ aspirations at a time when pressures from the regime, threatening the remnants of a still coherent way of life, coincide with new opportunities for long-term goals to be fulfilled. The very idea of protest after all is essentially negative, in that it is a statement of disapproval, a public display of objection against the policies of the regime, in Doyle’s term ‘a reflex of disappointment’, a sentiment caught in Romania by the ubiquitous slogan ‘Down with Ceauşescu!’.

In making their anger felt protesters are motivated by a sense of injustice, a feeling that things are not as they should be, and, inversely, this grants their conception of justice, a legitimising notion of right; but, as this is seen in terms of the
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correcting of wrongs within the existing social framework, it normally carries limited aims of rectification, and such protests are usually played out within carefully circumscribed bounds of behaviour. Prior to the fall of Ceaușescu, rather than being a frenzy of mindless violence, the pattern of disturbance on the part of the crowd in Timișoara was ordered and rarely overstepped culturally defined norms. Thus, although the length and breadth of Timișoara the full panoply of communist symbolism was torn down and trampled underfoot and there were numerous incidents of shops having their windows smashed and their contents looted, this material damage, nevertheless, seems to have been almost exclusively limited to state owned property. Moreover, amidst all these attacks on property from the crowd, there were few, if any, instances of assault on the person. When isolated within the crowd, as in the incident on Calea Girocului or during the demonstration of 20 December, soldiers were not attacked but allowed to depart peacefully, nor was the local Party leader, Radu Bălan, assaulted when he left the Party headquarters and passed through the milling throng on 17 December. However, after the fall of Ceaușescu, amidst the throes of complete state breakdown, public violence grew and increasingly lost all constraint, becoming more 'revolutionary' in form with reports of gruesome killings and a number of brutal vengeance attacks. It seems to be a general rule that the violence within a revolutionary situation lies in direct proportion to the ferocity of the regime's clamp-down; and, indeed, during the French Revolution, Babeuf was to note, upon seeing the severed heads of two notables paraded through the streets of Paris nine days after the fall of the Bastille, "Cruel punishments of every sort, quartering, the rack, the wheel, the stake, the whip, the gibbet, so many tortures everywhere have taught us such wicked ways!" During this period of state breakdown in Romania, the apparent brutality of popular vengeance would, therefore, seem to owe much to the regimes massacre of unarmed civilians in Timișoara, Bucharest and elsewhere, and to the coercive nature of the Ceaușescu era in general.

The symbols of the Revolution were also largely drawn from popular forms, many being motifs sacralised by Ceaușescu in his ritual use of nationalist imagery. To a watching world the very symbol of the revolution was the national flag with the communist emblem at its centre removed and, time and again, eyewitness accounts of the revolution speak of the crowds singing the old patriotic anthem Deșteapă-te Române! and, rather incongruously, dancing the folkloric Horia Unirii. As has been demonstrated in chapter three, the cleavage within the élite, which divided the revolutionary coalition from the regime, was also founded on traditional forms, being largely a continuation of the debate that had racked Romania since the previous century over the relative merits of exogenous and endogenous
models of modernisation — a finding that would seem to the view of Jeff Goodwin & Theda Skocpol that revolutionary coalitions tend to form around a pre-existing discourse that legitimises resistance to tyranny. The conflict between the ‘protochronists’ and their ‘globalist’ opponents had its interwar counterpart in the debates between the ‘synchronists’ and their rivals and, as the issue continues to be significant until this very day, to a certain extent, it is, as Krejčí has argued elsewhere, a case that the ‘development [of revolutions] is already foreshadowed by the origins of the issues which were later at the heart of revolution’.

During the revolution the protesters, as far as can be judged from their chanted slogans and the few hastily produced programmes of demands that appeared, sought the rectification of existing grievances and a mild redistribution of resources rather than any great radical reordering of society. The aims of the revolution were encapsulated in the single word slogan ‘Liberty!’ This suggested a desire to exit from neo-Stalinist tyranny and gain ‘freedom’, but held few practical political objectives other than the removal of Ceaușescu and his government and the granting of free elections. The hope was for a better life, but at all levels of society, this seems to have been too readily caught up in the idea that the removal of the dictator could lead to the righting of all wrongs. Economic reform, in particular, seems to have been noticeably low on the agenda, with the programmes issued in Timișoara and those of the NSF both only offering minimal space for private enterprise within the economy. Indeed, the widely voiced demand for ‘Liberty’ led some to initially suggest the revolution might follow a post-materialist agenda, but, subsequently, more worldly concerns have tended to predominate as Romanians have turned from politics to the problem of eking out a meagre living in a difficult environment. The earlier emphasis on political rather than material demands may be explained as a legacy of the politicised nature of the previous totalising system which led to all demands being conceived in almost exclusively political terms, and this, when coupled to an utopian image of the West, seems to have at times led to a naïve belief in some quarters that the adoption of Western political forms would somehow bring economic prosperity. This is not to say that radical demands were not heard, especially as time passed, but these found greater resonance within the élite and their followers, the students, rather than amongst the population at large. Although one voice cannot speak for the many, the angry words three years after the revolution of one of the foremost revolutionaries in Timișoara, Ioan Marcu, a Senator for the Iliescu orientated DNSF, hint amidst the bitter word of dashed hopes a less than radical dream: ‘I am the elected of the oppressed and needy ones, of those who were workers and are now jobless, of those who cry and suffer fearing for their future, of those who live with
the pain of no longer having food for their children. The people did not rebel for the rulers of so far to turn them into butlers by the foreign countries' gates. It aches to see post-revolutionary rulers of Romania wear golden bracelets when they deserve steel ones.¹⁰⁹

Instead of being a comprehensive listing of all the many grievances which scarred Romania prior to the revolution, this survey has sought to use the main sources of discontent as a medium to explore the aims of the revolutionaries, who took to the streets, and some of the wider dynamics which drove the process, and, in this, it has already given many pointers not only to the forces motivating mass mobilisation but also to those causing state breakdown. Most of the grievances addressed so far affected the population as a whole, but a multitude of more specific discontents also existed, including the fears arising from Ceaușescu's monstrous plan of sistematizarea, by which he sought to further rearrange the very face of Romania, although before his downfall, only a handful of villages seem to have actually been destroyed. Added to general unhappiness over low levels of agricultural, investment and restrictions on the size and sale of goods from private plots, such plans bred considerable discontent amongst sizeable swathes of the peasant population.¹¹⁰ Agricultural workers also feel under the remit of the New Economic and Financial Mechanism which was instituted in late 1970s in the name of worker self-management, enterprise self-administration and self-financing, with only the latter really having any substance, principally, in the shape of the accord global, which seems to have only fully come into force during the mid-1980s. Under this the former guaranteed minimum wage of 80% of regular income was abolished and wages were linked to centrally-defined indicators relating to plan attainment. But since plan targets were wildly optimistic, and fulfillment stymied by endless shortages, this tended to lead to either cuts in wages, with it being estimated that a 7% fall between 1984-85 was repeated again in 1986, or, since the accord was applied to all management up to the Deputy Minister level, the mass falsification of statistics and the random shuttling of goods from one depot to another to increase 'value' so as to maintain salaries.¹¹¹ The NEFM also increased pressures on managers with, for instance, the cost of all imports having to be met by exports. Under Stalinism, the technocratic-managerial intelligentsia had been expected to deploy their skills according to political criteria without questioning technical feasibility, because in the ideology of perfection difficulties 'were objectively impossible and antagonistic'.¹¹² After de-Stalinisation, during the reform period of the 1960s and early 1970s, this group had been allowed to deploy their technical skills to the full, but, as the neo-Stalinism of the 1980s took root, they
again found their freedom of technical action constrained by political norms, and this lay at the heart of their alienation from the system. However, these and other factors still explain the motivation of the opponents of the regime rather than the mechanics of mobilisation, and specific organisational forms were still required to translate discontent into mass protests capable of bringing down the regime.

Before closing this discussion about forces motivating mass mobilisation one further prerequisite for revolution, needs to be mentioned, and this is a permissive political culture. It has already been noted how regional variations in political culture impinged on perceptions of the moral breakdown of the regime. However, more fundamentally, within the political culture there has to be a propensity to the idea of rebellion, with an eschatological element present in the culture that can be utilised to cast the political struggle in terms of the destruction of the old regime and the emergence of a new, more virtuous society.

In noting Max Weber's observation that 'suffering or discrimination, perceived as a justified way of life, may be a serious inhibition to revolt', Krejčí has contrasted the tendency of the karmic laws of Hinduism to generate passivity with China, where revolution became culturally constituted as a regular mechanism for political change.

This at first sight rather esoteric excursus raises an important issue in relation to Romanian culture because, prior to 1989, the most pressing question which commentators had to explain, was the apparent passivity of the population in the face of such evident hardship, a conundrum most imaginatively expressed in Sampson's interrogative which heads this chapter as to 'why the mămăliga did not explode'. In answer to his question Sampson pointed largely to structural reasons, but another view, best expressed by Michael Shafir, laid particular emphasis on cultural factors. In searching for explanations for what he termed 'political stagnation' Shafir noted the lack of a tradition of autonomy in Romanian political culture and the deep roots of peasant conformism with its tendency towards resignation and fatalism rooted in mysticism — exemplified by the folk ballad *Mioriță*. One possible cultural reference point for such traits of conformism was the Romanian Orthodox Church, which traditionally has been subservient to political authority, playing no countervailing role in society, and in its rituals emphasised ceremony and external devotion.

In part, Sampson in searching for an answer to his question, also drew upon cultural factors but he took them to markedly different conclusions, when he stressed the individuality of the Romanians and their apparent lack of faith in social organisations. Instead, of adopting a strategy of passive conformity he saw the Romanians as actively scheming to by-pass the most unpleasant aspects of the system.
Since the revolution the coin has been reversed, and rather than passivity the need has been to explain the violence of the Romanian exit from communism, in contrast to the relative peacefulness of the process elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Again one approach to this has been to draw upon Romanian political traditions. In his study of Romanian politics, Martyn Rady has argued that within what he terms 'the politics of illusion' — the superficial adoption of Western forms without content — there also grew a 'culture of violence' and, when popular frustrations were not addressed, in the absence of suitable conflict resolving mechanisms, periodically 'resentment was bottled up until it burst out altogether in a flood of bloodletting.' Not all commentators would agree with Rady's analysis which broadly follows the functionalist school of revolutionary theorists and their famous volcano paradigm. However, it is undeniably important that the idea of revolt lay within Romanian political culture, and more than that, as it has earlier been suggested and later will be reiterated, perceptions of the Romanian Revolution of 1989 were to a large extent shaped by the country's prior experience of revolution.

The international scene

As already stated, it seems that for a revolution to reach a successful outcome it requires a permissive international environment, and, in the case of the Eastern European Revolutions of 1989, this was forthcoming when the Soviet Union which, had previously ruthlessly stamped out all attempts to move far from a rigidly defined political orthodoxy, adopted a posture of acquiescence towards change. Permissiveness implies a state of acceptance, but external pressures may also influence the passage of events either directly or indirectly. The allegation that there was some form of direct external intervention in the Romanian Revolution, chiefly on the part of the Soviet Union, has been discussed at some length in chapter two. The conclusion drawn was that, whilst there may have been considerable external interest in the revolution, there is no conclusive evidence so far available that foreign interference materially affected the outcome. Even if popular hearsay regarding the extraordinary number of Russians present in the country at the time is taken at face value, then the burden of proof still lies with those who would claim that they played a decisive role in determining the course of the unfolding events. Indeed, it may be plausibly argued to the contrary, that the absence of Soviet influence, and particularly of Russian troops stationed within Romania, was critical in permitting the escalation of violence since, unlike elsewhere in Eastern Europe, Gorbachev possessed no effective leverage by which to persuade Ceau§escu to relinquish power quietly. Indeed, in Romania her very isolation meant that there
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was not even an indirect external trigger, as occurred in the case of East Germany, when the opening of the Hungarian borders sparked the 'crisis of emigration'.

The transcript of the last meeting between the two leaders on 4 December 1989, reveals a remarkably bland and non-committal affair in which there were points of difference but not the violent confrontation often rumoured. Touching upon the recent events in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, Ceaușescu pushes Gorbachev to help these countries towards a 'better orientation' ideologically, advocating the convocation of a conference to chart a vision of the future for communism, whilst carefully stating that he does not imply military intervention. Generally, the picture that emerges is of Ceaușescu striving unsuccessfully for closer bilateral ties between the countries in order to resist any dilution of Communist Party power, whilst the Soviet leaders remain wary and reticent to sanction more meetings, being content to state that representatives of the two countries will meet at the forthcoming CMEA conference, and possibly again in the coming months.

Despite all the allegations of Soviet involvement in the plotting of a coup against Ceaușescu, the evidence available so far does not suggest any great interest of the Soviet Union in the affairs of Romania, with nothing more than a relatively low level Soviet penetration of Romanian security organs, which nonetheless were to be the key organisations. However, the lack of concrete information and the apparent reluctance of the authorities to furnish further details (which suggests that there is something to cover up) provides the space for rumour and speculation, and it seems probable that the myth of a high level of Soviet involvement, which is being actively propagated by some quarters inside Romania, especially, those formerly connected with the Securitate, will retain lasting influence.

As far as the contribution of indirect factors to the outbreak of the revolution are concerned, three areas of possible external influence may be distinguished:

a) Economic effects of global markets.

b) Changes in the pattern of international state relations.

c) Changes in the world-historical environment, chiefly in the form of a prevailing systems of ideas.

The impact of the first of these factors on the Romanian economic crisis of the 1980s has already been discussed. As suggested, the growing technological backwardness of Romania and an inability to compete effectively in international markets not only hampered debt repayment and necessitated export of even basic foodstuffs to earn foreign currency but also brought an acute awareness of failure amongst the technical elite.
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Historically, revolutions in Europe have been highly dependent on shifts in international state relations. The bursts of revolutionary activity in the years 1848 and 1917–19, and now it seems the years 1989–1991, were sparked by major international ruptures usually caused by defeat in war or the collapse of empires, with the fracture in 1989 being the break up of the Soviet Bloc. By 1989 the scale of the economic and political crises within the Soviet Union, especially with the escalation of the domestic nationalities’ problems, grew to such a level that, in comparison, the maintaining of control over Eastern Europe was no longer seen as vital or viable. This gave the permissive international context which the revolutions of 1989 needed but, despite the possible proddings of Gorbachev, there was no direct transference of revolution in 1989 to equate with the original post Second World War imposition of communism. Instead, throughout the region structural similarities and a common lack of legitimacy led the various Communist Parties, once their monopoly of power was successfully challenged, to collapse, like a house of cards, in quick succession. The revolutions elsewhere in Eastern Europe brought hope and expectations of change to Romania, an example to follow, showing how ruling élites once challenged by ‘the people’ could do little more than capitulate to their demands. Speculation increased that Ceaușescu too would be ousted and, when the 14th RCP Congress disappointed these hopes, the bitter taste of dashed expectations was to prove impossible to bear.

Why the Soviet Union decided to exorcise the ghost of the Brezhnev doctrine, which had haunted Eastern Europe since 1968, is a question beyond the scope of this work and an issue which has received a good deal of attention elsewhere. Under his ‘new thinking’ in foreign affairs, Gorbachev began a political search for arms control and an end of regional conflicts which had as its ideological concomitant emphasis on the embracing of human ‘universal values’, leading to a stress on the interdependent nature of the world and the need for mutual security — most famously caught in the phrase ‘Common European Home’. In this new world of understanding and cooperation there was little room for the old Cold War divisions — exemplified par excellence by the Berlin Wall — and, with this realisation, the road was opened to the revocation of the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine and, ultimately, the Soviet Union’s withdrawal from Eastern Europe. In adopting his ‘new thinking’, Gorbachev initially appeared to be concentrating on the safe-guarding of existing gains and ensuring stability so as to be able to provide a suitable platform for his own domestic policy reforms. And, in a similar vein, the political reform programme in Eastern Europe, by bringing part of the opposition into the political process and, thereby, relegitimising the existing political structure, also seems to have primarily designed to secure internal peace within the Soviet sphere.
of influence. However, by the late 1980s, Eastern Europe, still largely ruled by aging reminders of an unsavoury past, was also beginning to be of doubtful utility to the Soviet Union. From a strategic or military point of view, it provided no cover from long-range ballistic missiles and possessed armies of doubtful loyalty in times of war, and with the prospect of other defaults following the costly Polish débâcle, and CMEA achieving little other than the unequal trade of poor quality Eastern European goods for Soviet raw materials — which could earn more on the open market — it brought few economic gains either. However, although Gorbachev’s ‘new thinking’ in foreign affairs and his domestic reform movement did provide the context for the changes in Eastern Europe, they did not provide a detailed strategy for managing the transformation and, it seems, that for much of the period the Soviet Union was merely reacting to the powerful dynamic of revolution which had gripped the region. Indeed, the somewhat laissez-faire attitude displayed by the USSR towards its disintegrating ‘empire’ was, in part, a direct result of the ‘new thinking’.

In fact, some commentators have chosen to see the Eastern European Revolutions in terms of national revolutions seeking liberation from an occupying power, with Krejčí, for instance, suggesting that the revolutions of 1989 cannot be seen as true ‘vertical’ endogenous revolutions, as in the Great Revolutions, but rather variants of his ‘horizontal’ exogenous model and, therefore, analogous to colonial wars of liberation. To a certain extent, the Soviet Union by the 1980s does appear like many before it to have been suffering from imperial overstretch with the costs of preserving the ‘empire’ proving too great to bear. However, as with the ignominious retreats of the French from Indo-China and Algeria and the Portugese from Angola and Mozambique after long anti-insurgency campaigns, it was not so much the actual economic costs but the sapping of political will that seems to have led the Soviet Union to withdraw, first, from Afghanistan and, then, without a struggle, from Eastern Europe.

At first sight, this foreign liberation model is more difficult to apply in the the case of Romania than elsewhere in Eastern Europe, because under the national communism of Dej and Ceaușescu Romania had edged to the perimeter of the Soviet orbit and, as already noted, direct Soviet leverage on the country was limited. However, under what Shafir terms the strategy of ‘simulated permanency’, the Romanians, whilst adopting a posture of autonomy, continued to carefully maintain intra-bloc links and refrain from any true independence of action. The Soviet Union permitting the Romania ‘digression’ because of Ceaușescu’s commitment to communist orthodoxy and his refusal to countenance any expressions of
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internal autonomy. 'Partial alignment' meant that, although Romania did not actively participate in all the institutional structures, it remained a member of both the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and CMEA, thus, retaining sufficient links to the USSR to be considered an integral part of the Eastern Bloc. The establishment of a national communism, with the same degree of legitimacy as apparently enjoyed by the Yugoslav or Albanian parties, therefore, eluded Ceaușescu and, whilst political and economic dependency may have waxed and waned over the years, ideological identification with the Soviet Union, the traditional foe of Romania, remained strong and so communism was still perceived by most Romanians as an alien imposition, allowing the country to take its place within the wider disintegration of the Soviet Bloc. By instituting his own reform package Gorbachev undermined the position of Ceaușescu, both in the international arena, where Romania outpaced by the Soviet Union lost its image, carefully cultivated in the West, as a useful maverick and was consigned to diplomatic isolation, and domestically within the country, where long suppressed hopes were raised amongst the population and the ground effectively cut from under the feet of the aged neo-Stalinist Ceaușescu, who continued to combat such radical ideas of radical change.  

Lastly, it remains to consider the effect of changes in the world-historical context and particularly prevailing systems of ideas upon the Romanian Revolution. In many ways this cannot be separated from the decline in the power of the Soviet Union, just discussed, and it remains here only to reinforce the point that ideologically the Romanian Revolution coincided with a general decline in socialism and, indeed, was part and parcel of what has been termed the 'mass extinction' of Leninism. The importance of the collapse of belief in the official ideology of Marxism–Leninism to the process of state breakdown will be considered below, and here is not the place to chart its global decline. Instead, it would seem to be more profitable to address another related issue: the question of novelty in the Romanian Revolution, since this has been the source of some comment.

History provides the forms and symbols of revolution and, prior to 1989, the two dominant models of present within the European cultural arena were France 1789 and Russia 1917. As suggested earlier, in the repertoire of symbols it drew upon, the Romanian Revolution in many ways did conform to these earlier models and, despite the argument that the Eastern European Revolutions constituted the first post–modern revolutions, the urban based popular uprising of Romania, which followed an event bearing many similar characteristics in Iran, cannot be considered to have set a new pattern for revolutionary techniques. Furthermore, it seems highly unlikely that its outcome will present a new model for political
organisation, as has arguably been the case with the religious dominated Iranian Revolution. Indeed, at present, as will be considered at greater length below, it is not easy to envisage any state in Europe taking a radical new ordering not previously seen and, certainly outside the Vatican, a Christian theocracy would seem to be totally off the cards. However, this would not seem to invalidate the Romanian revolutionary experience, because, even accepting that revolutions require novelty, this need not necessarily be at the world-historical level, but rather in the political environment in question. Certainly, in the case of Romania, if a functioning free-market democracy was to be established, it would be a radical departure from the past. It might, therefore, be better when classifying revolutions to adopt Wallerstein's core-periphery distinction and talk of dominant and dependent revolutions with a few great world-historical events being followed by many lesser examples, which, of course, may be 'great' in their own domestic contexts.

A related strand of argumentation has been to point to the lack of new ideas in 1989 and some have even suggested that this somehow invalidates the idea of revolution. Aside for the fact that this falls into the trap of defining revolutions by the intentions of the eventual victors, this also raises the subjective question of what constitutes a 'new' idea — Marxism-Leninism had hardly arrived fresh on the scene at the time of the Nicaraguan Revolution, and the history of Islam stretches back far beyond the Iranian revolution. At any one time only a certain number of ideological options would seem to be available, and in the European cultural space, in this century, these have predominantly been fascism, socialism, communism and liberalism. That no new ideological framework emerged to motivate the 1989 revolutions would seem to be more a criticism (or success) of the European cultural milieu as a whole rather than the countries of Eastern Europe per se and, it can hardly be expected, that they should have postponed their revolutions until they fortuitously coincided with the availability of a new ideological schema! In fact, as might be expected, the revolutions did, to a certain extent, reflect the predominate ideological drift of the period, for shock therapy economic programmes were a manifestation of the privatisation driven Reagan-Thatcher Liberalism dominant in the West at that time. Such ideas were taken up by some in Romania, particularly within the ranks of the NLP and NPP, with the more radical opponents of the old regime arguing that an unrestrained application of free market principals was the only means to deconstruct the existing state. However, notably in the Romanian case, these sansculottes have remained without power. Revolutions in themselves do not need novel ideas and, indeed, it may be better to reverse the proposition and say that for their imposition such ideas often need revolutions. Instead of radical new ideas — a notion which seems to
largely derive from the Russian Revolution where bold moves, often at extreme human cost, were deemed necessary to destroy the old class structure — it can be plausibly argued that revolutions require alternative ideas, with both the choice and application of these being conditioned by the domestic political experience and the prevailing political culture which determines the relevance of the revolution for the development of the society.

State breakdown

State breakdown is the remaining tripartite pillar to be examined in the aetiology of the revolutions. However, in order to fully consider this variable, it is necessary to first distinguish the chief characteristics of the Ceaușescu state since, it will be argued that the violent manner of the Romanian exit from communism was largely determined by state structures. The Romanian state in 1989, locked into an unyielding neo-Stalinism, displayed all the attributes of an arrested political development. Still bound in the rigid monolithism which had already begun to slip elsewhere in Eastern Europe, it retained a highly exclusionary structure in which islands of autonomy were conspicuously absent, with there being no traces of any organised opposition, only isolated dissent. If comparisons are to be made, it may be better to equate the Romanian Revolution, not with the other events of 1989 elsewhere in Eastern Europe, but with the violence unleashed during de-Stalinisation and, especially, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 without, of course, the Soviet imposed denouement. In this model, Nicolae Ceaușescu can aptly be placed alongside Mátyás Rákosi instead of Imre Pozsgay. For Romania in 1989 retained many of the trappings of a Stalinist state and the process has been one of de-Stalinisation as much as de-communisation.

If for heuristic purposes, within the communist system Romania in 1989 could best be categorised as a neo-Stalinist state, then within the wider world political system it may be suggested that it shared many of the features which normally distinguish neo-patrimonial states. The overthrow of both Mohammad Reza Shah of Iran and Anastasio II ‘Tacho’ Somoza Debayle of Nicaragua in 1979 prompted a certain amount of literature regarding the susceptibility of such neo-patrimonial regimes to revolution, and since 1989 some attempts have been made to fit Ceaușescu’s Romania within the same model. Deriving from Weber, the term ‘neo-patrimonial’ was used by Eisenstadt to distinguish highly personalised regimes — most extreme forms are sometimes dubbed Sultanistic — in partly modernised societies which are ‘characterised by the chief executive’s maintenance of authority through an extensive network of personal patronage, rather than
through ideology or impersonal law’. This produces an extreme political exclusivity, with a ruling executive of restricted social base and few, if any, other autonomous groups amongst a generally depoliticised society. Organisationally weak, with political institutions, such as parliaments, if they do exist acting as little more than rubber stamps, such states, because of the rulers fear of a coup often have a weak and inefficient military which proves totally unable to match any revolutionary challenge, and are generally extremely dependent on a single foreign power. At least, superficially, the Romanian state does seem to have borne a passing resemblance to many of these traits, but in themselves they do not explain a proclivity to revolution at all, since relatively few of the world’s neo-patrimonial regimes have met this fate. Indeed, neo-patrimonialism need not be conducive to revolution, since, if the elite is effectively co-opted or sufficient members of society are politically neutralised through either formal or, if the regime turn a blind eye, informal patronage networks, then the growth of any opposition can be inhibited and stability bought. In an attempt to resolve the question of why certain neo-patrimonial states fall to revolution, Richard Snyder has reshaped their characteristics to give three key variables based on the institutional strength of the military and the strategies and relative organisational strengths of both moderate and revolutionary opposition groups. In testing his model Snyder does not consider Eastern Europe, but applying these variables to the Romanian case in 1989 would bring a count of low military autonomy and low organisational strengths for both the moderates and revolutionaries. This pattern contrasts with Snyder’s two cases of revolution, Iran and Nicaragua, in which he evaluates a low military autonomy and organisational strength amongst the moderate opposition was offset by a high organisational capability on the part of the revolutionary opposition. Instead of revolution, according to Snyder, a correlation of these three lows, which he identifies in his test case only with Mobutu Sese Seko’s Zaire, represents what he terms ‘stability’ (in the context of revolutionary activity). However, rather than stability, when the regime mediates effectively ‘between and among state and societal goals’ to ensure system maintenance, in the case of Romania, it would seem better to follow the lead of Michael Shafir and use the term ‘political stagnation’ when political pressures are either absent or neutralised. Political stagnation produced political quiescence in Romania for many years but devoid of ‘real’ change, system maintenance was based on the regime’s ability to defend rather than from its ability to govern, and as such it was primarily concerned not with regulating the political process but directing it to ensure its own survival. Shafir concludes his analysis: ‘Political stagnation is thus neither a state of political development nor of political decay. Rather it is a state of immobility, for simulated change.
can in no way be seen as a form of social dynamism'. Stagnation, therefore, rested only on the regime's ability to defend its position and in the absence of 'real' change it merely served to mask the gradual disintegration of the Romanian state which, eventually, was to reach such an acute state of breakdown that it could be toppled by a relatively weak and badly organised, but numerous, oppositional grouping.

Applying such a neo-patrimonial model to Romania is fraught with difficulties, not least because in levels of modernisation and geo-political location it bears no obvious resemblance to states such as Haiti or Zaire. Instead, it may be argued that it was the modern (i.e. urban) state of Romania that largely determined the nature of the revolution. However, Jeff Goodwin in his work on neo-patrimonial and exclusionary directly ruled colonial regimes has taken the revolutions in Eastern Europe into account when shaping his analysis, and this has led him to suggest that the key variables in shaping revolutionary situations are extreme state autonomy from society (which may be personalistic), external dependence, a politicised economy and indiscriminate repression of independent oppositional movements. Of these the highly politicised nature of the economy, Romania's somewhat tempered external dependence, and the activities of the security forces during the revolution, have already been considered and it remains to stress what appears to be the key neo-patrimonial variable and one evident within Ceauşescu's neo-Stalinist state: the exclusionary nature of the regime.

In relation to Stalinism, Romania may be termed a neo-Stalinist state because, although Ceauşescu in terms of his personality cult and in other attributes emulated Stalin (and even more so Mao Zedong and Kim II-Sung), the changed historical context meant that he was unable to fully replicate the Soviet leaders system, even if he had so desired. However, often the difference was one of degree rather than substance so, for instance, although the Securitate were to be rightly feared, in describing their activities, it would be truer to use the term 'coercion' rather than 'terror' and certainly under Ceauşescu the loss of life and suffering cannot be equated with the Soviet Union in the 1930s, China during the Cultural Revolution or, indeed, Romania under the Stalinist Dej. Although the power Ceauşescu held was close to being absolute, if not totally so, he did at least profess a nominal attachment to socialist legality and operated within some (partial) constraints, although admittedly these were largely self-imposed. Changes in the international environment, including Romania's signing of the 1975 Helsinki Agreement, implied, at least superficially, an acceptance of certain external obligations and the international media placed Ceauşescu, especially in his latter years,
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under a far closer scrutiny than Stalin had ever faced. It seems, for instance, that the delay in expelling Tőkés can, in part, be attributed to the worldwide attention his case attracted. Ideologically, Ceauşescu's attachment to nationalism at the expense of Marxism–Leninism also gave a distinct character to his regime, which had had multiple consequences since, as the two are fundamentally mutually contradictory, it inevitably led to ideological 'softness' even if the rhetoric of Marxism–Leninism remained strong.¹⁴⁴

The most obvious feature of Romanian neo-Stalinism, and the one most closely resembling the neo-patrimonial model, was the concentration of power in the hands of Ceauşescu, his family members, led by his wife Elena, and the small number of old Party cronies who constituted his court. The Ceauşescu regime was highly exclusive, and became more so as the years progressed, with a ruling executive of increasingly advanced years, which (according to its opponents) was 'anti-intellectual, xenophobic, isolationist, anti-technocratic, and hostile to change'.¹⁴⁵ By the late 1980s the size of the powerful PEC Permanent Bureau had shrunk to only seven members including Ceauşescu and his wife.¹⁴⁶ Excessive centralisation of power within a few hands by narrowing the regime's supporting base not only made it fundamentally vulnerable to attack, but, by binding the fortunes of the state so tightly to that of the leadership, it brought about a situation in Romania somewhat similar to Russia in 1917, when the collapse of the Tsarist regime had also brought down the state, allowing the Bolsheviks to seize power with only limited popular support. The narrow base of the regime also dictated the shape of any opposition that might arise, since it gave the political space for the formation of the widest possible coalition and, given the low autonomy of the military, such a mass grouping was always likely to pose the greatest threat to regime.¹⁴⁷

Not only was power concentrated in few hands but this elderly ruling clique apparently increasingly believing their own narrow world-view, cut themselves off from society. With minimal feedback in an atmosphere of intellectual stagnation, this narrow ruling élite developed an enclosed mentality, seemingly increasingly paranoid and almost totally divorced from reality.¹⁴⁸ This is nowhere better shown than in Ceauşescu's interpretation of the revolution as being nothing more than the work of a few domestic malcontents aided by foreign agents provocateurs and in his abiding belief, even when held under detention, that 'his' people would rise to the rescue.¹⁴⁹ Although these failures of judgement may largely be blamed on Ceauşescu's world-view, they also raise important questions as regards the information he was being fed by the Securitate, since they would seem to have
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been his main channel of intelligence because, as in all Stalinist states, in Romania the intelligence services were effectively under the control of the leader and not the Party. As yet, there is precious little information available about the workings of the Securitate during the revolution, but much can be inferred from comparisons with East Germany where documents from the Stasi archives have been made available for public scrutiny. These reveal that the leadership and the Stasi had become locked in a fatal symbiosis, with the intelligence services playing an important role in conditioning the leadership's view of the world but not daring to reveal the full extent of popular discontent in reports which were smothered in the stylised language of socialist rhetoric and congenial clichés reflecting the Party's 'success'. What applied to East Germany would seem to be even more relevant to Romania, since like the Stasi, the Securitate considered themselves as an élite, leading and shaping society. However, it could be that this status perception may partly have been their undoing, because it seems to have engendered a rather condescending stance towards a society that was largely perceived as consisting of passive peasants. Following the old adage of 'familiarity breeds contempt', it may be that a by and large successful passage of the difficult 1980s, with the only glaring outbreak of unrest being the major disturbances in Brașov, lulled the Securitate into a false sense of security about their ability to keep the lid on popular dissatisfaction, and this at least is the impression to be gained from Timişoara. Even if they were generally aware of rising discontent (which seems likely), the Securitate, like the Stasi, were probably hesitant about channelling such information to the deaf ears of Ceaușescu and, indeed, to a remarkable extent, they seem to have readily embraced his national-communist rhetoric and concentrated much of their efforts on foreign agents and Romanians they considered to be under their influence.

Amongst the general population, the concentration of power was largely perceived in terms of nepotism and favouritism, particularly, after the elevation of Elena to be on an apparent par with her husband. Indeed, the stress on Elena was a distinct feature of the cult of personality in Romania. Much has been made of Ceaușescu's introduction of his relatives into highly visible political positions, what has been termed 'party familiarisation', but, in fact, it may be questioned how much power many of these family members actually wielded, especially given their weak performance during the revolution, when only Nicu and Andruța Ceaușescu played limited roles. In hindsight, a more sober appraisal would suggest that their high status positions conformed more with the Romanian tradition of distributing rewards to family members than any attempt to build a politically powerful Ceaușescu dynasty. Even the posting of Nicu Ceaușescu,
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always said to be the heir apparent, as Party Secretary in Sibiu, can both be seen as a springboard for future promotion and a partial sidelining for a man of limited talents. Through the promotion of his family, Ceaușescu was acting as countless Romanians had done before him, and doubtless many more will afterwards, but by conspicuously placing his relatives in such high status positions, he was not only reinforcing the ‘federation of families’ culture and legitimising the nepotism of others, but also, in the process, undermining the authority of his regime and laying the foundations for the moral collapse of the state.

During the 1980s Ceaușescu also seems to have assumed almost total control of policy and decision making. Prior to the 1980s a number of ways of proposing legislation had existed and, although none of these were formally abandoned, as the decade passed, presidential decree became the preferred form with all major policy decisions tending to be signalled by Ceaușescu in his speeches. Ceaușescu’s counter to perestroika, ‘perfecting’ (perfectionarea) — a variant of the Stalinist ‘ideology of perfection’, although it allowed for the possibility of room for improvement — was firmly rooted in the assumption that the Romanian leader was the sole guide to the construction of the ‘multilaterally developed socialist society’. As the case had been with Stalin before him, Ceaușescu permitted no real debate or challenge to this vision, and whatever discussion was allowed usually focused on means of implementing policies rather than matters of substance. Since major policy mistakes could not be countenanced, let alone be publicly admitted, error from the ideological standpoint was out of the question and a change of direction, thus, effectively off the agenda. Moreover, since policy could not be at fault, then mistakes and poor performance could only be explained in terms of incompetence or lack of loyalty by subordinates. The inflexibilities of the command economy made decision making difficult in all Leninist states but in Romania the concentration of power in Ceaușescu’s hands multiplied the problem. Indeed, the tendency for Ceaușescu to make all major day-to-day decisions imposed a rigid hierarchy on decision making which proved catastrophically inflexible when confronted with a fast evolving revolutionary situation. The concentration of power also served as a break on reform because any further complication of what was, essentially, a rather simplistic Stalinist model, would have necessarily removed power from Ceaușescu, although the system itself was also more than capable of thwarting any attempts at change, as when Ceaușescu’s attempts at introducing economic correcting mechanisms during the 1980s ran into the sands of bureaucratic obduracy.

The general lack of apparent dissention within the higher echelons of the RCP can partly be explained by the specific strategies employed by Ceaușescu
to prevent the appearance of any rivals. However, the failure of any members of Ceaușescu's inner circle to mount a 'true' palace coup or even to show any overt signs of opposition would seem to need further explanation. Perhaps browbeaten to submission, they were truly united behind the Weltanschauung of Ceaușescu, or some form of 'group think' prevailed, the propensity of a collective body to persist with badly judged decisions because individual members are reassured by group solidarity, leading to an apparent blind obedience to the dictates of the conductator, at least formally in his presence. However, the concentration of power had also increased Ceaușescu's 'indispensability'—a belief that the system would be unable to function without him at the helm, since no others knew its workings—and it seems that this was an idea that he was careful to propagate amongst his colleagues. Thus, any potential challengers within the elite would have had to carefully weigh up the possible consequences of their actions and the risk that the overthrow of Ceaușescu might lead to the disintegration of the whole system, as in fact did happen, and the very threat of this seems to have been sufficient to dissuade any from chancing their arm. The concentration of power was eventually self-defeating, as by lessening the resources that could be distributed it removed the possibility of co-opting others into the élite, and, instead, a destructive ever tightening cycle was created. Because the political and economic resources available for distribution lessened, narrowing the pyramid of patronage and leading to the concentration of power, it became increasingly impossible for the leadership to contemplate loosening the system to produce the extra resources necessary to buy social tranquility for fear such a move would engender collapse, leaving as the only available option a tightening of coercion. Additionally, although the Stalinist model was relatively simple, it necessarily developed overreach—as seems to be the tendency with all statist systems—and this carried both a geographical as well as a vertical, hierarchical, dimension. In all the Great Revolutions both before and during the revolution, the centre despite deploying the full panoply of state terror has experienced difficulty holding on to the geographic periphery, and transferring this model to Romania, the fact that the spark of revolution lay in distant Timișoara and, then caught flame across all of Transylvania before spreading to Bucharest, although it can be partly explained by practical problems involving communications and differing cultural orientations, may be seen as some confirmation of the axiom that the further a province is from the centre the less strong is its allegiance to the regime.

The most obvious manifestation of the Ceaușescu neo-Stalinist state was the extraordinary cult which reached absurdist proportions. The whole country was bedecked with placards and banners proclaiming the unbounded achievements of

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the supreme leaders, elaborate rituals were staged for them to receive the adulation of the masses, and so great was deemed the sagacity of Ceauşescu that no publication could appear without it being embellished by his words of wisdom. In its symbolism the cult bore many of the characteristics of a secularised religion and, indeed, early Soviet thought in the idea of ‘God Building’ had held that socialist man would turn from the worship of a transcendental divinity to find religious expression through the socialist earthly utopia, and, miraculously, in the case of Romania the apotheosis of Ceauşescu does seem to have occurred within his own earthly paradise. Amongst Party members of little education and in a wider popular culture infused with traditions of religious iconography the omnipresent portraits of Ceauşescu and his wife could be seen as a legitimising device cementing the authority of the leadership. However, the cult was a double-edged sword, for in extolling the virtues of Ceauşescu as the supreme decision maker it laid the ground, once conditions started to deteriorate within Romania, for him to be branded as the universal scapegoat. Within the all pervasive monolithism of neo-Stalinism there was no counter mechanism, such as the market, to deflect criticism and Ceauşescu, as the avatar of the system, became the focus of all grievances. Through the cult Ceauşescu became not an authentic leader or an example to be imitated but an idol to be obeyed, who developed no meaningful relationship with a society that remained mere onlookers or dragooned participants in his spectacles. The resulting structure was a hollow shell, a false image open to ridicule, which needed just one crack in the façade — or, as it was in this case, one glance of consternation — for the whole edifice to come tumbling to the ground.

The cult image was a lie, but, as Leszek Kolakowski has noted, “Obvious lies uttered aloud with impunity are excellent proofs of the health of the system” and, indeed, the grossness of the lie merely served to illustrate Ceauşescu’s power, bringing the cult image partly to life, but, as the leader moved centre stage, so the stock of the Party and the official ideology waned. For the cult served not only to establish Ceauşescu’s personal authority in place of the institutional authority of the Party, but through the employment of nationalism it sought to project the leader as the very embodiment of the nation, thereby, in part, creating an alternative form of legitimisation to compensate for the weakening of the official ideology of Marxism–Leninism. Ceauşescu tying the two together in a formulation that held that it was only through the ideology of Marxism–Leninism and the ending of class conflict that the true national destiny of Romania could be achieved. The aim of establishing a Stalinist heavy industrial base was joined to the goal of national independence, since modernisation was seen as laying the foundations
of a strong national state. Legitimisation in Romania, thus, did have a material dimension but, rather than aiming to fulfil the needs of consumers, it was founded on the building of a 'modern' industrial base and the projection of Romania's international standing. However, as the 1980s progressed and Romania languished in ever deeper diplomatic isolation, the recurrent power cuts and other shortages revealed the falsity of this image, compounding the sense of 'national' failure.

Ceaușescu's neo-Stalinism, just as its progenitor, was entirely politically determined, which meant that, although the ideology claimed to be the epitome of 'rationality', in fact, developed its own 'counter-nationality' in which decisions were made on the basis of political criteria rather than professional expertise, with Romania finding its equal to the Soviet geneticist Lysenko in the bogus promotion of Elena Ceaușescu as a scientist of international standing (with the major proviso that Lysenko did at least have some technical training). Through the cult in substitution to 'rationalism' the propaganda apparatus sought to manufacture charisma, but failing to establish predictable norms, the system came to rest on a highly personalised and arbitrary decision making process, in which Ceaușescu, himself, increasingly '... began to ignore some of the formal structures and procedures he himself had created to demonstrate the legality and institutionalization of the political process. From top to bottom corruption throve as minions, taking their example from the leader, carved out their own petty tyrannies. The system became highly malleable as laws and decrees, often totally unrealistic in their aims, were frequently flouted or half-enacted, ultimately, producing a state of chronic paralysis and a complete loss of all sense of orientation. Confined to the distorted vision of Ceaușescu the future was rendered increasingly pointless, which, as George Schöpflin has stressed, eats at the heart of self-legitimisation.

Instead of defining state breakdown through specific objective conditions, it is probably best seen in terms of loss of legitimacy, and throughout this study it has been stressed that after reaching its zenith with Ceaușescu's popular triumph in 1968, when he carried virtually the whole nation behind his nationalist message, this was a commodity in short supply by the close of the regime. Since the Marxist-Leninist model had largely been imposed on Romania by the army of a neighbouring country, which was traditionally viewed with hostility, the adoption of nationalism necessitated a shift in legitimisation. Attempts were made to blend the two together by establishing a national base for the post-war revolution, with, for example, stress being placed on native communist participation in the 23 August 1944 coup, and in his rhetoric Ceaușescu emphasised ad nauseum that Romania was building a socialist society by its own efforts, in keeping with its own culture and priorities. However, nationalism could only weaken the purity
of the official ideology of the state and, indeed, from hindsight, after the virtual extinction of Marxism–Leninism, it seems that the only dynamic left within the Romanian body politic by the 1980s was nationalism and that the regime's official ideology had become so debased that the political space had been formed to allow the growth of an alternative 'truer' reform socialism.

However, nationalism represents more of a mobilising tool than a coherent body of ideas and, as moral authority seeped away from the Ceaușescu regime, it became clear that its legitimacy had declined to the point where it seemed to rest on little more than the power the Romanian leader wielded. However, whilst it was clear that legitimacy had been lost, the dominant image of Ceaușescu as a scapegoat cast considerable ambiguity over the process. Thus, whilst Ceaușescu and his immediate entourage had obvious lost the right to rule, and so, as rapidly became clear during the revolution, had the RCP, the nationalism Ceaușescu so full-bloodily embraced was far from disgraced and even permeated the chosen symbols of the revolution. The situation regarding Marxism–Leninism was more ambivalent because as a term it seems to have been open to multiple interpretations, standing at various times for a legitimating ideology, a more general matrix of socialist values, as well as the structures and practices that characterised RCP rule. The predominance of the latter led 'communism' to be popularly interpreted largely in terms of dictatorship and a system of repression and, whilst such a form of rule was obviously invalid, the incoming leaders of the NSF seem to have believed that the ideology itself retained sufficient legitimacy for them to initially attempt to install a version of reform socialism, often dubbed 'constitutional communism', on the back of the revolution. Indeed, it may be suggested that their failure in this project might be ascribed more to the inherent internal contradictions of the system, external pressures, and the activities of the radicals on the streets, than to any general ground swell of popular sentiment against the values of Marxism–Leninism. intellectual circles the ideology was anyway seen in very symbolic and superficial terms. For sometime, Iliescu, Brucan, Roman and the others remained reluctant to clarify their position vis-à-vis the former official ideology and judging from the subsequent elections a substantial proportion of the population also continued to feel some attachment to the values of an ideology which, arguably, were only seen in very symbolic and superficial terms by the vast majority.

The mechanics of state breakdown in the Romanian case and the motive forces that set the dynamic of the revolution can best be traced by focusing on four key relationships each of which, in turn, raises a number of specific questions as regards
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the revolution. The relationships to be considered are between Ceauşescu and a) the Party b) the élite c) society and d) the security forces.

Ceauşescu and the RCP

The prime need in considering Ceauşescu’s relationship with the RCP is to explain how, after more than forty years in power, upon the flight of its leader the largest Communist Party in Eastern Europe, outside the Soviet Union, simply dissolved as if conjured away in a puff of smoke. This suggests not only a collective loss of self-belief by Party members on a colossal scale but also that the Party had become so totally identified with Ceauşescu that it no longer retained any separate autonomy, being a more appendage to an all powerful head. Although they may be presumed to have been aware of the weakness of the Party, the swiftness of the implosion still seems to have caught the Iliescu group by surprise — this is certainly the view of Brucan — and, to a large extent, it determined their failure to effect a smooth transfer of power. Furthermore, Party breakdown also lay at the heart of the aetiology of the revolution, since in Romania it also amounted to state breakdown, as under Ceauşescu the two had been fused, with the ‘marriage’ being symbolically tied with his accession to the post of state President as well as Party head. The fusion of state and Party was ostensibly done in the name of efficiency, but, at all levels, Party officials were in the ascendent. Unification facilitated increased central control of social and economic structures and reinforced the Party’s hold on all aspects of life. The merging of Party—state positions at the county level also augmented Ceauşescu’s power, since it enabled him to exert personal control through a succession of local clones who replicated his own position. The fate of the Party and the state were, thus, irrevocably bound together and any weakness on the part of one would necessarily reverberate through the other.

Within the precepts of ‘multilaterally developed socialism’ society was supposed to wither away to be taken over from ‘within’ by the Party. In the promised land every ‘expert’ was to be ‘red’, but by its very nature this formulation set in place a fundamental contradiction, since the high degree of revolutionary consciousness required to effect a take-over from within, was necessarily diluted as the Party turned from being a vanguard grouping into an agent of mass inclusion. With 3.7 million members by the end of 1987, it included within its ranks approximately 23% of total adult and 33% of the working population. As a mass organisation the RCP was intended to broadly replicate the structure of society through a representational configuration, but special emphasis was placed on recruiting certain key groups for ideological reasons, and, therefore, during the 1980s, 68% of all new members were stated to be workers (what constituted a worker seems to have
This move to re-proletarianise the Party had the effect of producing a disproportionately low educated organisation, with 47% of members in 1980 having only a primary education and a relatively small 11% higher education, the remainder having finished some form of secondary schooling. According to official figures the looming crisis throughout the 1980s had little effect on recruitment levels, with Party membership continuing to increase at much the same rate as it had in the previous decade by an average of 3% per annum, although this had noticeably tailed off to only 1.9% in 1987. The persistence of recruitment levels throughout this difficult period would seem to support the assumption that membership of the Party for most was principally seen as a route for career advancement, chiefly from blue collar to white collar employment. Despite the fact that 73% of the new recruits were drawn from the Union of Communist Youth, their ideological commitment appears to have been lukewarm at best, as, indeed, was their apparent loyalty to Ceaușescu, judging by the fact that much to his chagrin Party members were amongst those arrested during the demonstrations in Timișoara. The low quality of a frequently poorly educated cadre, rigid and highly formalised Party structures, which stifled all traces of initiative, half-hearted commitment by an often disaffected middle-ranking leadership and a lack of ideological cement, all seem to have combined to produce a hollow façade with little durable content, still able to mobilise large numbers for empty gestures of adulation but flimsy enough to collapse at the first challenge, as the revolution revealed. During the 1970s and early 1980s the size of the RCP may have worked in favour of the stability of the regime, since it permitted an application of a semblance of Party discipline on its huge membership, in part through offering the most assured avenue for gaining the sought after status of one of ‘them’, instead of the anonymous ‘us’, although Sampson has argued that this key status definition cut across Party membership, income and occupation groups. However, as the crisis deepened and the expected rewards of access to scarce goods, preferential treatment and upward mobility failed to materialise, discontent amongst Party members appears to have begun to rise and their loyalty to the regime correspondingly dissipated.

Aside from the low quality of many of the cadre, the Party was also seriously weakened by the policies adopted by Ceaușescu to forestall the possible appearance of rivals within the élite. In this, he was noticeably successful, since prior to the ‘Letter of the Six’, the only isolated signs of public dissent from within the higher echelons of the Party were the protests of Károly Király and the outburst of Constantin Pârvulescu at the Twelfth Party Congress in 1979. Aside from narrowing the power base to a minimum and deploying coercion, Ceaușescu adopted...
several other strategies to inhibit the growth of opposition. Foremost of these was his policy of élite circulation by which office holders were regularly shunted from one post to another to prevent any rivals from establishing a potential power base. The pace of this circulation, which was between both Party and state bureaucracies and local and central administrations, intensified during the 1980s, drawing in all levels of the system and, whilst it did effectively prevent any challengers to Ceauşescu arising from within the regime, it was at the high price of completely undermining the confidence of the apparat and, fatally, compromising the cohesion of the Party.

The circulation was largely horizontal with little vertical movement, although there was a slight tendency of greater risk of dismissal for lower, ranks producing something of a ‘hierarchy of insecurity’. At the highest level, although some apparent protégés did depart in disgrace during the 1980s, they were, in general, exceptions to the rule. In this largely ‘hermetic circulation’, in which almost the sole criteria determining movement was political loyalty, normal measures of success and failure were largely absent, giving little incentive for Party leaders to improve governmental performance, since promotion and demotion were unlikely providing strict fidelity to Ceauşescu was maintained. This limited vertical social mobility at all levels of the system produced something akin to what Krejčí, after Vilfredo Pareto’s celebrated formulation, has termed a ‘Paretian disproportion’ in which the leadership contained not ‘able, energetic and resolute, lions’ but ‘weak and cunning foxes’. The blocking of social mobility and the solidification of the ruling élite, by weakening the quality of leadership, eroded the capacity of the ruling gerontocracy to meet any potential challenge and also, since their channels of advancement were closed, it also prompted the hungry lions to search for alternative mechanisms by which to gain power, one of which was forcible change.

Ceauşescu and the élite

At the centre of many theories of revolution the key group which is seen as determining the fate of the regime is the intellectuals, for if their support is lost all seems destined to fall. Brinton termed the phenomenon the ‘desertion of the intellectuals’, Lynford Edwards as ‘the transfer of the allegiance of the intellectuals’ and Krejčí and Goldstone, amongst others, have placed their shift in loyalties at the crux of their theories of revolution. Turning to comparable examples, Schöpflin has emphasised the regime’s loss of intellectual support in both Hungary and Poland during 1956 (as he also does weakness within the Party), and in the more recent Iranian Revolution, amongst the causes often cited is the Shah’s alienation of religious intellectuals through his policies of secularisation. However,
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rather than the transfer of allegiance of the intellectuals, it may be better to talk of the alienation of the élite, since intellectual when strictly defined constitutes a somewhat narrow band, whilst élite (people whose skills and positions are such that they are able to influence large numbers of others) implies a broader category embracing all the higher echelons of society, including intellectuals, higher members of the intelligentsia and other social leaders. Also, since relatively few of the élite go into outright opposition, alienation may be preferred, as it implies a withdrawal of consent, rather than a transfer of allegiance, allowing for an intermediate posture of passivity with internalisation of sentiment giving an outward appearance of loyalty.

In the Romanian case the political posture of the élite was considered at some length in chapter three. The conclusion was that the main cleavage within the élite was between a ‘protochronist’ minority associated with the Ceauşescu regime and a greater ‘globalist’ majority who if not in absolute opposition, since such a movement was conspicuous by its absence in Romania, had become alienated from the regime after their marginalisation during the 1980s. This alienated élite (many of whom were Party members), aside from their hostility to Ceauşescu, shared a common attachment to a vague value system rooted in broader Western traditions, although this had in part been shaped in negative reference to their ‘protochronist’ opponents. Within monolithic socialist societies such as Romania, the job of the creative intellectuals was to justify the system by devising apologetics for its legitimisation, with those who would not undertake this task being effectively silenced. Intellectuals are accustomed to controlling the public sphere through language, but under socialist words became debased and ritualised and increasingly semantically barren. With the circumscription of language the majority of humanist intellectuals became marginalised and increasingly powerless. Few names beyond the intellectuals of Ceauşescu inner court reached the wider public domain, excepting the handful of dissidents publicised by western radio broadcasts. The intellectuals, to a certain extent, are a mirror in which the regime sees itself, indeed, so rosy was the image held up by the ‘court jesters’, that, like Narcissus, Ceauşescu fell in love with his own reflection and came to believe that the hymns of praise they sang were as real as the improbably youthful portraits held aloft by the adoring crowd. But for the remainder of the Party élite, the reflections they sometimes caught in other mirrors were less reassuring, eroding their faith in Ceauşescu and his policies and, fatally, weakening their own sense of self-legitimisation. The criticism of ‘communist insiders’, such as the authors of the ‘Letter of the Six’, who understood the ideational base of the system, being
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particularly potent as they undermined Ceaușescu’s claims to hold the essence of the ideological truth.

To a certain extent, the revolution can be seen as a contest over status and the distribution of power within the élite. Indeed, it can be argued, that intra-élite conflict was systemic in monolithic communist states, where the fusing of political, economic and social resources made winning and losing an all too often literal case of life and death, and this process was heightened in an exclusionary neo-Stalinist state, where élite groups battled for the ruler’s ear. The decline in the moral authority of the regime echoed throughout the whole of society, but it was particularly felt by members of the alienated élite, who chafed at being ruled by those who they perceived as being of an inferior status. Status inequality within the élite has been dubbed by Krejčí a ‘Weber disproportion’, with the most widely cited example being the wealth of the rising bourgeoisie not being matched by political power prior to the French Revolution. As a measure of social status Krejčí cites Talcott Parsons’ interpretation of Weber’s concept: “a typically effective claim to positive or negative privilege with respect to social prestige so far as it rests on one or more of the following bases: (a) mode of living [lifestyle] (b) a formal process of education . . . or (c) the prestige of birth, or of an occupation.” Applied to the Romanian case, a clear disproportion is revealed in which the technical and much of the cultural intellectual élite, who customarily expected the highest status, felt they were not accorded their rightful position in society. In their lifestyle the revolutionary challengers saw themselves as being markedly more abstemious and moderate than what was characterised as a degenerate and corrupt ruling élite, and in education no comparison was to be made with those who were often seen as being little more than a bunch of ill-educated peasants. In terms of prestige of birth and occupation, although Ceaușescu held undoubted élite legitimacy by virtue of his lengthy service to the RCP, many of the most prominent members of the NSF regime, such as Brucan, Birlădeanu, Iliescu and Roman, were also drawn from the ranks of the communist ‘aristocracy’, being equally long-standing members of the Party or the children of illegalists.

However, the presence of this disproportion again explains discontent rather than unrest and most evident during the period prior to the revolution was the apparent passivity of much of the élite. In part, this can be explained by reference to the coercive practices of the regime, but specific strategies would also seem to play a role. Aside from the aforementioned circulation of the élite, two other strategies were particularly employed, co-option and divide and rule, with the support of certain key groups, such as journalists, being bought by the regime through a raising of their professional status, although without any concomitant
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increase in autonomy. In consequence, the press declined to a mere mechanism for adulation, stifling all debate and offering no independent points of view. The public, mistrusting any 'official' news channel, turned to alternative sources of information, which were largely gossip and rumour, and the possession of accurate information became interpreted as a sign of status. Indeed, Sampson has argued that by the 1980s, status in Romania was largely determined by access to information and, since information is usually the preserve of intellectuals, their inability to command this resource engendered considerable frustration and anger.

Ceauşescu and society

In discussing Ceauşescu's relationship with society the need is to explain two apparent paradoxes. Firstly, Ceauşescu was toppled by a series of mass protests, but, until the end, he seems to have retained enormous faith in the idea that these same people endorsed his regime. This may be put down to simple delusions on his part, but it also implies that there had been a significant shift in his relationship with the people that the leader, for reasons best known to himself, had failed to recognise. Secondly, it has been widely recognised that Stalinism produced considerable social atomisation, and, in the case of Romania, continuing high levels of coercion, by breeding endemic social mistrust in personal relations, made this so acute that it has often been cited as a prime explanation for the passivity of the population during the 1980s. Yet, mass mobilisation requires a degree of social cohesion, implying that even within the confines of a state, which has undergone severe cultural dislocations, alternative forms of societal organisation had emerged.

Both a consequence and an aim of Stalinist forced modernisation, with its attendant urbanisation, industrialisation and collectivisation, was the destruction of the 'traditional' fabric of society through the dissolving of social bonds and the overturning of age-old norms. Out of the resultant homogenised society cleansed of class antagonism where even the boundary between the public and private sphere had become blurred beyond recognition, as the harsh pronatalist polices of the regime impinged even into the bedroom, Ceauşescu attempted to form a new socialist man — *Homo Romanicus*. Under Ceauşescu society was viewed as an object of policy rather than as a subject in its own right, with the regime being highly participatory only in so much as the population was in an almost constant state of mobilisation. 'Real' participation was at a minimum, despite Ceauşescu's attempts to 'simulate' grass roots involvement through mass rallies and carefully staged elections, and during the 1980s with the onset of neo-Stalinism, these became more pronounced as the Romanian leader once more turned his back on inclusion, when manipulation rather than domination is the defining relationship
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between regime and society, in favour of a return to the Stalinist model of mobilisation and coercion. The result was a disorientated and atomised population with little social cohesion, towards which Ceaușescu adopted specific polices aimed at further weakening any remaining lateral bonds. Principally, through the strategy of divide and rule, by which offices were multiplied, as in the security forces, ensuring a plurality of channels of communication, and then played off one against another, in a policy which was ultimately reproduced at the national level in respect to the Hungarian and Romanian ethnic communities. This policy may have staved off Ceaușescu's day of reckoning, but it heightened tensions within Romania particularly, with the Hungarian community, which became a centre of dissent and a perpetual thorn in the side of the authorities, attracting world-wide opprobrium onto the regime. Within Ceaușescu's nationalist rhetoric opposition was impossible, since all who were not 'for' the nation must be 'against', and so Stalin's 'enemies of the people' were transposed to 'enemies of the nation' and 'class war' was replaced by the prospect of 'national war', as attention was focused on neighbouring states, particularly the Soviet Union and Hungary, with whom relations remained perpetually chill.

This levelled and atomised society, apparently devoid of any traces of social cohesion, in the absence of 'traditional' moral norms lapsed into a passive anomie, with it seemed at times, no other unifying values than that of survival. After years of turning up at poorly maintained institutions for non-existent work many, including skilled scientists and technicians, felt more than a sense of material deprivation, a feeling of powerlessness, which, exacerbated by the denial of identity inherent in omogenizare, bordered on the very edge of non-being. In a society divorced from a framework of normal values, with minimal room for personal initiative, their disorientated lives seemed without any discernable meaning and, in that, they once more sought purposiveness; then, it can be said, that amongst many intellectuals the predominate goals of the revolution stretched beyond material concerns. Yet, whilst 'explaining' the apparent passivity of the population during the 1980s, the same characteristics by a neat reversal can also be used to account for much of the dynamic of the revolution. Indeed, prior to 1989, on the basis of the anomie he observed within Romania, Sampson made the remarkably prescient prediction that any future explosion would take the form of a pure expression of rage resembling a jacquerie.

The homogenised structure of the state, which was characterised by an absence of differentials, an ideological stress on egalitarianism and centralised decision making, produced a commonality of experience, which during the 1980s increasingly became a commonality of grievance, ensuring that any explosion would
include broad swathes of society. Indeed, Sampson has plausibly suggested that
the cold winter of 1984–85 was the defining moment in this process, when to save
fuel the huge central heating systems supplying thousands of apartments were
turned off and no amount of connections could provide the necessary leverage for
the boilers to be refired. The barriers between ‘us’ and ‘them’ were eroded building
a sense of collective suffering and underwriting the deep feeling of betrayal
that permeated society. This shared experience of suffering and domination,
reinforced as years passed in the solidarity of the queue, brought society as an en-
tity, increasingly into opposition to the regime, so that, for instance, the workers
in response to the ‘... official “cult of work” ’ propagated to motivate fulfillment
of the plan, developed an ‘oppositional cult of non-work,...’ In this way, by
playing on the weaknesses of the system, it can be said that society in search of
a strategy for survival actual came into confrontation with Ceauşescu and, to a
certain extent, hastened the downfall of his regime.

Homogenisation had also allowed Ceauşescu to construct a ‘contract’ with
society, involving a complex blend of welfarism and nationalism in which new flats
and urban facilities in a vigorously independent state were traded for political im-
potence. During the 1960s and 1970s, the economy had performed strongly enough
for surplus resources to be diverted to give considerable gains in living standards
amongst most sections of the population. Indeed, such were the memories of this
period that they were to form a golden age myth, mobilising the population to a
rectifying revolution. However, during the 1980s, as the economic downturn began
to bite and work brought instead of reward just further exhortations for sacrifice,
the striking differences between Ceauşescu’s utopian ideological rhetoric and the
sad realities of everyday life revealed the extent of ‘the lie’ upon which the whole
system was built. The workers’ state was a mere ‘false identity’ and no amount
of the oratory of ‘sentimental ouvrierism’ could hide the fact that rule was con-
centrated in the hands of an increasingly narrow Party élite and that the ‘social
contract’ had been reformulated as society’s duty to the leadership, and coercion
increasingly established as the only source of real power. However, such was the
centrality of the legitimising myth of the workers state that, until the day he died,
Ceauşescu continued to place absolute faith in the Patriotic Guards and workers’
defence groups. The extent to which his trust was misplaced was fully revealed
when the workers finally did challenge his authority, first in Timisoara, and then
elsewhere in Romania, brutally stripping aside the ‘false identity’ and laying bare
the regime’s ‘lie’ for all to see.

Thus, whilst it can be argued that Romanian society had suffered consid-
erable atomisation, and that few institutions between the family and the nation
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were capable of generating any great loyalty, it also remains true that the bulk of society was bound together by a sense of shared experience which was powerful enough to bury deep seated ethnic differences, allowing for a popular rising en masse against Ceauşescu, although, once he departed from the scene, the anomie resulting from atomisation can be invoked to explain some of the excesses of the revolution. However, this wider social cohesion only in part explains the mechanisms of mobilisation, because, as Skocpol has noted, 'the mass lower-class participants in revolution cannot turn discontent into effective political action without autonomous collective organisations and resources to sustain their efforts'. In a case study of the Iranian Revolution, Skocpol identifies the traditional networks centred on the bazaar merchants as forming such a nucleus, noting that the Shah was, therefore, brought down not by guerrillas or modern political parties, but rather by a 'set of cultural and organisational forms thoroughly embedded in the urban communal enclaves...' and, likewise, in the Bolivian Revolution of 1952, the miners can be seen as a similar organisational group who had a 'special cultural resonance'.

Following this lead, it might be suggested that revolutionary mobilisation requires (semi-)autonomous collective organisations which will probably be well embedded within society and possess a degree of cultural significance. In fact, in turning to the Romanian case, three such organisational forms can be identified, each dominant at a certain stage of the revolution. Firstly, the origins of the demonstrations in Timişoara were rooted in the Hungarian Reform Church. The Church in Timişoara provided a key organisational base on which to focus the protests in support of the dissident pastor László Tőkés, and the first demonstrators were almost entirely drawn from the ranks of his congregation. Secondly, a number of observers have drawn parallels between the behaviour of the protesters on the streets of Timişoara and elsewhere, and that of a football crowd, noting that, barring the slogans shouted, their conduct was virtually identical. It seems that only a month earlier, in a virtual dress rehearsal for the revolution, Romania's victory over Denmark in the World Cup qualifying competition on 15 November 1989 had brought jubilant supporters flooding onto the streets of Timişoara chanting slogans amongst which were heard cries of 'Down with Ceauşescu!'. The camaraderie of the terraces appears to have provided some type of model for the collective behaviour of the young men who predominated in the demonstrations during the first days of the revolution, and, it is perhaps significant, that Sampson has noted that the local football club was one of few intermediary organisations that possessed the mobilising potential of primary organisations. Thirdly, the last and, apparently, most important organisational forum was the factory. It was
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not the ‘football crowd’ demonstrations that brought down Ceaușescu, because the bloody suppression of the protests in Timișoara on 17 December and Bucharest on 21 December both succeeded in regaining the streets for the authorities, instead, it was the mass demonstrations in public places on 20 December in Timișoara and 22 December in Bucharest that were to prove decisive. During these days, the factories seem to have provided assembly points in which people could gather in sufficient numbers before they issued onto the streets to give some basic organisational form to the demonstrations, allowing the protesters to present a solid enough phalanx to completely overwhelm any remaining vestiges of military opposition. Ceaușescu was toppled by mass protests which seem to have often derived from an organisational form, the factory, that communism had elevated to be both the actual and also the mythical heart of the state, giving them a special resonance because in a ‘workers’ state’ they were the lifeblood of legitimisation. Marx and Engels had argued that following their concentration in the new urban factories, workers stripped of their rural isolation and reduced through capitalism to a universal poverty, which Marx termed ‘immiseration’, would subsume their individual interests within a wider class consciousness and form political associations to defend their common position, which by the rationality of desperation would ultimately lead to revolution. However, as noted previously, immiseration, even in poverty-stricken Romania, does not seem to have sufficed to prompt revolution and, generally, elsewhere the formal institutions that have arisen to defend workers’ interests, such as trade unions in the West, have become highly effective mediating bodies, ensuring that reform rather than revolution has been the dominant motif, with the workers more or less being able to satisfy their demands within the confines of the capitalist system. However, the situation in Romania was markedly different, as there was an almost complete absence of ‘real’ formal institutions to represent the workers, with the unions being little more than ciphers charged with mobilising the workforce on behalf of the regime. Bereft of effective bodies to air their grievances, the workers had no means of bargaining for change leaving as one alternative, revolution. The factories were, therefore, not so much the source of formal organisational structures, although it seems that in some enterprises the workers took over the trade unions and workers councils during the revolution, but rather they served as substitute communities facilitating mobilisation. Craig Calhoun has argued that in the absence of formal organisations well integrated ‘traditional’ communities are normally required for mobilisation, but in atomised Romania neither were present and, instead, for many the prime locus of orientation seems to have been the workplace — an identification constantly reinforced by RCP propaganda — although other orientations did exist, with, for instance, in
the context of the revolution the solidarity of the various Protestant communities being important during the first days of the struggle.\textsuperscript{213} Factories may well have acted as a substitute community for mobilisation but the lack of formal institutions produced a fundamentally weak revolutionary movement, characterised by many small clusters rather than one coherent whole. Largely defined through negative reference to Ceauşescu it was little more than an agglomeration of individuals and, thus, high vulnerable to oligarchic take-over.

\textit{Ceauşescu and the security forces}

Finally, the crucial determinant in deciding the fate of a revolution is the actions of the security forces of the state. Indeed, if the security forces fail to respond to the orders of the political leadership, this may be said to be the supreme expression of state breakdown.\textsuperscript{214} Revolutions are ultimately brought about by this failure of the state's apparatus of coercion and, if this is not caused by military defeat, then the security forces have to be persuaded that the regime is lacking in sufficient legitimacy to warrant their continued support. This is what eventually happened in Romania, but the crucial difference with the other Eastern Europe Revolutions is that, prior to this moment, not only did Ceauşescu possess the political will to use force but also he was in a position to be able to give orders for the security forces to act, and they, at first, were willing to respond.

To deal with an outbreak of unrest the principal forces Ceauşescu had to draw upon were the 128,000 strong army, its civilian paramilitary associate body, the Patriotic Guard, and the forces of the Ministry of the Interior, the militia and the Securitate. The potential active combatants amongst the latter being largely the 20,000 Securitate troops, the 484 strong Fifth Directorate presidential guard and the 795 members of the USLA special anti-terrorist unit. Indeed, it is noticeable, particularly in the light of myth of the Securitate as a specially favoured service, how Ceauşescu relied on a combined response to the disturbances, in which each of the three main branches of the armed forces — the army, Ministry of Interior and the Patriotic Guard — played a role, but with the army overall predominating. In this approach he seems to have been following the same tactics as were successfully employed at Braşov in 1987. As has been stressed in earlier chapters, the Securitate do not seem in general to have displayed any greater loyalty to Ceauşescu than other sections of the security forces, and many of the comments made below about the collapse of the army as a fighting force would seem to equally apply to the Securitate troops, which were also a largely conscript body with only regular NCOs and officers. Indeed, in considering the loyalty of the Securitate it is interesting to look elsewhere in Eastern Europe, especially at Poland and Hungary,
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where, during the dying days of communism, a ‘political capitalism’ had begun to emerge with the establishment of ‘private’ profit orientated companies within the bureaucracy. Frequently involved in trade with the West these ‘entrepratchiks’, to use Verdery’s term, were well placed to realise the growing gap between East and West and, attracted by the ideas of capitalism, gained a vested interest in promoting economic reform. In Romania, such import–export companies tended to be dominated by the Securitate and, reasoning largely by analogy, it may be that they too came to realise that their best interests might be served by a freeing of the economic environment. If so, this may in part explain their apparent lack of commitment to the Ceauşescu regime and certainly, since the revolution, it seems to have been those formerly associated with the Securitate who have secured the resources necessary to build some of the largest business empires within Romania’s embryonic capitalism.

The response of the security forces to a revolutionary situation is dependent upon their position within the state. If the armed forces occupy a relatively autonomous position within the state structure they have the potential of mounting a military coup to remove the current leadership and, thus, either forestall a revolution or occasionally initiate a revolutionary process. Military autonomy can be judged through a number of factors, including whether the armed forces exercise control over the supply of matériel, the possibility of officers being able to follow predictable career patterns, the capability of personnel to communicate discontent to each other, the ability of the regime to purge the military of elements whose loyalty is in doubt and whether alternative military force are available to counterbalance the regular armed forces. On all these counts, the autonomy of the Romanian armed forces must be rated low. Decisions concerning matériel appear to have lain outside the purview of the military and, indeed, the Romanian army was notoriously badly equipped. Ceauşescu’s policies of divide and rule and the random circulation of cadre applied as much to the military as to elsewhere and, judging by the subsequent complaints of officers and the large number of promotions made after the revolution, vertical mobility within the ranks had also dwindled to a minimum. So fearful was Ceauşescu of the possibility of a military coup that a special directorate of the Securitate (IV) was charged with monitoring the military for signs of dissatisfaction and, given the consistent failure of any officers to mount a credible coup attempt, the endeavours of the intelligence services must be judged to have been successful. As in other spheres, Ceauşescu retained absolute authority within the military, over all dismissals and, finally, as a counterbalance to the military there was the fearsome Securitate, renowned as being better equipped and trained than any other branch of the security forces.
Neither the Romanian army nor it would seem any other branch of the security forces, with the possible exception of the Securitate, possessed sufficient autonomy to be able to mount a coup. Certainly, attempts seem to have been made, but all had ended in ignominious failure and, despite the protestations of conspirators such as Militaru, it seems plausible to suggest that neither were any future plans guaranteed of success.219

The low autonomy of the military directly influenced its operational effectiveness since an army can be effectively used as an instrument of repression within a revolutionary context only by virtue of the imprinted loyalties which give it a sense of institutional separateness from society as a whole. For even the most professional of forces operate under important constraints on their use, arising both from the weight of international opinion and the strains which are placed on internal discipline through excessive employment on domestic civilian populations. Under the taunts of the crowd the army, as an institution in Romania, proved unwilling to accept any more than a limited amount of repression — effectively collapsing as a disciplined force after a single operation in both Bucharest and Timişoara. However, before this had occurred, the unarmed crowd had, time and again across Romania, in acts of often incomparable heroism, stood their ground before the security forces, even after they had opened fire on the protesters. The continuing willingness of the crowd to confront the security forces seems in part to have derived from an unflinching belief that the army was about to defect to the side of the 'people'. As early as the night of 16 December in Timişoara, there are reports of the protesters chanting the slogan 'The army is with us!' and it seems to have become commonplace from the next day.220 How such a belief came to be current within the crowd is vital to an understanding of the revolution, because the actions of the crowd so sapped military morale, that eventually the security forces refused to extend the repression and this directly led to the overthrow of Ceauşescu.

In her study of the Iranian Revolution Skocpol, also notes the courage displayed by the demonstrators, and suggesting this may have derived from Shi'a Islam, she concludes 'It did matter that the Iranian crowds were willing to face the army again and again — accepting casualties much more persistently than European crowds have historically done — until sections of the military rank-and-file began to hesitate or balk at shooting into the crowds'.221 In fact, the frequency that the bravery and commitment of the revolutionaries has far exceeded that of the defenders of the regime has prompted Krejčí's to draw up what he terms the 'Khaldunian contrast' between the fighting spirit of the two sides.222 Krejčí suggests that ideological commitment is the essential difference
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prompting the contrast and Skocpol, in stressing the values of Islam, would seem to generally confirm the view that beliefs are paramount. The protesters in the Romanian Revolution also displayed outstanding feats of bravery, with numerous well authenticated stories of demonstrators stepping out in front of the crowd, confronting lines of soldiers and taunting them to fire, and, although casualties in Romania did not mount to the Iranian scale, this would largely seem to be because the Ceauşescu regime collapsed more quickly than that of the Shah. Yet, Romania is a Christian country and the ideological commitment of most of the revolutionaries does not seem to have been high, which suggests that for their apparently indomitable courage the protesters were drawing upon other sources. It may be that the strength of their sense of grievance and a concomitant belief that their actions were legitimate drove the protests but, it seems, that an idea also lay at the heart of the Khaldunian contrast in the Romanian Revolution, and this was the belief held by the demonstrators, well before there was any discernable evidence that it really was the case, that 'The Army is with us!' Such was the collective identification with the conscripts that faced with cordons of armed soldiers people unhesitatingly moved forward to fraternise with the troops to try and persuade them to join the side of the revolution and one of the most striking images of the revolution is that of protesters offering bread and meat to the conscripts, the poor diet of the army being notorious. However, rather than being acts of reckless folly founded on nothing more than optimistic hopes, closer study suggests that such actions by the crowd did have a certain rationale.

Firstly, at a purely emotional level, few seem to have felt that the soldiers, most of whom were extremely young, badly trained and poorly disciplined conscripts, totally unsuitable for the task in hand, were capable of firing in cold blood at crowds of innocent civilians. Indeed, the composition of the army seems to have had a direct bearing on its apparent failure to establish a sense of institutional separation from society at large, as it was perceived not as a separate 'caste' but as the defender of the 'people'. This partly seems to have arisen because a very large proportion (74%) of the force were conscripts, namely, 95,000 of its 128,000 personnel, undergoing at sixteen months, the briefest period of military service of any of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation nations, and, thus, retaining a close identification with the civilian population whose privations they equally bore. Moreover, many of the demonstrators had once been conscripts themselves and often still had friends and family who were serving within the army, and this sense of mutual solidarity was probably increased by Ceauşescu's habit of using military labour on construction sites and in industry, an onerous burden which seems to have been disliked by all ranks. From a more practical angle, having served in
the army many knew that it was also highly unlikely that live ammunition would be issued and this seems to have led them to believe that they could face the guns with impunity, and even warning shots — seen as being only blank cartridges — were often ignored.

The institutional loyalties of the officer corp also evidently lay other than with the regime they served — indeed, in Timişoara there is some evidence that the army first broke ranks at the junior officer level, and after the revolution Lupoi was to say that when Ceauşescu in his 20 December address to the nation had publicly thanked the army for fulfilling its duty ‘We were disgraced in front of the people….it forced officers to take a clear position, and the one they chose was against Ceauşescu’.227 Initially, following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Romania and the propagation of a nationalist ideology, which had raised the spectre of external enemies and the consequent need for a professional army, the military had risen in status and been substantially liberated from the all pervasive political control.228 However, mirroring the experience of the technocratic intelligentsia in general, the reassertion of ideological primacy in the early 1970s had led to a downgrading of their status, especially following the embrace of the ‘Entire Peoples War’ doctrine, with its stress on the preservation of national independence through mass mobilisation to harry an invading force, which put a premium on sheer numbers and the Party led Patriotic Guard rather than military professionalism.229 Army unease was further heightened by Ceauşescu’s economic policies, which beside leading directly to the deployment of military units in industrial plants, were also the motive force behind the short conscription period, designed to serve the needs of industry rather than the army, and the apparent relative neglect of the army in favour of the navy and air force, which required advanced weapon systems more suitable for export.230 From the late 1970s until the mid 1980s there had been a virtual freeze on defence expenditure, legitimised through a national referendum in 1986, which may have been aimed at quietening military critics as much as international propaganda, and although spending had risen again slightly in the late 1980s, perhaps in direct consequence of the disturbances in Braşov, little effort seems to have been made to win the support of army officers in general.231 Additionally, the severing of professional contacts with the other members of the Warsaw Pact, leading to Romania’s absence from military exercises and depriving the army of advanced Soviet technology — only partly compensated by Western imports — seems to have alienated a number of older more senior generals who had received their training in the Soviet Union.232 However, Ceauşescu’s policy towards the Pact left him with a tricky contradiction to resolve, since the differences with his powerful eastern neighbour created the
need for strong domestic security forces, but the more powerful these became they more vulnerable he was to a military coup and, indeed, before 1989, various coup rumours had surfaced periodically over the years indicating dissatisfaction within the military.²³³

All these tendencies were inadvertently fused by Ceauşescu through his espousal of a nationalist ideology. Nationalism stressed the same patriotic values that lay at the heart of the military value system, thereby reestablishing the organic relationship between the army and nation which had been diluted by internationalist tendencies in the immediate years after the communist take-over, when the Red Army was stationed in Romania. Following the embracement of nationalism the Romanian army as the chief forum for patriotic socialisation, had taken on a renewed importance as the schoolroom of the nation, and this led to a widespread tendency both within the ranks of the military and within the people as a whole to identify the army with the nation, that is 'the people', at their widest extent.²³⁴ And during the revolution it was this identification that was to bear fruit on the streets of Timișoara, Bucharest and elsewhere when the protesters chanted the slogan at the troops: 'We are the people, whom do you defend?'

The causes of the revolution can, thus, be conveniently conceptualised in terms of the three prerequisites for revolution. Firstly, the permissive international environment in 1989 provided a window of opportunity for political change in Romania. Secondly, during that year, the breakdown of the Party—state had advanced to such a degree that after only a relatively insubstantial challenge the state collapsed. The army chose to defend traditional military loyalties to the nation and the preservation of order rather than the regime it nominally served, and through its defection, Ceauşescu was rendered open to challenge. Finally, there arose a revolutionary coalition motivated by numerous discontents which in the enormous political space vacated by the narrow exclusionist Ceauşescu regime came to encompass much of the population. In the latter stages of the process the population chiefly found organisational order in the culturally significant factories, but, initially, the trigger for the outbreak of the revolution was the regime's ham-fisted attempt to expel Lánszló Tőkés from his living in Timișoara. Why the Securitate so bungled this operation remains something of a mystery, but aside from problems of communication and the possibility of international protests already cited, it may be that the élite Securitate did not consider a relatively minor priest, even if he was a Hungarian, warranted undue attention. There is a big step from identifying discontent to considering it a serious threat and, after years of successfully controlling the situation and with all the resources of the state at
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their disposal, the Securitate too may have begun to believe in their own myth of invincibility. Certainly, the exercise of force seems to have generally been seen as a last resort, threats usually being sufficient to defuse a situation, and, indeed, under pressure and fearing the worst, Tőkés did try and disperse the crowds from outside his church but, by then, of course, it was too late.
Notes


2. For the term ‘negotiated revolution’ see László Bruszt, ‘1989: the negotiated revolution in Hungary’, *Social Research*, 57:2 (1990), pp. 365–87. In East Germany the events were known as the ‘turning-point’ (*Wende*).


4. In fact more casualties were recorded in Eisenstein’s reconstruction of the storming of the Winter Palace than in the actual event. Calvert, *Revolution and counter-revolution*, p. 11.

5. For an example in a recent popular work of reference published in Britain, see the entry for Romania describing the events as a ‘popular uprising’ leading to the overthrow of Ceausescu in David Crystal (ed.), *The Cambridge encyclopedia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 1036.


8. And naturally the process is not without contention or contradictions. Thus, many would argue that the ‘English Civil War’ was really a revolution, whilst the so-called ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688 was nothing of the sort and, more recently, the degree to which Hungary 1956, France 1968 and Poland 1980–81 can be considered revolutions has been the subject of considerable debate.

this book he has noticeably eschewed any definition in favour of the simple statement that revolution is an 'accelerated, and in some phases violent, process of a significant social change'. Krejci *Great revolutions compared* (2nd ed.), p. 9.


15. Jeff Goodwin & Theda Skocpol, 'Explaining revolutions in the contemporary Third World', *Politics and Society* 17:4 (1989), pp. 489–509. A far from full and uncontested list of recent peasant based revolutions might include Cuba, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Algeria and Nicaragua. As an example of a commentator doubting the possibility of revolutions in contemporary Europe Tilly cites Jacques Denoyelle who, writing in 1988, 'declared that the experience of authoritarian socialism and the advent of democratic individualism “joined to make violent rebellion a leftover from the past, a utopia stripped of its greasepaint”'. Quoted in Tilly, *European revolutions*, p. 2. For the case of Romania see chapter one, where even after the changes elsewhere in Eastern Europe during 1989, many commentators in the West doubted whether there would be a change of regime, let alone a bloody revolution.


21. Calvert, *Revolution and counter-revolution*, p. 17. Note that this study has not adapted all Calvert's stages of revolution which may be summarised as: a) a process of disenchantment in which an opposition forms b) the event c) a
programme by which the successful group attempts to change the main postulates of society d) a myth which is less of what actually occurred and more what ought to have been. The crucial factor being the event because only by the event is it possible to tell a revolution.


23. Tilly, *European revolutions*, p. 235. Tilly saw Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union as having entered into revolutionary situations alongside Romania, whilst he judged the positions in Albania, Poland and Bulgaria as being marginal.


26. Mark N. Hagopian, *The phenomenon of revolution* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 3–9. Hagopian’s typology lacks clarity, perhaps because he was influenced by the forms of coup which predominated at the time (especially in South America). In consequence, the two variables are frequently mixed and some possibilities, such as a palace coup ushering in considerable change, unduly discounted.

27. The others are executive coup, where the ruler strikes against the state to illegally continue his period of rule, and paramilitary coup, where an extra-legal coercive forces launch a putsch, as, for example, in the case of Mussolini’s March on Rome.

28. Vladimir Tismaneanu argues that ‘immediately after the beginning of the popular uprising in Bucharest a coup was organised against Ceaușescu by some of his closest associates’, chief of whom, he suggests, was General Stânculescu, Tismaneanu, ‘The quasi-revolution’, p. 328. The idea of a coup forms the basis of the ‘stolen revolution’ myth discussed in the next chapter. See also the extensive discussion about plans for a coup in chapter two.

29. For events surrounding the PEC meeting see chapter one.


32. Krejčí, *Great revolutions compared*, p. 5.

33. To confuse matters Tilly, *European revolutions*, p. 3, calls the events in Romania as well as those in Albania and Bulgaria, ‘a popular rebellion’ but later, in the same book, he terms Romania a ‘revolutionary situation’, whilst declaring the situation in the other two countries did not reach this state of affairs, ibid. p. 235.


35. Broadly, following a similar line Skocpol argues that rebellions can be distinguished from social revolutions by their absence of structural change, Skocpol, *States and social revolutions*, pp. 4–5. Huntington also stressed political criteria when he wrote ‘The measure of how revolutionary a revolution is is the rapidity and the scope of the expansion of political participation. The measure of how successful a revolution is is the authority and stability of the institutions to which it gives birth’. Cited in Jack A. Goldstone (ed.), *Revolution, theoretical, comparative, and historical studies*, (San Diego, Calif.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), p. 40.


40. Paul Gafton, ‘Ceaușescu’s strained relationship with the nomenklatura’, *Radio Free Europe Research, Romania Situation Report/9*, 14 August 1987, p. 3. This figure applies to the whole leadership, including middle-level and local officials and suggests the nomenklatura compromised some 6% of the Party. If the count is restricted to high central officials, what Gafton terms the ‘RCP Central Committee nomenklatura’, the figure shrinks to just 10,700.
42. The idea that revolution should involve the transformation of society’s socio-economic base is largely a legacy of Marx being further refined by Lenin: ‘What distinguishes the socialist revolution from the bourgeois one is precisely the fact that in the latter case ready-made forms of capitalist relations exist, whereas Soviet power, the proletarian one, does not receive such ready-made relations... Transformation of the entire state economic mechanism into a large, integrated machine, into an economic organism which works in such a way as to make hundreds of millions of people act under a single plan, this is the gigantic organizational task which fell on our shoulders’. Lenin quoted in Bruz, ‘“Perestroika”’, p. 173.
43. Quoted in Skocpol, *Social revolutions in the modern world*, p. 20.
44. Edwards quoted in Krejčí *Great revolutions compared* (2nd ed.), pp. 5–6.
46. Tilly, *European revolutions*, p. 235. Tilly saw Albania, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Poland, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia as having certain revolutionary outcomes.
48. See chapter one.
52. Bruz, ‘“Perestroika”’, p. 179. ‘Efficiency’ here being seen in usual Western European terms as enhancing profits by lowering costs and not in Eastern European terms as the maximising of resources.
54. For an example of the losses on exports of secondary oil products see below.
55. From December 1985 failure to report to the authorities a conversations with foreigners was made a criminal offence. Georgescu, ‘Romania in the 1980s’, p. 84.
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same time refining capacity nearly doubled as it leapt from 18.5 million to 35 million tonnes. Georgescu, 'Romania in the 1980s', p. 73, n. 8.

57. At its peak in 1982 the debt seems to have been around $11 billion but by 1986 it had been sharply cut to $5.5 billion and by 1989 it seem to have been virtually paid off. See Georgescu, 'Romania in the 1980s', p. 77, n. 22; Paul Gafton, 'The foreign debt', Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/15, 29 December 1988, pp. 7–9.

58. For the concept of 'limited good' see George M. Foster, 'Peasant society and the image of limited good', in Jack M. Potter, May N. Díaz & George M. Foster (eds.), Peasant society: a reader (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), pp. 300–323. Foster sees 'limited good' as the cognitive orientation which leads peasants to view the total environment 'as one in which all of the desired things in life ... exist in finite quantity and are always in short supply ... [and] there is no way directly within peasant power to increase the available quantities'. ibid. p. 304. Existence under such an orientation being, thus, determined and limited by the natural and social resources seen as being available.

59. Steven L. Sampson, 'Muddling through in Rumania (or: why the mamaliga doesn't explode)', International Journal of Rumanian Studies, 3:1–2 (1981–1983), p. 170. In this article Sampson actually distinguishes between 'muddling through' and 'stagnation' but in his later work he treats the two as being synonymous.


61. For the concept of 'softness' see Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, pp. 178–79.


63. See chapter three for a more lengthy analysis of Brucan's ideas.

64. Krejčí Great revolutions compared (2nd ed.), p. 32.

65. For details of Brucan's thinking see chapter three.

66. In an early speech Ilieșcu cast the revolutions in such terms when he stated that 'no attempt of the remains of the old regime is capable of turning back the wheel of history again'. BBC EE/0652, B/9, 3 January 1990, Agerpres in English, 2057 gmt, 31 December 1989; see also similar wording in BBC EE/0650, B/10, 30 December 1989, Bucharest Home Service, 1100 gmt, 28 December 1989.

67. Krejčí Great revolutions compared (2nd ed.), p. 248–49. In that one of the aims of the revolutions of 1989 was to emulate Western levels of development they cannot easily be seen a postmodern revolutions.


72. Verdery, 'What was socialism and why did it fail?', pp. 238–40. It is perhaps significant, that the first phase of Perestroika in the Soviet Union in 1986 was known as *uskorenje* (acceleration).

73. This is what Krejčí, following Kramnick, has termed a 'Tocquevillian contradiction'. Kramnick redefined relative deprivation as '... a sudden widening of the gap between expectation and gratification when it is perceived, correctly or incorrectly, that the governing régime is either responsible for, or incapable of, dealing with this intolerable situation'. Quoted in Krejčí *Great revolutions compared* (2nd ed.), p. 35.


76. Krejčí *Great revolutions compared* (2nd ed.), p. 35.

77. Sampson suggests that the division between 'them' and 'us' was founded on a carefully graded hierarchy of supply, headed by those who acquired resources through mutually traded favours, with below them those who resorted to bribery and at the bottom those who were forced to patiently queue in line. Sampson, 'Muddling through in Rumania', pp. 169–71.


79. That consorts should be seen as the real evil geniuses behind the throne occurred both in case of Elena Ceauşescu and Imelda Marcos. Whether this displacement, which appears to have been of limited truth in both cases, arises from hostile perceptions of women who have risen to unaccustomed positions of influence in traditional societies or because of a general unwillingness by the population to identify 'their' leader, who at least in the case of Ceauşescu had at one time enjoyed popular legitimacy, with later misrule is unclear.

80. For a series of scandalous stories about Nicu Ceauşescu and the debauched lifestyle of the Ceauşescu élite, see Pacepa, *Red horizons*. For a corrective to stories about their fabulous wealth, see the description of the Ceauşescu's living quarters in the Central Committee building in Simpson, *The darkness crumbles*, pp. 274–76.


85. For the moral rigour of the opposition see chapter three. This line of argument stems from Arjomand who, has noted that "The fact that [revolutionary] social movements are reactions to social dislocation and normative disorder explains the salience of their search for cultural authenticity and their moral rigour". Quoted in Goldstone, 'An analytical framework', p. 43.

87. Skocpol’s reappraised her position in light of the Iranian and other revolutions: ‘Revolutions are ultimately “made” by revolutionaries, but not of their own free will — not within political contexts they themselves have chosen, to paraphrase Karl Marx, but within very specific sorts of political contexts that are not the same for all who would make revolutions, Goodwin & Skocpol, ‘Explaining revolutions’, p. 495.

88. Skocpol, Social revolutions in the modern world, p. 9.

89. Doyle argues forcefully that in looking at revolutions it is necessary to go beyond the small group of ideologues who ‘wove events into what they longed to believe was a preordained and predictable pattern and then proclaimed, at whatever point they had reached, the Revolution’s course and meaning were clear, and that whoever opposed or resisted their interpretation was self-evidently counter-revolutionary.’ William Doyle, ‘Revolution and counter-revolution in France’, in E.E. Rice (ed.), Revolution and counter-revolution (Wolfson College Lectures, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 106. In support of his argument he notes the fundamental contradictions between the intentions of the first revolutionaries who triumphantly stormed a state prison and yet within four years had filled the prisons of France to bursting point and who ‘wished to purify the Church to make it serve the faithful better, but who ended up by closing down every church in France and sanctioning every sort of blasphemous outrage against religious observance.’ ibid.


92. Aya, Rethinking revolutions, pp. 5, 15.


94. Krejčí Great revolutions compared (2nd ed.), p. 12.

95. Skocpol, Social revolutions in the modern world, p. 314.

96. Aya, Rethinking revolutions, pp. 15–16. In support of the view that in any revolutionary situation the majority are likely to be antipathetic, if not downright hostile to the revolution, Doyle, writing about the French Revolution, notes that, whilst the Jacobin Republic of Year II had popular support within Paris, outside the capital the counter-revolution had far more. This enables him to present the dominant leitmotif of the French Revolution as being one of resistance to impetus coming from the centre and fear of turmoil and disruption. During the revolutionary process, after all, terror is often used to maintain an otherwise weak hold on power. Doyle, ‘Revolution and counter-revolution in France’, pp. 95–108. Likewise, in a case from Germany, Barrington Moore, points out that the ‘mass of workers [in the Märzrevolution of 1920] were not at any point in a revolutionary frame of mind. They ... had limited and specific targets ... They did not want to overturn the existing social order and replace it with something else,... [but] fought in self-defence.’ Quoted in Aya, Rethinking revolutions, p. 140.

97. Aya, Rethinking revolutions, p. 53, emphasis added.


100. Although Craig Calhoun’s ideas were shaped in terms of ‘traditional’ communities they would seem to have a universal resonance and later it will be argued that certain institutions, particularly factories, did act as surrogate communities. For the idea of ‘reactionary radicals’ see Calhoun, ‘The radicalism of tradition’, pp. 129–175; also Goldstone, ‘An analytical framework’, p. 43. For the idea of return within the Romanian Revolution see chapter six.


102. Aya, Rethinking revolutions, pp. 53–54.

103. For a list of arson targets in Timişoara on 17 December 1989, see Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, pp. 57–58.

104. Quoted in Aya, Rethinking revolutions, p. 55.

105. Such use of nationalist imagery, of course, was not confined to Romania as one glance at the logo of Solidarity would reveal.

106. Goodwin & Skocpol, Explaining revolutions, p. 493.

107. Krejčí Great revolutions compared (2nd ed.), p. 5.


109. Ion Marcu, ‘The Romanian people have not rebelled for the rulers of so far to turn them into butlers by the foreign countries gates’, Romania: Documents–Events, January 1993, pp. 21–22.

110. According to Romanian official statistics, the distribution of investment in 1984 was 14.9% to agriculture and 51.7% to industry. Georgescu, ‘Romania in the 1980s’, pp. 71–72. For coercive practices against peasants to try and force increased production, which he terms a ‘third-serfdom’; see ibid. pp. 74–75.

111. For the New Economic and Financial Mechanism see Shahr, Romania, pp. 121–126; Paul Gafton, ‘Wage increases of 10% approved’, Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/8, 23 June 1988, pp. 21–22; Anneli Ute Gabanyi, ‘Workers’ protests flaring up’, Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/1, 6 February 1987, pp. 7–10. Brucan, The wasted generation, p. 135, where he alleges that a 33% fall in wages was a prime trigger for the Braşov disturbances. The Acord also gave the authorities the right to ship workers all over the country to labour on prestige projects.

112. Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, p. 108.


114. Krejčí Great revolutions compared (2nd ed.), p. 22.

115. Shafir, Romania, pp. 132–35. Shafir follow Everett M. Rogers who defines fatalism as “…the degree to which an individual perceives his lack of ability to control his future”. A sharp contrast can be drawn between the posture adopted by the Romanian Orthodox Church and that of the Catholic Church in Poland.


117. Rady, Romania in turmoil, generally and especially p. 194.

118. For a blistering attack on this model see Aya, Rethinking revolutions, pp. 21–49, especially p. 23.

119. A transcript can be found in ‘Pentru prima dată în presă / stenograma discuției dintre doi lideri comuniști Gorbaciov–Ceaușescu’, România Liberă, 19 February 1994, pp. 1, 2–3. In fact, there seem to have been two meetings that day between the leaders each of two hours duration and, although it is not entirely clear, it seems that the transcript may be of the evening meeting only. Also it is
rumoured that there had been a more confrontational preliminary meeting some weeks earlier. For details of the meeting see Dan Popescu, ‘Ceauşescu ştia că i se apropiă sfârşitul...’, România Liberă, 23 February 1994, p. 16.

120. There has also been much speculation about secret police and KGB involvement in the events which marked the downfall of the communist parties elsewhere in Eastern Europe in 1989 especially in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and East Germany. As an example for the events in Czechoslovakia see; John Simpson, ‘Prague revolution “engineered by the secret police”’, The Times, 30 May 1990, p. 8; Bernard Wheaton & Zdeněk Kavan, The Velvet Revolution: Czechoslovakia, 1988–91 (Boulder Col.: Westview Press, 1992), throughout but especially pp. 47–48, 113–114.

121. This typology derives from Skocpol, Social revolutions in the modern world, p. 315. In the case of revolutions in neo-patrimonial states she stresses: a) Dislocations in transnational economic markets b) Shifts in Great Power patronage c) Transnational ideological influences on revolutionary cadre and rulers alike.

122. See for instance the words delivered by Tiberiu Kovács to the demonstrators in Timişoara during the evening of 16 December 1989: “All Europe has given us an example to follow: Poland, Hungary, the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria! What are we waiting for?” Quoted in Milin, Timişoara: 15-21 decembrie '89, p. 32.


124. ‘... in an interdependent world it is co-operation in defense of universal values, not the conflict between capitalism and socialism that is at the heart of international relations’. Gorbachev quoted in David Holloway, ‘Gorbachev’s new thinking’, Foreign Affairs, 68:1 (1988/89), p. 71.


126. Krejčí broadly distinguishes between ‘vertical’ endogenous revolutions that are inspired by the traditions of the country in which they take place, and ‘horizontal’ exogenous revolutions, where the inspiration comes from ‘the challenge of foreign values, habits and institutions’. Krejčí Great revolutions compared (2nd ed.), p. 12. Although Krejčí considers the revolutions of 1989 not to have been revolutions in the technical sense, largely it seems, because they lacked violence, he suggests they still fall under the metaphorical usage of the word, ibid. p. 138.


128. An interesting comparison can be made with Nicaragua and Iran, where it was the USA, preoccupied by internal problems and rent by internal divisions, which pulled the rug out from underneath the feet of former client rulers. Foran, ‘Theories of revolution revisited’, p. 6.

The accession of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in the USSR and the advent of perestroika seems to have given encouragement to those wishing to see change in Romania, as they began to look towards the Soviet Union both for allies and for models of reform and the Soviet leader's Gorbachev's visit to Bucharest in
May 1987 is said to have inspired a number of clandestine reform programmes including those of Nicolae Stânescu and Ion Fistioi Discuss in chapter three and it is possible some may have reached the Soviet leader before eventually falling into the hands of the Western media. It was also reported that the Soviet press was in great demand in intellectual circles in Bucharest prior to the revolution and in his writings Brucan in particular shows a familiarity with Soviet thought current at that time. Vladimir Socor, 'Mihai Botez and Károly Király seeking support for reforms', Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/6, 3 July 1987, p. 8.


130. The idea that revolutions should contain an idea of novelty is forcefully made by Hannah Arendt: 'Only when this pathos of novelty is present and where novelty is connected with the idea of freedom are we entitled to speak of revolution.' Hannah Arendt, On revolution (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973), p. 34.


132. A proponent of these views once tried to persuade me (unsuccessfully) of the relative merits of privatising Cișmigiu, the public park which is an oasis of tranquillity in the heart of Bucharest.

133. Only quibbling with the qualification 'significant' as regards revolutionary movements it is possible to agree with Goodwin's general statement about the state specificity of revolutions. 'Certain sorts of states,...are especially likely to engender specifically revolutionary forms of political opposition, and a particular subset of these states is especially likely to collapse or capitulate when confronted by significant revolutionary movements'. Goodwin, 'Old regimes and revolutions', p. 576.

134. Although note that Shafir considers Ceaușescu's television speech of 20 December to have been reminiscent of those of Ernő Geroe on the eve of the Hungarian Revolution. Shafir, 'The revolution: an initial assessment', p. 36.

135. Sampson has also made comparisons between Romania in the 1980s and both Stalin's Russia of the 1930s and the rest of Eastern Europe in the 1950s. For the former see Sampson, 'Regime and society in Rumania', p. 42, and Steven L. Sampson, 'Romania: house of cards', Telos, 79 (1989), p. 221, where he states 'In the context of East European social movements, Romania remains "backward"'.

136. Another frequently cited example of a neo-patrimonial state being overthrown by revolution is Fulgencio Batista's Cuba. For attempts to place Ceaușescu within the neo-patrimonial model see Goodwin, 'Old regimes and revolutions', pp. 577–78, 594–96, 600 n. 29; Skocpol, Social revolutions in the modern world, p. 312 and the comments in Fischer, 'The new leaders and the opposition', p. 46. Goodwin, on the basis of a limited analysis, suggests that the events in Romania amounted to an aborted social revolution comparable with the situation in Haiti after the ousting of Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier. Aside from any
superficial similarities there may be between the Tontons Macoutes and the Security, Goodwin's interpretation largely seems to rest on his assertion that the regime Iliescu leads is neo-communist. However, his argument is considerably weakened when he openly states that he terms the regime as such, not because it is attempting to maintain the institutions of communism, but 'because of the background (and certain mentalities) of its principal leaders'. Such a judgement would seem to make the leopards of communist politics unique in not being able to change their spots and, in fact, is so subjective as to be next to useless. For a well reasoned rebuttal to the idea that the Iliescu regime was neo-communist see Verdery & Kligman, 'Romania after Ceaușescu', p. 126. For neopatrimonial regimes in general see Jack A. Goldstone, 'Revolutions and superpowers', in Jonathan R. Adelman (ed.), Superpowers and revolutions (New York: Praeger, 1986), pp. 38-48; Richard Snyder, 'Explaining transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships', Comparative Politics, 24:4 (1992), pp. 379-99; Goodwin & Skocpol, 'Explaining revolutions', pp. 489-509.

137. Snyder, 'Explaining transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships', p. 379. The regimes are termed 'neo-patrimonial' rather than 'patrimonial' because they do not rely on 'traditional' forms of legitimisation, such as heredity. Skocpol, Social revolutions in the modern world, p. 268.

138. Snyder, 'Explaining transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships', p. 396 n. 1; Goldstone, 'Revolutions and superpowers', pp. 40-41.


140. Snyder, 'Explaining transitions from neopatrimonial dictatorships', p. 380.

141. Shafir, Romania, p. 62.


143. The distinction between coercion and terror is made by Jowitt, 'The Leninist extinction', p. 75. During an interview with an American journalist Ceaușescu is reported to have admitted to being a great admirer of Stalin. See Kligman, 'The politics of reproduction', p. 370 n. 15.

144. Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, pp. 143-44; Tismaneanu, 'The tragicomedy of Romanian communism', p. 333. This section draws heavily on Schöpflin's excellent study of Eastern European politics and to lessen repetition in future only direct quotes will be acknowledged. Vladimir Tismaneanu considers Ceaușescu's ideology to have been a 'syncretic mixture of decayed Marxist tenets, self-aggrandizing ethnocentric myths, and the unabashed celebration of Ceaușescu himself. Xenophobia, autarchy, isolationism, anti-occidentalism, and anti-intellectualism were the main motifs underlying the ideological construct.' Tismaneanu, 'Romania's mystical revolutionaries', p. 402.

145. Georgescu, 'Romania in the 1980s', p. 81. In this assessment Georgescu seems to be drawing on Mihai Botez who also blamed Romania's decline on the mediocre intellectual qualities of the ruling group. Georgescu, 'Romanian dissent: its ideas', p. 184. Again the concentration of power can be seen in terms of traditional forms, as according to Jowitt, in status societies primary group affiliation is to the family and the nation with a virtual absence of intermediary organisation. The corporate group as the basic social unit is exclusive in its membership and 'groups of this order engage in exchanges of sorts with each other but remain distant from and suspicious of each other.' Ken Jowitt, The Leninist response, p. 7.

146. By 1989 the membership of PEC Permanent Bureau had been cut to only seven: Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu, Constantin Dăscălescu, Emil Bobu, Manea
Mănescu, Gheorghe Rădulescu and Gheorghe Oprea. In 1984 it had been eight, but after the departure of Ilie Verdeș he was not replaced by a new nominee.

147. This appears also to have been the case in Cuba, Nicaragua and Iran, where narrow regimes faced broadly based mass movements.

148. Such paranoia was not only the preserve of the Ceaușescu regime. In Albania Enver Hoxha is credited with covering the country with a vast network of concrete bunkers to meet any foreign invasion threat. And a similar divorce from reality has been observed in the case of the former Italian Prime Minister, Giulio Andreotti, when arraigned over charges he had maintained close links with the Mafia whilst in office. A commentator, noting Andreotti categorically rejected the charges added: 'One detects no sign of insincerity; what emerges, though, is a world—view that seems extraordinarily detached from reality.' Andrew Gumbel, 'Andreotti to face trial on mob links', The Independent, 3 March 1995, p. 13.

149. For an analysis of Ceaușescu's mentality see chapters one and two.

150. Under Stalin the secret police had ruled over the Party. Jowitt, 'The Leninist extinction', p. 75. Khruschev had reversed this pattern, but in neo-Stalinist Romania the Securitate were still very much at Ceaușescu's beck and call and were expected to monitor Party members. In contrast in Eastern Germany there was an effective alliance between Party and Stasi and only after the accession of Gorbachev, and the perceived threat this brought to the orthodox line, was some spying on Party members sanctioned. Popplewell, 'The Stasi and the East German Revolution of 1989', p. 43. Tismaneanu argues that in Romania the Securitate really were a state within a state and the chief repository of political power, with the political elite being strictly subordinate, Tismaneanu, 'The quasi—revolution', p. 316.


152. Popplewell, 'The Stasi and the East German Revolution of 1989', p. 44.

153. The power wielded by the Securitate may have bred a feeling of invincibility. See chapter one.

154. Teodorescu, Un risc asumat, is permeated throughout by an apparently unshakable belief that Romania was infested with foreign agents. An interesting comparison can be made with what has been reported to be the KGB's position in 1968 over Czechoslovakia: '..., the success of the KGB intelligence collection was undermined by a failure of intelligence analysis. The centre's ideological blinkers rendered it incapable of interpreting opposition except in terms of plots and conspiracies.' Andrew & Gordievsky, KGB, p. 401.


156. Typifying the widely accepted image is the illustration to be found in Bru–
can, The wasted generation, p. 105, where Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescus are graphically depicted as being at the centre of nine grasping octopus tentacles each bearing the name of a family member. For a balanced appraisal of the various allegations see René de Fleurs, 'Socialism in one family', Survey, 28:4
The promotion of the family members of other leaders to positions of importance may have reflected better access to information as much as straight nepotism.

157. Kenneth Jowitt has argued that Romania can be viewed in terms of a Weberian 'status' society in which the basic unit of organisation was the peasant family household. Client–patron networks in which relations among groups are governed by personal, not impersonal, norms of action are a defining feature of such societies, with integration, thus, tending to occur on patrimonial lines. The promotion of family members to key positions in such societies can be seen as a basic defence strategy ensuring that resources remain under the control of trusted figures who are expected, in Shafir's words, to 'watch over the common “family courtyard”'. Moreover, since such societies also tend to embrace the idea of 'limited good', and see resources as being finite, these family groups tend towards the view that they can only improve their position through removing resources from others, imparting a continuous dynamic of confrontation into the system. Ken Jowitt, *The Leninist response*, pp. 6–21, especially 7–8; Shafir, *Romania*, pp. 79–80. Eyal also sees Ceauşescu's actions as following 'traditional' patterns of behaviour Eyal, 'Why Romania could not avoid bloodshed', p. 150.

158. Nicu Ceauşescu had been made a candidate member of the Central Committee in 1979, a full member in 1982, and a candidate member of the PEC in 1984. He had been appointed to Sibiu in 1987. When Iliescu was sent to Timişoara and Iaşi in the same position, it was seen as a demotion. But note that Fischer argues that the post of local Party Secretary was a route for promotion for many since it provided an opportunity to establish a network of local connections. However, given his parentage, it must be doubted that Nicu really needed to build such a local power base. For an analysis that saw Nicu's move to Sibiu as a stepping stone on in his path to power see Anneli Ute Gabanyi, 'Nicu Ceauşescu on the way up?'. *Radio Free Europe Research*, Romanian Situation Report/12, 6 November 1987, pp. 9–12.


163. Michael Shafir argues that earlier a fear of being purged or, after the early Dej years, a desire not to weakening the collective position of the Party through factionalisation, what he terms 'faction–anxiety', may have been sufficient to ensure leadership cohesion. However, by 1989 such factionalism was a dim and distant memory. Shafir, *Romania*, pp. 66–67. Tismaneanu, 'The tragicomedy of Romanian communism', p. 336, also argues that Romanian communism had a world–view inherently suspicious of diversity, never having 'given much credence to critical Marxism, heterodoxy or the values of dialogue and tolerance'.

164. Shafir also distinguishes between what he terms 'power consolidation' and 'authority building', with the leader in the former, which he sees as being more identified with Stalinist systems, protecting and aggrandizing his rule via 'purges, patronage and manipulation of the main institutional pillars of the establishment' and in the latter, identified with post–Stalinism, through 'demonstrating to other élites his competence and indispensability as a leader'. In Ceauşescu's neo–Stalinist state, Shafir rightly sees power consolidation as being the primary
strategy, but arguably the two are not incompatible, with an excessive concentration of power not precluding the adoption of 'authority building' techniques to cement the leaders position *vis-à-vis* the higher echelons of the regime. Shafir, *Romania*, p. 69.

165. For the concept of indispensability see Goldstone, 'Revolutions and superpowers', p. 42.


167. In its excess it was said to have equalled the cults of Stalin and Mao. Fischer, *Nicolae Ceaușescu*, p. 160. For the cult see as well Vlad Georgescu, 'Politics, history and nationalism: the origins of Romania's socialist personality cult', in Joseph Held (ed.), *The Cult of Power: dictators in the twentieth century* (Boulder, Col.: East European European Monographs distributed by Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 129–42.

168. The funeral ceremony of Lenin organised by two of the strongest adherents of God Building, Lunacharsky and Krasin, was infused with traditional religious overtones and the public display of Lenin's embalmed body bears more than a passing resemblance to a religious cult of saints' relics. Ceaușescu's cult is often said to have been influenced by the high regard in which he held Far Eastern communist cults but these rooted in Confucianism seem to have been built on different foundations. For the deification of Ceaușescu see Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe*, p. 219 and Anneli Maier, 'Ceaușescu deified on his 62nd birthday' *Radio Free Europe Research*, RAD Background Report/34 (Romania), 11 February 1980, pp. 1–7; also Dan Ionescu, 'Religious elements in the glorification of Ceaușescu', *Radio Free Europe Research*, Romanian Situation Report/2, 28 January 1988, pp. 7–10. Maier suggests that a poem by Corneliu Vadim Tudor portrayed Ceaușescu as a 'lay–god'. Ceaușescu also often presented himself in semi–regal guise, and one of the more bizarre manifestations of his 70th birthday celebrations was the appearance in the Romanian press of a number of bogus messages of congratulation apparently cobbled together from old texts, including one from the Queen of England, Elizabeth II.

169. The Shah of Iran also seems to have been cast in a similar light.

170. It can be argued that the market is particularly adept for such a usage since it '...is not generally regarded as suspect or illegitimate, given the constitutional insulation of the political (or public) and economic (private) spheres that is characteristic of capitalist societies, whether democratic or authoritarian'. Goodwin, 'Old regimes and revolutions', p. 583.


172. Kolakowski quoted in Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe*, p. 162. Pavel Câmpeanu has hints at the power projected by the cult image when he writes: 'In spite of the coarseness and their transparency, these subterfuges had the strange effect of reinforcing an obscure fear that Ceaușescu was immortal' and this he suggests seems to have blended into a fatalistic passivity as 'little by little the population's obsession with his ubiquitous presence turned into an obsession with his death'. Pavel Câmpeanu, 'The revolt of the Romanians', *The New York Review of Books*, 37:1, 1 February 1990, p. 30.


179. For the union of the Party and state see Shafir, Romania, p. 59. The union also saw the formation of large numbers of Party–state organs, such as the Supreme Council of Economic and Social Development, the Defence Council and the National Council for Science and Technology.

180. During the 1980s an average of 47% of new recruits were women, and by 1985 Ceauşescu was able to declare the Party was evenly divided between those over and under forty. All figures derive from Fischer, Nicolae Ceauşescu, pp. 191–200.

181. See Fischer, Nicolae Ceauşescu, p. 197, where a telling comparison is made with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in which, at the same time, just 8% of the members possessed only primary education. Georgescu, ‘Romania in the 1980s’, p. 81, suggests that, by the late 1980s, 80% of Party members and 78.5% of the “party apparat” had a peasant or working-class background according to RCP sources.

182. Given the falsity of nearly all statistics in Romania during this period these figures need not necessarily be any more correct than other enumerations.


184. Fischer, Nicolae Ceauşescu, p. 218, cites the cases of Ilie Verdeț, Virgil Trofin, and Constantin Buritică. For an analysis of Verdeț’s departure see Maier, ‘Growing job insecurity for Romanian nomenklatura?’, pp. 13–18, especially pp. 16–17. To this may be added the Sulina petrochemical waste scandal which brought public reprimands from Ceauşescu for a number of senior officials, including Dăscălescu, Postelnicu and Oprea, and the dismissal of Ştefan Birlea, Chairman of the State Planning Committee and PEC alternative member, and Ilie Vaduva, Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation both of whom had been considered close to Ceauşescu in the past. See Michael Shafir, ‘Senior officials dismissed in environmental scandal’, Radio Free Europe Research, Romanian Situation Report/9, 20 July 1988, pp. 17–21; ‘Romania: explosive’, East European Newsletter, 2:13, 29 June 1988, pp. 1–3.

185. A similar situation seems to have appertained in Iran. See Michael Tien-lung Liu, ‘States and urban revolutions: explaining the revolutionary outcomes in Iran and Poland’, Theory and Society, 17:2 (1988), p. 156. For the circular flow of power in Romania see Shafir, Romania, pp. 72–73.

186. Krejčí Great revolutions compared (2nd ed.), p. 37. Arjomand, ‘Plea for an alternative view’, p. 147, also considers what he terms the ‘Aristolelian–Paretian’ ideal type and suggests it is particularly applicable to the Eastern Europe Revolutions.


188. Schöpflin, Politics in Eastern Europe, p. 119–22. Schöpflin has also emphasised the loss of intellectual support in Hungary and Poland during the 1980s: ‘In both Poland and Hungary the vital nexus in the process of delegitimisation was the loss of support of the significant sections of the critical intellectuals and the
Notes: Why the mămâliga did explode

191. See chapter one.
194. Quoted in Krejci _Great revolutions compared_ (2nd ed.), p. 32.
195. For the press see Fischer, _Nicolae Ceauşescu_, pp. 182-89.
196. Sampson, 'Muddling through in Rumania', p. 173. Epitomising the constraints placed on the free flow of information was the fact that every typewriter had to be registered with the militia. Georgescu, 'Romania in the 1980s', p. 84.
197. See Kligman, 'The politics of reproduction', pp. 364-418. the project of social engineering was known as _omogenizare_.
198. Sampson, 'Regime and society in Rumania', p. 43.
199. Skocpol suggests divide and rule tactics are used by all patrimonial leaders and, furthermore, adds 'In states with strong bureaucratic features, rulers who do not apply such tactics risk de facto or actual removal from power by solidary collections of civilian or military officials.' Skocpol, _Social revolutions in the modern world_, p. 255 n. 8. Certainly, the Shah of Iran seems to have followed a similar strategy of multiplying offices and then infiltrating them with the secret police. Tien-lung Liu, 'States and urban revolutions', p. 157.
200. Hungarian dissent crystallised in several forms. There were a series of individuals such as Károly Király, a former alternate member of the PEC until 1972 and Vice-Chairman of the Hungarian Nationalities Council until March 1978, who sent a series of letters of protest to prominent RCP members in 1977 later published in the West; and Lajos Takács, a candidate member of the Romanian Communist Party Central Committee, Vice-Chairman of the Hungarian Nationalities Council, Professor of International Law and former Rector at University of Cluj, who produced a memorandum in April 1978. A samizdat journal, _Ellenpontok_, was also published edited by Geza Szoeecs, Attila Ara-Kovacs and Károly Toth, all of whom were expelled to Hungary following international protests after their arrest. Finally, and possibly most important of all, may be added the Hungarian Reformed Church, although the role of this organisation beyond the observation that László Tőkés produced articles for _Ellenpontok_, does not yet seem to have received much study. For Károly Király's last letter see Edward Steen, 'Another eminence attacks Ceauşescu', _The Independent_, 7 January 1988, p. 10; Vladimir Socor, 'Károly Király's letter', _Radio Free Europe Research_, Romanian Situation Report/1, 13 January 1988, pp. 29-31. For earlier letters written in 1977 see _Witnesses to cultural genocide: first-hand reports on Romania's minority policies today_ (New York: American Transylvanian Federation & The Committee for Human Rights in Rumania, 1979).


203. Michael Simmons, ‘Treading on eggshells’, *The Guardian*, 12 January 1990, p. 23, quotes the expressive words of a Romanian author: ‘In Romania the clock seemed dumb, the hours and minutes passed without any meaning. We were drifting in the belief that we were forgotten in a play for nobody, for nothing’. See also Kligman, ‘The politics of reproduction’, p. 367.

204. Sampson, ‘Regime and society in Rumania’, p. 42.

205. Sampson, ‘Regime and society in Rumania’, p. 44.

206. Verdery, ‘What was socialism and why did it fail?’, p. 224, emphasis in text.


210. Sampson, ‘Muddling through in Rumania’, p. 169. On the shape of the crowd which is described as being ‘like a comet’, see Suciu, *Reportaj cu sufletul la gură*, p.39, and for the analogy with football supporters, ibid. p. 90. For the November events see ibid. pp. 7, 56–57. Football hooliganism was not unknown in Romania, and in June 1988 a match between the two great Bucharest rivals, Steaua and Dinamo, had been brought to a halt as opposing fans battled on the pitch after a controversial goal had been disallowed. See Aurelia Leicand, ‘What is going on in Romanian soccer?’, *Radio Free Europe Research*, Romanian Situation Report/9, 20 July 1988, pp. 41–43.


212. Photographs taken on 22 December in Bucharest show large numbers of workers marching into Piața Palatului, just before the flight of Ceaușescu, carrying make shift banners calling for his resignation. However, they are noticeably being shepherded by some of their own number wearing armbands and this raises important questions as to how much formal organisation was deployed at this time. Was the march actually called by the regime in a last desperate attempt to prove Ceaușescu still enjoyed popular support only for the demonstration to be hijacked as a forum for anti-regime sentiment? Did the workers spontaneously create new structures or adapt old ones such as the trade unions? Evidence from Bucharest and elsewhere shows workers councils being established after the flight of Ceaușescu but were some created beforehand?


214. In Weberian terms the state can be seen as “A compulsory political organization with continuous operations...insofar as it successfully upholds the claim
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Revolutions resting on mass mobilisation and state breakdown tend to encompass both the swirl of battle and the chaos of defeat, giving them an intensity and complexity that eludes easy analysis. In recognition of this fact, this study has often been content to redefine the questions rather than offer clear answers. Much concerning the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 remains abstruse and, instead of draw the strings together in a new narrative, this concluding section will seek to make some broader observations about, firstly, the morphology of the revolution, as it proceeded from the initial outbreak until what appears to be a long lasting political settlement, and, secondly, the mythopoeia of the revolution, since a consistent theme stressed throughout has been that popular narratives imparted much of the dynamic to events, and through these the revolution was filled with life and ultimately become an important actor in its own drama.¹

The morphology of revolution

In theoretical terms the Romanian Revolution bore little resemblance to the Leninist model, since mass mobilisation appears to have been largely spontaneous and there is scant evidence of a ‘revolutionary vanguard’ playing any decisive role prior to the fall of Ceaușescu. Indeed, the sheer scale of the revolution, both in levels of popular participation and in geographic spread, is quite striking, even if it has often proved hard to quantify. It criss-crossed the country taking in most of the main towns, where typically large crowds thronged the public spaces, stormed and seized the most blatant symbols of RCP rule, such as County Council buildings and the local headquarters of the reviled Securitate. Everywhere on the foundations of existing structures, such as People’s Councils and factory committees, there quickly sprouted vast numbers of Front councils of all types. Apparently, formed without any coordination from the centre in the larger towns, especially, fresh faces were often thrust to the fore, but elsewhere the revolution merely brought
the symbolic reshuffling of hold-overs from the old regime. The exact composition of these new councils still needs further investigation, but it would seem that the membership in many cases was largely drawn from lower elements of the local technical and cultural élite. In this, local conditions would seem to be largely replicating the national picture, where enthusiastic but undisciplined young revolutionaries quickly gave way to those who could lay claim to greater authority, often by virtue of education or experience.²

However, this assumption raises a question previously rather glossed over: 'who exactly were the revolutionaries in Romania?' In his speech of 20 December Ceauşescu by identifying the protesters as hooligans incited by foreign influences had clearly distinguished the demonstrators from 'the people' as a whole. However, the protesters in their slogans, from the earliest days, clearly identified themselves as 'the people' and, during the latter stages of the revolution in Timişoara, Bucharest and elsewhere, when the factories emptied out onto the streets and the numbers in public spaces often rose to approach 100,000, the popular revolutionary coalition clearly did encompass a large proportion of the population as a whole. However, before this time 'the people' battling on the streets seem to have comprised a far smaller fraction of society. Amongst this group no particular segment of society seems to have predominated as regards class or occupation, with, for instance, the eyewitnesses in Suciu and Milin being drawn from a wide range of social backgrounds. More of a determinant seems to have been age and sex, with the majority of the demonstrators apparently being young men — nearly every account of the revolution in Timişoara between 15 and 17 December stresses the presence of youths at the forefront of the protests — and this anecdotal and photographic evidence would seem to be borne tragic witness in the personal details of those who died in the revolution. The vast majority were in their 20s with a scattering in their late teens and early 30s — of those whose age of death is known 77% were under thirty five — although it is also noticeable that, as the revolution progressed and the violence became more spasmodic, the victims tended to come from older generations.³ Those registered as dead in Timişoara on 18 December nearly all came from the city or its immediate environs and most were males of mixed ethnicity averaging thirty three years in age. In Bucharest during the whole revolution, partly due to the large number of young conscripts who died, the average age was slightly lower being twenty seven, but again the vast majority were men with only sixteen out of 207 being women.

Although students undoubtedly did play an important role in the revolution in Bucharest and elsewhere, contrary to popular belief, in Timişoara they do not seem to have been particularly in evidence during the first days of revolution
before the flight of Ceaușescu. At that time, countless groups of demonstrators beat a path to the student complex chanting ‘Students come with us!’ and by its very nature this slogan would seem to indicate that the demonstrators did not consider that Timișoara’s student population of approximately 16,000 was yet on the side of the revolution. This is partly because the staff of the University, as they did in Bucharest, made strenuous efforts to prevent students from leaving the complex by locking doors, barring lower floor windows and mobilising members of the association of students, reinforced by troops from the militia, to guard the exits. The University term was also declared ended several days early and by Monday 18 December most students already seem to have left for home as the meetings held within the University on that day to denounce the perpetrators of the events seem to have been sparsely attended. Instead, more numerous than students amongst the demonstrators in Timișoara seem to have been lycée pupils and factory workers, and significantly the the worst violence of the revolution in Timișoara, which occurred during the evenings and on Sunday 17 December, coincided with periods of free time from work and, afterwards, shift changes seem to have continued to play an important part in the pattern of protest. The general picture is of many of its demonstrators continuing with their job as normal and only joining the protests when their work was done.

However, it was not the young men of the streets who took power, but elder more experienced figures many of whom had once occupied prominent positions within the the RCP, with the nature of this political succession being partly determined by the structure of the Ceaușescu regime. During the early days of the revolution the leadership in Timișoara and, presumably elsewhere, seems to have been drawn from the ranks of the crowd, with individuals such as Opera and Boroșoiu achieving prominence from as early as the night of 16 December. Inexperienced and unknown, even in their own localities, few of these early leaders of the revolution were able to make any sustained impact on national politics. Once the initial stages have been passed, a revolution needs leaders able to exert a more widely accepted authority whilst still holding a legitimate claim to be the voice of protest, and as noted in the preceeding chapter, the usual pattern in a revolutionary situation is for these new leaders to be largely drawn from the ranks of the alienated élite of the ancien régime. Such had been the levels of coercion exerted in Romania that not even the rudiments of a broader oppositional movement had ever coalesced, and the few cultural dissidents, such as Doina Cornea, who had dared challenge the regime, had been ruthlessly silenced. With the consequence, that there were none with the moral force of Vaclav Havel or Lech Walesa to take the lead in Romania, even if the NSF had been willing to grant them political
space. Instead, the exclusivity of the neo-Stalinist regime, by thrusting reformist elements within the Party outside the bounds of the permitted political discourse, tended to focus the spotlight on dissent from inside the party. The most public expression of this in recent years had been the celebrated ‘Letter of the Six’ drawn up by a group of former high party officials, who had retained sufficiently high a profile both at home and abroad to give them a degree of inviolability, even in Ceaușescu’s Romania. Largely through foreign radio broadcasts an image of dissent was projected, which embraced not only the writers of the Letter but also others from within the party, such as Iliescu, known to have fallen foul of Ceaușescu, and in the process sufficient distance was generated between them and the previous regime to permit their acceptance as a legitimate political succession during the revolution.

The highly centralised nature of the state also worked to the advantage of the NSF when they took power, since it meant they could concentrate their attention on Bucharest, and this doubly applied in the television station, a closed and relatively easily controlled atmosphere, from which Iliescu was able to project himself as the new leader of the nation. However, the lack of any obvious alternative leadership and the success with which those within the NSF were able to present themselves as being sufficiently politically autonomous from the Ceaușescu regime, would seem to be only part of the story; what has still to be adequately explained is the apparent ease with which Iliescu was able to exert his authority over the remnants of the old regime. Crucially, within a matter of hours of the takeover, all the leadership of the security forces had swung behind the NSF and, but for Mazilu, it seems that Iliescu’s leadership was not challenged by any other of the senior members of the Front at this time. Undoubtedly, pressure from outside the ranks of the NSF did mould élite unity and Iliescu also seems to have possessed a considerable amount of self-belief; but if, as the opposition frequently charges, this omnipotence sprang from his position of being Moscow’s anointed, then this would appear to be the most decisive role played by the Russians in the revolution.

Once in power the first task of the NSF was to regain control of the country, because the condition of state breakdown, which lay at the heart of the causes of the revolution did not magically disappear overnight with the dawn of the revolutionary event and the removal of the previous leadership; instead, with the departure of the ‘indispensable’ leader the last vestiges of the previous system collapsed deepening the crisis. From one point of view, the revolution was a fundamentally negative phenomenon shattering any bindings which still constrained an already anomie society. The result was the creation of a semi-anarchic and largely rudderless world, in which amidst spasmodic vengeance attacks, petty theft flourished,
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population movements were unchecked leading many to flock to the capital and state property from empty apartment blocks to land was seized to salve what were often considered legitimate grievances. Factories functioned at best only intermittently, and the collapse of political structures was graphically underlined by the appearance of a direct political petitioning more reminiscent of a medieval court than a modern state, as people travelled from far and wide to Bucharest to personally present their claims for redress before the new NSF grandees. In this atmosphere the NSF in search for stability took the decision to bring on board several members of the old regime, such as Paul Niculescu-Mizilu, to help with system maintenance. However, the appointment of these figures, whilst helping restore a degree of normality, proved a political liability reinforcing the charges that the NSF was neo-communist.

The most acute symptoms of state breakdown lasted for the best part of a month, during which the NSF set about institutionalising the revolution by rebuilding political structures — much as on the old model — cementing their control over the security forces, reorganising the bureaucracy — at least superficially — and taking the first steps to restructure the economy but again without radical change. In revolutionary situations the first moves of the new regime are frequently influenced by the previous structure of power and in Romania, where the private economic sector was non-existent, the obvious path to take was a continuation of widespread state ownership. Only in foreign affairs, where change was relatively easy to effect, was there a marked reversal of previous policies as the new regime, helped by a mood of world-wide goodwill stemming from the revolution, rapidly moved to end the diplomatic isolation of the Ceauşescu years and mend fences with both the East and West. Soon, large numbers of ambassadors were being recalled to be replaced by more amenable faces, although here again it is noticeable that the changes were by and large restricted to the upper echelons.

The first policies of the NSF were predominantly aimed at rectifying popular grievances, as they moved quickly to rescind the most draconian and disliked of Ceauşescu's legislation, excluded the most compromised of the previous leadership from power and sought to stem corruptive practices by reintroducing notions of legality, although this was undermined at any early stage by the execution of the Ceauşescus. However, such were the extremes of the Ceauşescu state, that it was both expected by the population and accepted by the incoming regime that rectification would necessarily also require some degree of political and economic redistribution. But the parameters of this redistribution were far from agreed and, almost before the last shots had been fired in anger, the first proposals from the NSF, because they diverged so strongly from the expectations of the more radical
The myths and realities of revolutionaries, became the subject of prolonged and bitter contention. On the part of the NSF, the initial intention within Consensus, appears to have been for an extremely selective redistribution of both economic and political power. Within the agricultural sector some degree of land reform seems to have been envisaged, although the extent remained unclear, and, it seems likely, the Front’s hand was pushed by private seizures. As far as industry was concerned any possible redistribution was largely to be limited to the extremities of the service sector, since any widespread reform risked cutting across rectifying promises, with both the bureaucracy and the workers calculating they had more to gain than lose in the event of a deeper transformation. The original redistribution of political power was also intended to be slight, being largely limited to empowering former cadre of the party, although the new leaders appear to have been willing to extend a welcome to most of the technical and cultural élite providing they were willing to work under the confines of Consensus. This redistribution was more than symbolic since the system had been so distorted by Ceauşescu’s concentration of power that any loosening of the boundaries would result in a considerable influx of fresh talent from the second rank and below. However, by the same token, the relatively narrow bounds of power within the Ceauşescu regime, and the ‘invisibility’ bestowed on all but the highest post holders by the shadow of the cult, allowed many to disavow active identification with the past, limiting any ‘purges’ to the most blatant proponents of the old regime. Nevertheless, almost the entire, often rather elderly, upper echelon of the Party did leave office, though where the exact lines of demarcation were drawn during this cleansing, who set them and how they related to internal power battles within the Front remains unclear, but, nonetheless, some existed judging by the campaign run in România Liberă.

It may be that social polarisation and the creation of two confrontational blocs is an inevitable consequence of the radical/conservative dichotomy which lies at the heart of revolutions, implying that a lengthy period of conflict necessarily follows the event before the wound is healed. Certainly, in Romania the revolutionary struggle has been a prolonged and bitter encounter, often marked by sporadic outbursts of violence, although these never approached the dimensions of the revolution. The popular revolutionary coalition, which arose during the events, due to its breadth and the largely spontaneous nature of its birth, was a loose and uncoordinated body largely held together by a negative appraisal of Ceauşescu and his neo-Stalinist system but also bearing a mass of unformed rectifying and redistributive hopes. Such an all-encompassing body contained a welter of potential lines of fracture along such axes as élite or popular culture, passive or active
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revolutionaries, radical or moderate reformers, urban or rural, worker or peasant, former members of the RCP or those who had steadfastly remained outside the Party, and it is perhaps not surprisingly the stresses and strains imparted by the revolution were soon sufficient to pull the coalition apart. In Romania the ‘honeymoon’ period, to use Brinton’s term, when euphoria and hope are dominant, was to prove conspicuously short-lived and, instead, in the political hothouse of the following months there was an explosion of political activity which was to see the coalition broadly divide into two major opposing groups. At first, disagreements were largely measured in terms of personalities but, as time progressed, ideological differences began to be sharpened, although after the abandonment of Consensus, ideological drift within the NSF meant that the emphasis, instead, tended to fall on conflicting golden age myths and contrasting interpretations of the revolution. The latter being particularly potent because they struck at the very legitimacy of the regime and evoked a strong emotional response from the political audience.

As they took control the leaders of the NSF seem to have had a conception of restricting political power to a relatively narrow ruling coalition. However, the revolution had empowered broad swathes of the population and, throughout January and beyond, the principle task of the Front was to reimpose order by redrawing the parameters of power so as to exclude (or include) challengers from both the ‘left’ and the ‘right’. Victory in these struggles was to go to the NSF by virtue of its control of greater resources. Through its hold on the state it was in a position to implement popular policies, it regulated access to information through its monopoly of radio and television, it was also able to manipulate state patronage networks to its advantage and maintain control over the structures of repression, although given the apparent neutrality of the military in the struggle, this seems to have meant reactivating part of the Securitate and buying the support of important groups, such as the miners, who came to act as the regime’s paramilitary force (given the apparent infiltration of the miners after the 1977 Jiu Valley strikes by Securitate this may have amounted to the same thing).

From the ‘left’ the threat came from the scores of ad hoc NSF councils that had sprung up in the wake of the events. A disparate and unruly bunch, which in the weeks after the revolution often appeared to have been convulsed by paralysing strife, they nonetheless, especially in the large cities, seem to have contained the germ of a more radical revolution with, for instance, factory workers in some enterprises usurping a degree of control over managerial appointments. During January, the Front, increasingly in alliance with the state bureaucracy, struggled to stamp its authority on the situation and roll-back the power taken by this totally uncoordinated, but potentially radical, revolution of the ‘left’. By the end
of the month the NSF enterprise councils had been dissolved, traditional hierarchies of control reestablished in the factories and a series of ‘re–elections’ held to give many of the the local territorial councils a more desirable composition.

The radical challenge from the ‘right’ was far better organised and much more difficult for the NSF to control, since it was spearheaded by the newly re-emergent traditional parties, which boasted a credible alternative legitimacy and derived considerable vocal support from student groups, who, also claiming authority from the revolution, possessed the most radical agenda of all the political groupings at this time. To deal with the challenge from the ‘right’ the NSF adopted a dual policy mirroring the two, often contradictory, tendencies within its own make up. One ‘pluralist’ strand sought to maintain the ideals of the revolutionary coalition by institutionalising the revolutionary struggle within a ‘normal’ political framework. This policy, at the end of January, was to result in a second formal redistribution of power with the formation of the PCNU, as political space was made for members of the pre-war elite and a handful of figures who had gained prominence in the revolution to join the current holders of power. This political settlement was broadly advantageous to the NSF not only because it was able to dominate the PCNU, once it was formed, but also because it marked the consensual acceptance of democratic forms on a Western European model. This innovation, aside from bestowing extra credibility on the NSF, posed no threat to its continued control of the political arena, since not only could the Front easily muster sufficient resources to dominate the subsequent election campaign but also because it empowered an electorate that largely identified with the values propagated by the Front. In the previous chapter it was suggested that revolutions are not intrinsically radical events but only take on this guise when the agenda is captured by groups espousing a radical ideology. The sansculottes on the streets may be highly visible but the bulk of the population remains fearful of excessive change and upheaval. By quickly moving to rectify the worst of grievances and calling for only a moderate redistribution of resources, the NSF was able to present itself as a force for order and moderation and, effectively play on popular fears that an opposition victory would bring breakneck change, mayhem and chaos. Somewhat ironically, the introduction of a pluralistic democracy in Romania by enfranchising an electorate dominated by groups such as the bureaucracy and workers, more interested in system maintenance than a rapid transition to a liberal economic model, has created a strong brake to reform and only further ossified the socio–economic base of the state. The second ‘Leninist’ strand within the Front was far less tolerant and sought to dominate the revolution and mobilise its supporters to crush all opposition. This made for a rough and sometimes explosive political scene, which
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did Romania little credit, and branded the NSF in the worst possible political light, especially after the merciless attack of the miners in June 1990 to crush the occupation of Piața Universității in Bucharest by students, some of whom had been at the forefront of the revolutionary process, but had been effectively excluded from power in the political settlement.

The myths of revolution

The revolution of December 1989 is widely accepted as a significant event within Romania but one so complex and contentious that so far no unified historical narrative has appeared, yet alone been widely accepted. Instead, the events have been recast as a number of discrete and politically charged competing histories or myths. Indeed, it seems probable that even if a more widely accepted narrative can be established (as may be possible through the report of the forthcoming Senatorial Commission of Inquiry), such is the political value invested in shaping differing views of the revolution, that the space will still be provided for markedly different interpretations of specific events to coexist, in order to cement continuing political divisions.11

One of the main arguments of this work has been that the Romanian Revolution can only be understood through recourse to myth. The Ceaușescu regime had carefully cultivated the myth of the Securitate as an omnipresent and omnipotent force in order to instill mass obedience, fostering amongst the Romanians what Mariana Celac has termed an 'intra-uterine' personality 'withdrawn, fearful and suspicious of the outside world'.12 However, the revolution in its explosion of release from this dark confinement gave birth to an equally nocuous myth: that the downfall of Ceaușescu was certain to be accompanied by a vicious backlash from the forces that had for so long underpinned the foundations of his regime. This myth of Securitate generated violence introduced a powerful new dynamic into the second phase of the revolution, prompting much of the fighting and most of the deaths. The reality behind this myth still remains imperspicuous and, in all probability, seems destined to endure for the foreseeable future. However, by producing the fury and unbridled passion usually associated with revolution the second phase of the process, after the flight of Ceaușescu, helped define the events in the eyes of the participants and a watching world, transforming what, until then, had been the violent overthrow of a tyrannous leader into a 'true' revolution replete with new images and symbols — from the burning University Library in Bucharest to the dead Ceaușescus. Thus, out of a violence largely rooted in myth, there sprang a new reality, which through the bravery of the young people on the streets, fuelled calls for a new world fit for such heroes.13
The people on the streets because they felt they were experiencing a 'real' revolution called it by that name, which would suggest that the phenomenon is not only largely selfascriptive but also culturally constituted, since the events have to fulfill the image of revolution held by the actors before receiving the appellation. From this it would also seem to follow that in order to fully comprehended a revolution it is necessary to understand what the term means to the those involved. The images and message of revolution were then spread outside Romania by the international media and, since the Romanian Revolution was the first to be considered a televised revolution, it was filled with a special resonance and the watching world, to a certain extent, viewed it as a shared experience. The idea of revolution is largely created by these two two agencies, the actors involved and the international media, and those who would study the phenomenon would do well to heed Krejčí's wise words that once an event has been popularly established as such it 'would be a preposterous act of pedantry' to change such a name. However, the highly disjointed and personal impressions of what are extremely chaotic and complex events inevitably give rise to a host of differing versions of the revolution, all of which may be 'correct' because they represent different 'interpretations' not different realities. These often fleeting impressions can only be given a greater sense of intelligibility, if they are interpreted through a more widely held narrative, but in the absence of an accepted 'metanarrative' the field in Romania has been left open instead to a number of competing myths, with many of the actors involved and members of the international media championing views completely at variance with the official version of events and, in the process, plunging what was once almost universally hailed as a revolution into a definitional void. However, since the revolutionary event is but a segment of a wider revolutionary process characterised by political struggle, such a battle for the revolution both as a symbol and a base for legitimisation is perhaps not surprising. Indeed, it may be suggested that the revolutionary event has become so contested in Romania, partly because of the sharp political polarisation that followed in its wake, and that, indeed, the intensity of the debate is merely symptomatic of this wider struggle and, thus, the depth of the revolution. If this is so, then, rather than being a futile exercise in semantics, the debate over the nature of the event has played an integral role in the revolutionary struggle and bears considerable significance for the shaping of post-Ceaușescu political identities.

The conflicting interpretations of the revolution arose in an atmosphere in which nearly all political groupings claimed to be the authentic voice of revolution, although it seems that at first the new leaders of the NSF were a little reluctant to fully embrace the term, with Iliescu, Brucan and the others, during their first
broadcasts on the television, assiduously avoiding the use of the word ‘revolution’ in favour of terms such as ‘change’ and ‘transformation’. Presumably their reticence arose from a fear that the use of the word revolution would be read as confirming the presence of a major political rupture opening up the possibility of widespread change despite the fact that, as already mentioned, the NSF ideologues were able to conceptualise the revolution in Marxist terms, and the adoption of Consensus, in as much as it was related to perestroika, also did not rule out the use of the word, since Gorbachev referred to his proposed changes within the Soviet Union as a ‘revolution within a revolution’. Whatever, the word ‘revolution’ already seems to have been on the lips of the crowd by the afternoon of 22 December and faced with the collapse of the RCP and fierce fighting across the country, which gave rise to persistent rumours that their hold on power was tenuous, the NSF had no alternative, either in practical or ideological terms, to seek legitimacy by placing itself at the head of the revolution as the voice of the people. In a radio broadcast on 23 December Iliescu referred to the existence of a ‘revolutionary situation’ and on the following morning Virgil Magureanu reading a communique of the National Salvation Front was to triumphantly embrace the term when he declared that ‘The revolution has won!’ The Front, therefore, appears to have been propelled by the events into recognising the revolution and, once the term was adopted, it at least placed the possibility of a clean break with the past and expectations of wholesale rather than limited evolutionary change onto the political agenda.

However, even as it became widely accepted that Romania had experienced a revolution, questions began to be raised about its nature, because just as some young Czechs had vehemently denied to Bernard Crick that their ‘Velvet Revolution’ could be termed as such, because ‘revolution was a communist concept’, so, it was widely accepted in Romania that the Leninist variant of revolution through a small vanguard party, which remained equated in popular perception with the post Second World War communist take-over, was fundamentally illegitimate. This was even recognised by the leadership of the NSF who repetitively stressed the non-Leninist attributes of the revolution, and especially its spontaneity: ‘...[the revolution was] a special, sudden and violent event which has eliminated the despotic power....In the process of structuring the new element of power, the front, which emerged spontaneously at the moment of explosion and which represents the soul of the process, assumed the responsibility of taking over power...’. By turning their back on the Leninist variant the Romanians appear to have been tapping more elderly and (supposedly) more national pre-Leninist revolutionary patterns which portray revolution as an acceptable political corrective against unjust rule.
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Indeed, some have spoken of the Balkans having a special revolutionary tradition, and in Romania this image of revolution largely arose through a mythologised view of the French Revolution of 1789, refracted through the local event of 1848, and idealised as popular mass uprisings against tyranny. However, this politically determined reductionism, by only acknowledging the idealised liberal model as the legitimate revolutionary experience, imposed an impossibly narrow definition of revolution onto the political debate in Romania, not only was revolution to be marked by an entirely spontaneous mass uprising untainted by the meddling of foreign powers, but also the new leadership should derive from the crowd and be (seemingly) totally unconnected to the previous ruling élite, the boundaries of which, however, were highly contested. Although these models were almost certainly not at the forefront of the minds of the revolutionaries during the white heat of the events, as the fighting died down and they struggled to make sense of what they had witnessed, these two ideal types of Leninist and Liberal revolutions were drawn upon to aid understanding and mould the revolution to the emerging political agenda.

The myth propagated by the NSF, that the leadership of the revolution had been thrust upon it through popular acclaim, as it rose like a phoenix from the midst of a spontaneous uprising, was so porous as to leave it open to attack on several levels and, after the events, opposition groups sought to delegitimise it through reference to both these Leninist and Liberal models of revolution. In the process, they created their own myths of revolution which may be most conveniently termed the 'stolen' and the 'false' revolutions, the two being distinctive. The first myth rests on the assumption that the events were a spontaneous popular uprising seeking the complete overthrow of the communist system — that is a 'true' Liberal revolution — which through a coup d'état was hijacked by former members of the old regime who wished to place a brake on reform; the implication being that a neo-communist group had used conspiratorial communist means to seize power. This idea that the events of December 1989 had somehow been betrayed was especially prevalent amongst the younger revolutionaries of the street, and during 1990 it was to fuel another myth, that of the 'second revolution' which held that the only solution to Romania's woes was the immediate catharsis of a new and 'real' revolution. The second, 'false revolution' myth, embracing the most extreme of conspiracy theories, argues that the event cannot even be graced by the term 'revolution', since it was a carefully staged political charade completely manipulated by foreign interests. By this, the proponents of this version of the events normally imply the KGB working in conjunction with the Hungarian security forces, which acting as a revolutionary vanguard, orchestrated the events
Table 6.1: 1992 Opinion poll on the nature of the revolution.

Do you consider the events to have been a:

- Revolution ('Spontaneous' Revolution) 46%
- Internal Conspiracy ('Stolen' Revolution) 31%
- External Plot ('False' Revolution) 23%

Source: Câmpeanu, De patru ori în fața urnelor, p. 181.

Dividing the myths of revolution into such hard and fast categories must be viewed largely as a heuristic exercise, since in reality all have intermeshed into a complex pattern of beliefs, giving each Romanian a discrete interpretation of the events. However, that such broad interpretations of the revolution do exist is undeniable, and the basic tripartite division is useful because, on the basis of the primary identification of his respondents, Pavel Câmpeanu in his psephological studies has been able to suggest that these differing myths have gained their potency not just because they can all be rooted in selective readings of the narrative, but also because they underwrite the foundation myths of competing political groupings. The extent to which these myths have been taken up by the Romanians is graphically illustrated within a poll Câmpeanu conducted in 1992, which showed that, three years after the event, fewer than half of the respondents still professed a belief that what they had witness was an unblemished revolution (table 6.1).

As in all opinion polls it can be argued that the questions to a certain extent mirror the agenda of the pollsters, with the answers available providing implicit value judgements, but, nevertheless, they do seem to broadly follow the parameters of the debate in Romania which, as has already been suggested, has been couched almost exclusively in terms of the revolutionary event. Having established his three basic categories founded on his respondents' interpretations of the revolution, Câmpeanu, then, went on to test their reaction against a number of often controversial post-Ceaușescu political events. All three categories gave broadly
similar responses in their approval or disapproval to questions relating to the violence in Tîrgu Mureș, the formation of the Stolojan Government, the descent of the miners onto the capital in June 1990 and the reduction of subsidies on basic products. However, several questions brought out markedly differing responses. For instance, the question of whether the National Salvation Front should have participated in the 1990 election drew high approval from the revolution group, slight disapproval from the external conspiracy supporters, and a high level of disapproval from the internal conspiracy supporters, whereas the clearance of Piața Universității by the police in 1990 was viewed with a great deal of approval by both the revolution and external conspiracy supporters but with a small level of disapproval by those favouring an internal conspiracy.

These results have led Câmpianu to suggest that three broad political mentalities are developing in Romania which bear a direct relationship to perceptions of the revolution. Put in practical political terms, stories favouring the internal conspiracy theory have tended to appear in the more ‘liberal’ press and its adherents professed a leaning towards the Democratic Convention and the candidacy of Emil Constantinescu at the 1992 election, whilst those who favoured the spontaneous revolution scenario had a tendency towards the Democratic National Salvation Front and Ion Iliescu. Articles relating to the ‘false revolution’ and external manipulation have more often appeared in the nationalist journals such as România Mare, and this interpretation of events, as might be expected, has generally been favoured by voters who leaned towards more nationalist parties such as România Mare and the Party of Romanian National Unity.26 In general, these findings would seem to suggest that in the case of the Romanian Revolution, it has more frequently been a matter of political allegiance shaping the view of events rather than the events shaping political adherence.

The same may also be said of a less obvious interpretation of the revolution which was also rooted in perceptions of the past, because one feature of the 1989 revolutions which received some comment at the time, is that instead of looking ahead they were glancing over their shoulders to the past. Indeed, Jürgen Habermas coined the term ‘rectifying revolutions’ and the eminent historian of the French Revolution, François Furet, has described them as ‘a raging passion of restoration’.27 At least superficially rather than being modern, or even postmodern, the revolutions of 1989 did seem to hark back to an earlier age, when revolution was perceived as a circular process; and Habermas, when he speaks of ‘the reformist picture of the return of political regimes following one after another in a continuous cycle like that of the heavens’, appears to be casting them...
in an almost medieval light.\textsuperscript{28} Certainly in Romania, during the revolutionary event, future orientated systems were little in evidence and, at first sight, in the absence of any credible novel models with which to secure an exit from a troubled present, return seems to have been the dominant motif. However, this looking backward into the past did not mean that the revolution was either conservative or circular, since inherent within the concept of return there was also ideas of change and within this an unmistakable linear progression. And since, even in Romania, where pre-war parties such as the NPP have made a strong showing in post-communist politics, supporting retrospective policies such as the reintroduction of the provisions of the 1923 constitution and the restoration of the monarchy, the idea of a ‘true’ return undoing the massive transformation wrought by communism was patently impossible the revolution has followed a linear rather than a circular path. Instead, the idea of return appears to have served more as a political marker, through which conflicting groups established their identity by offering highly mythologised visions of the past as possible guides to the future. Reflecting the main cleavage in the revolutionary coalition this has been centred on two contrasting ‘golden age’ myths, one of which belonging to the traditional parties might be termed ‘restorative’, since it sought to expunge the trauma of communism by returning to the ideals of a pre-communist Eden, and the other, identified with the NSF, ‘rectifying’, since by focusing on the successes of the late 1960s and early 1970s it portrayed the revolution as essentially a corrective to Ceauşescu’s 1980s neo-Stalinist model, thereby opening up the possibility of a democratic socialist ‘middle-way’.\textsuperscript{29} Both of these golden age myths were based on utopian and rather rose-tinted visions of the past, since during the inter-war years levels of democracy in Romania had at best been debatable, with capitalism heavily circumscribed by paternalism, whilst the communism of the 1960s was founded on the same structural deficiencies which were eventually to bring its systemic collapse in 1989. Instead of being prescriptions for the future, in the months after the revolution these myths of return served more as markers for shaping political identity, but as time has progressed and their emptiness become more apparent, they have dimmed, as both positions have tended to wither towards a pragmatic neo-liberalism.

All these myths of the Romanian Revolution were spread to the outside world by the secondary propagators of the idea of revolution, the international media. Amongst foreign journalists the myth of the ‘stolen’ revolution, which is founded on a local representation of the dominant Western myth of liberal revolution, struck a particular chord, and to a certain extent it may be suggested that the
West, and particularly the French, who in 1989 were celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of their own revolution of liberty, equality and fraternity, were guilty of projecting their own expectations of revolution onto Romania. However, when the high expectations were not met and the country was sorely found wanting, as it was, especially after the brutal June excursion of the miners onto the streets of Bucharest, the Romania was transformed from being a damsel in distress to the unacceptable face of post-communist Eastern Europe.

The first image of the Romanian Revolution which reached the outside world through the international media was a starkly black and white picture of horrifying slaughter, as heroic unarmed revolutionaries laid down their lives battling against Ceaușescu and his evil henchmen. Then, almost as soon as foreign journalists entered the country and began sifting through the mass of often conflicting gossip, rumours and conspiracy stories, this image became blurred and confused and rapidly the dominant motifs turned to suspicion, deceit and recrimination. This rather negative appreciation was to eventually rest on a number of strands, but, initially it seems to have arisen from the extensively propagated myth — used in terms of a widely held but false notion — that enormous numbers of people had died in the most horrific circumstances during the revolution. When it later became clear that the figure was a gross exaggeration and there had not been the widespread slaughter initially reported, it was somehow held as being symptomatic of greater duplicities, with opponents of the incoming regime arguing that the stories had been deliberately manipulated by the Front, perhaps to justify the charges they laid against Ceaușescu.

The exponential rise in the casualty figures of the revolution peaked at a reported 80,000 dead and 130,000 injured. The widely cited figure of 60,000 dead seems to have originally stemmed from the trial of Ceaușescu, although within the proceedings it was stated that this figure referred to the whole of his period of rule. Indeed, a tendency towards exaggeration of the death toll seems to have been almost endemic within Romania with journalists encountering the same phenomena at a local level. Thus, in Arad, Phillip Jacobson, was told by a 'calm Italian-educated doctor' that he had treated no more than sixty people for bullet wounds since Friday 22 December, whilst a Captain of the militia claimed to have seen hundreds of bodies strewn throughout the town. At the local level this confusion over the death toll could also be blamed on manipulation by persons unknown (but presumably the new authorities), as in the case of the infamous, highly emotive photograph of a dead baby lying on the corpse of its mother amidst other bodies in a Timișoara graveyard. At first, it was claimed that all the corpses were victims of the massacre of 17 December, but, when it later became clear,
that this was not the case, a countercharge arose that the whole episode had been deliberately staged to provide shocking evidence of Ceaușescu's crimes for the Western press. Although there is no available evidence of the NSF leadership actively encouraging belief in the manifestly inflated figure of more than 60,000 dead, by the same token they also seem to have done little to end the confusion and it was not until later, in the summer of 1990, that more accurate official figures were produced. In fact, it appears that throughout the revolution a parallel, more or less accurate, casualty count was available, not only to the regime but also to Western diplomats and, it seems, as well the foreign media. Careful scrutiny of newspaper articles often reveals more realistic estimates buried within the text and, when Bernard Kouchner, the French Junior Minister for Humanitarian Aid, visited Romania, he is reported to have been told on 25 December that 364 dead had been recorded in the hospitals of Bucharest with a further 850 receiving treatment, whilst nationwide the estimate was of 746 dead and 1,800 wounded. A slightly higher estimate of 2,500 dead had already been made by European Community Ambassadors the day before and this figure was also produced by the Hungarian army and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The apparent near universal acceptance of such an inflated casualty figure may in part be explained by a necessary reliance on unconfirmed reports, since after the outbreak of disturbances in Timișoara, the borders of Romania were effectively sealed and the first Western correspondent did not arrive in Bucharest until the evening of 22 December. However, Eastern European correspondents were present and their reporting of the events until the flight of Ceaușescu seems to have been reasonably accurate. Moreover, it is not just a matter of the exaggerated death toll, although it is salutary to recognise that if it had approached the levels suggested it would have equalled American losses during the whole of the Vietnam War and even exceeded that of the recent conflict in Chechnya, rather it is a question of how the wildest of stories about bloodthirsty assassins slaughtering thousands of innocents in a cataclysmic Götterdämmerung came to be so readily accepted in the West. Michel Castex, who was amongst the first of foreign journalists to cast doubt on the authenticity of the revolution, has suggested the blame can partly be laid on the presence of the international media en masse, most of whom lacked any experience of Romania. Under pressure for sensational stories they readily took refuge in an uncritical consensus and in the absence of any hard evidence to the contrary, this created a uniformity of opinion that no news editor was willing to challenge.

However, equally, important would seem to be the culturally constituted image of Romania as a remote backwater, which communism and the bizarre cult of
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the Ceaușescus, with their grandiose schemes of destruction, only served to reinforce. Within popular perception, by the end of 1989, Nicolae Ceaușescu stood supreme, eclipsing both Fidel Castro and Kim Il-Sung as the last bastion of neo-Stalinist terror, with the mood being caught by an editorial in The Times of 19 December 1989 which equated the Romanian leader with the Roman Emperor Caligula, asserting that he ruled by the same dictum of ‘let them hate as long as they fear’. For this strange and distant land the primary cultural reference point for many remained the Dracula legend. As Gail Kligman notes: ‘... Transylvania is conceived as a rather uncivilised boundary of European civilisation... Only in the chaos of “one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe” could Dracula thrive. Only in the “horseshoe” of the Carpathian Mountains where “every known superstition in the world is gathered” could the objectivity of scientific rationalism be suspended...’ Thus, with some irony the revolution that sought amongst its aims to reimpose ‘rationalism’, prompted an apparent collective loss of the same faculty in a watching world, and in a triumphal blending of myths, Ceaușescu, who had often equated himself with Vlad Țepeș, the Romanian hero, became transmogrified in popular allusion to Bram Stoker’s Dracula, feeding on the blood of his nation and bearing in caricature his fangs.

However, the international mass media was only the medium for the wider transmission of an often grotesque local message and the apparent predisposition of the Romanians themselves to exaggerate and embellish the war against the terrorists would seem to need some explanation. The news deficit under Ceaușescu, which had seen the effective disappearance of all official channels of reliable information, placed the onus on informal ‘oral networks’, frequently heavily laced with rumour and gossip; and such word of mouth sources by their very nature tend to be highly malleable and liable to distortion, as the message passing from person to person is recycled countless times. Indeed, so great was the deformation of reality under the Ceaușescu regime that the bounds of the lie became practically unlimited and capable in the popular imagination of soaring to untold heights, for, if nothing is believable, then all is plausible. Such was the ‘social schizophrenia’ engendered that the universal expectation arose that all public utterances would be accommodations and perforce be different from private views. Moreover, the language of the lie, the ritualised wooden words of official pronouncements and often absurd laws, semantically stripped bare, encouraged linguistic elasticity as ambiguities were played upon to escape the embrace of crass or coercive impositions; hence, the more the bounds of plausibility expanded, so did the flexibility of the language by which it could be described. As the official narrative of events had come to be seen as a lie, the informal oral culture became the repository of
multiple alternative 'true' histories, and, as these informal narratives were shaped in a vivid popular culture, in which exemplary stories tended to verge on the fantastic with werewolves and vampires often lurking close to the surface, it seems to have been relatively easy for such images to be adopted in order to give shape and sense to the unfolding events. This can be seen not only in the stories identifying Ceaușescu with Dracula but also in the commonly found canard that the Securitate blew up blood banks in Bucharest and other cities to prevent the treatment of the wounded.

However, aside from these possible culturally based explanations, it seems that exaggeration may also have come to serve a more nefarious short-term political purpose, as the leaders of the Front soon appear to have grasped the benefits to be gained from inflating the security danger whilst they consolidated their hold on government. Indeed, they appear to have shamelessly used the fighting to weld the mobilised nation behind the NSF and the army, employing the image of a common struggle against the terrorists to slough off their past and cement their newly found identification with the people. The stories that the new leaders were living in fear of their lives, moving around Bucharest in tanks and regularly changing homes to avoid assassination, which continued to flourish long after the worst of the fighting had diminished, would appear to bear more than an element of theatricality and to be a definite dramatization of the actual situation. However, even if the NSF might be accused of massaging the image of the fighting to suit its own requirements and, in particular, using the terrorist threat to secure its hold on power, it still takes a considerable leap to arrive at charges that it actually organised the violence in an 'Operetta War', as the most extreme of the conspiracy theorists would suggest. There seems to be little evidence for this, but the relationship between the NSF and the fighting does need further clarification, especially, how General Tudor came to shape the image of the enemy and how this came so readily to be taken up by the other leaders. The army also would seem to have had a vested interest in painting the war against the terrorists in the strongest possible light, as, by adopting an heroic posture in the second phase of the revolution, it was able to consolidate its position as the guardian of the nation and effectively gain absolution from the sins incurred during the brutal suppression of the first street demonstrations. Indeed, it may be said the Securitate also tried the same tactic, but to considerable less success, as in the official version of events the terrorists rapidly passed out of the ranks of the 'regular' Securitate forces to some undefined special units.

In similar vein, the revolution for the Romanian people as a whole also seems to have been seen as something of a cathartic process, a chance to cleanse the
nocuous residue of the past, as the terrorists, who embodied the old regime, were
thrust through their inhuman behaviour beyond the pale of society and, indeed,
sometimes even outside the bounds of the very nation, becoming Arabs, or, in an
apparent blending of the Ottoman practice of the devershime and the Jewish golem
myth, orphaned automata raised in isolation to obey the dictates of an evil leader.
Through the stark black and white images in which the revolutionary conflict
was cast, Romanian society was temporarily cleansed of the practitioners of evil
but, as the more nebulous realities of the revolution became apparent and blame
more difficult to apportion, the persistence of these myths — credible because
they were firmly rooted in reality — of the Securitate as the avatar of evil, have
made the coming to terms with the day-to-day existence of such men a painful
process for a large proportion of the population. This same process of exaggeration
during the revolution also served as a means of excusing the past and explaining
previous inaction under an iniquitous dictatorship, because only through turning
the old myth of the Securitate as brutal supermen into a reality could previous
acquiescence be explained and internally condoned but, since this new reality was
also a myth, in both senses of the word, it has only led to a damaging endless hunt
for a chimera, unquestionably malign, but a chimera nonetheless.44

Five years after the event, the revolution still remains invested with a high
degree of political symbolism and even those political groupings which see the
events as primarily a ‘false revolution’ are still forced to accommodate this essen-
tially antithetical pairing, unable to fully deny what they deny because as post-
communist entities their legitimacy to a certain extent derives from the event.
Moreover, Câmpeanu’s research suggests that even if the revolution is nowadays
seldom brandished directly as a political weapon, varying interpretations of the De-
cember events may continue to figure prominently amongst the foundation myths
of virtually all political parties. Indeed, as time passes a tendency has sometimes
emerged for many of the old shibboleths to be blended and subtly reshaped to
meet prevailing circumstances. Thus, Iliescu, who still bears the mantle of lead-
ership assumed when he headed the NSF, in his speech on the fourth anniversary
of the revolution on 22 December 1993 maintained the myth of the spontaneous
revolution when he spoke of ‘The spontaneous uprising of the masses, their ex-
plosion of will’, and also the idea of exclusivity when he declared it was the most
‘radical and complex upheaval in Central and Eastern Europe, unique because of
its explosive and violent character, the radicalism and scope of public participa-
tion and by the sudden and total break with the previous regime’. However, in
paying tribute to the radicalism of the crowd these latter words hint at a partial
re-evaluation of the revolutionary experience and this continued when, in a statement far bolder than any uttered at the time of the events, the myth was adjusted to accommodate changing social and economic realities: 'Those 10 programmatic points [of the NSF] expressed the essence of the Romanian revolution and clearly prove that the will of the masses who took to the streets was not merely that of replacing certain persons from the decision-making centre of state power, but also radically to change the political system and the morphology of society.'^45

Ilieascu's careful restatement of the myth of the spontaneous revolution hints at the political charge which still lurks within a revolutionary event that many remain convinced hides politically explosive revelations and, reflecting this, all too often studies of the subject have degenerated into mere value judgements of the NSF, and, especially, its leader. Yet, this approach cannot do full justice to a complex revolutionary process, which as it has lurched unevenly forward, has been shaped by a number of often conflicting forces. The sum of the revolution is far more than the NSF and any study that fails to recognise this runs the risk of diminishing the role of the thousands who courageously took to the streets to defy Ceaușescu. It was these protesters who made the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 and, ultimately, it was an important section of this crowd who imparted much of the radicalism to the event. As they chanted 'Liberty!' before the mass ranks of the security forces in Timișoara, Bucharest and elsewhere, it would seem that in their conception of revolution the protesters were closest to Hannah Arendt who saw revolution as a search for freedom and the revolutionaries as those who fought for freedom in the face of tyranny, because, notwithstanding the ills of post-communist Romania and the manifold doubts that still persist over the events of December 1989, the undeniable fact remains that at that time the Romanian people did overturn a particularly unpleasant regime.^46 One of the greatest of Romanian historians, A.D. Xenopol, earlier this century, perceptively wrote that Romania had traditionally experienced constitutional settlements that 'taught us freedom, rather than constitutional contracts born out of the exercise of freedom'.^47 During the Romanian Revolution of December 1989 the citizens of Romania, rising in search of freedom, played their part in determining the eventual constitutional settlement of the revolution, thus, perhaps for the first time, giving the country the opportunity to break the patterns of the past and to set forth on a differing and more propitious path to the future.
Notes

1. Myth here being used in the sense of a traditional narrative embodying popular ideas rather than as a widely held but false notion. When the latter sense is implied it will be clearly stated.

2. The argument of Michael Shafir considered in the last chapter that Romania's political culture is fundamentally conformist might be relevant here.

3. These figures covering approximately 12% are not official and are drawn from the pages of the Romanian press. They include the personal details of thirty-five victims who were registered as dead in Timişoara on the 18 December, thirty-five more from the night of 21 December in Bucharest and a further ninety-nine whose ages were given in the pages of România Liberă — sixty-four civilians and thirty-five military. The accuracy of the figures can not be vouched for and, particularly, in the case of the Timişoara figures they give the appearance of having been rounded up to the nearest fifth year. Perhaps reflecting the fact that the demonstrations in Timişoara, which occurred in the early evening, drew many curious onlookers, the victims of the revolution in that city had a tendency to be slightly older than those in Bucharest, with more than 20% being aged between forty and forty-four. 'Primim de la asociatia „17 decembrie“ Timişoara', Adevărul, 13 March 1991, p. 5; Vasile Neagoe, 'Noaptea cea mai lungă', Express, 1:10, 6–12 April 1990.

4. The student population of Timişoara amounted to 4,000 at the University and 12,000 at the Polytechnic.


6. From Timişoara, Ioan Savu, Ioan Marcu, Claudiu Iordache and Petre Petrișor were amongst the exceptions to this general rule.


8. In fifteen days after the revolution the Front received 1,200 people in audience and was sent 16,000 letters. Dan Marțian interviewed by Ion Lăzăr, 'Pentru un dialog real cu cetățenii', Adevărul, 25 January 1990, p. 5.

9. This model of post-revolutionary policies derives from Goldstone, 'An analytical framework', p. 45.

10. The idea of the inevitability of social polarisation is taken from Lawrence Stone, 'Theories of revolution', World Politics, 18:2 (1966), pp. 165–66, where he argues that the coalescence 'into two coherent groups or alliances of what are naturally and normally a series of factional and shifting tensions within society can be found in many revolutionary contexts'. For the successful application of this model to the Russian Revolution see William G. Rosenberg & Diane P. Koenker, 'The limits of formal protest: worker activism and social polarization in Petrograd and Moscow, March to October, 1917', American Historical Review, 92:2 (1987), pp. 296–326.

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13. This is not to say that the idea of revolution would not have occurred without the bloody second phase but arguably social polarisation may not have been so great.

14. Some evidence of the outside world’s interest in Romania can be seen from the enormous number of charities that have been established in Great Britain purely to channel aid to a country which few had demonstrated any interest in prior to the revolution.


17. Bruz, ‘“Perestroika”’, p. 185.

18. On the television Brateș noticeably catches himself just as he is about to say ‘revolution’, half-uttering the word, before correcting himself and referring instead to the more ambiguous ‘action of the people’. *Revoluția Română în direct*, p. 104. The term is also obliquely implied by Victor Ionescu ibid. p. 111. In referring to a ‘revolutionary situation’ Iliescu would appear to be using a circumscribed form of Krejci’s first metaphor of revolution as identified in the previous chapter.


20. BBC EE/0651, B/4, 1 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 1800 gmt, 30 December 1989. See also the earlier declaration by Iliescu: ‘Our revolution has a special particularity. It is an outcome of the masses’ spontaneous action . . . . The idea is completely false that it could have been a coup performed by some organised forces supported even from abroad. The truth is that this Council of the National Salvation Front is an emanation of the movement and did not precede it.’ BBC EE/0649, B/6, 29 December 1989, Agerpres in English, 2259 gmt, 26 December 1989.


22. Tismaneanu, ‘Romania’s mystical revolutionaries’, pp. 417, 436; For an early use of the second revolution myth see Michael Dobbs, ‘Prewar parties reviving in Romania’, *The Washington Post*, 3 January 1990, p. A.28, who quotes a twenty-five-year-old student saying ‘If the Salvation Front does not respect the goals of the revolution, then we are ready to make a second revolution’.

23. For the Leninist interpretation of revolution see Kimmel, *Revolution: a sociological interpretation*, p. 120.

24. The poll covered 1,215 respondents in both urban and rural areas of thirty counties. It may be that the 50% of the population who preferred to see the events as something other than a revolution were in part reflecting the widespread popular disenchantment felt within Romania about developments since 1989. Verdery & Kligman, ‘Romania after Ceauşescu’, p. 119, also note that virtually every Romanian seemed to interpret the events of December 1989 as a plot of one kind or another.


România Mare were the notorious ‘protochronists’ Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Eugen Barbu.

29. Habermas in particular strongly argued that ‘...the abolition of the people’s republic has occurred under the sign of a return to old, national symbols, and where this was possible, has understood itself to be the continuation of the political traditions and party organisation of the interwar years’. Habermas, ‘What does socialism mean today?’, p. 4. Tismaneanu, ‘The quasi-revolution’, p. 314, has stressed the dominance of restorative motifs within the discourse of the opposition. Whilst Brucan has emphasised that the quiescence in Romania prior to the 1980s can be explained by the popularity of the Party during the 1960s due to improved conditions amongst peasants who had left the “idiocy of rural life” to join the industrial workforce. Nicholas Thorpe, ‘Party veteran denounces hardship under Ceauşescu’, The Independent, 28 November 1987, p. 6. Anecdotal evidence supports this supposition and, indeed, the Party’s period of popularity amongst these sections of society can probably be extended until the early 1980s and lies at the heart of the cry ‘that things weren’t so bad under Ceauşescu’ so commonly heard all across Romania.

Vladimir Tismaneanu also stresses the prevalence of another counter myth of the 1930s that has proved attractive to many intellectuals. Founded on a ‘romanticisation’ of the generation of Nae Ionescu, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran and Eugen Ionescu, at its most extreme this myth has become conflated with the mysticism of the ‘fascist’ Iron Guard to breed a heady right wing extremism, personified by the transfer of the erstwhile student leader Marian Munteanu’s allegiances to the extreme right-wing Movement for Romania. Tismaneanu, ‘Romania’s mystical revolutionaries’, pp. 402-38.

30. See chapter two.
32. Although this gruesome photograph was widely reproduced around the world it does not seem to have appeared in the relatively ‘restrained’ British press. An example can be found in the Greek newspaper Eleftheros Typos, 27 December 1989, p. 48, under the caption ‘Over 60,000 victims of the Communist’. The rubric under the picture reads ‘Document of massacre: mass graves dug by communist dictator Ceauşescu’s murders in Timişoara, amongst the victims a pregnant women whose unborn baby did not have the chance to see the light of day’. Closer examination of the photographs shows that many of the bodies, which show no apparent signs of bullet wounds, were so decayed that they must have been interred sometime before 17 December. Nothing surrounding this incident is very clear but it seems most likely that the bodies were excavated during the frenzied search mounted for the dead who had been carried away to Bucharest. This interpretation is stressed in an interview conducted by Philip Jacobson with Dr Milan Leonard Dressler, ‘Mourning Timişoara tries to reckon cost of liberty’, The Times, 7 February 1990 p. 8, (note Dr Dressler’s controversial appearance in chapter four). Dr Dressler supervised the official post-mortem examinations on the casualties of the revolution in Timişoara and about this incident he states: ‘Alarmed by reports that the Securitate was getting rid of corpses, crowds began searching frantically for mass graves. At the pauper’s cemetery, ... , “they were, scrabbling at the earth with bare hands, and eventually they found some bodies.”’ When asked if it was deliberately staged
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he continued: 'I cannot believe that,... What happened, I think, was that in the tension and high emotion that followed the massacre, everybody discovered automatically became of [sic] a victim of Ceaușescu. The problem was that this discovery convinced people there must be others, and naturally those still missing a friend or relative could not bear to think they might have been dumped in an unmarked ditch.' Accounts of the finding of the first bodies, which occurred before the fall of Ceaușescu, would seem to support Dressler's view, see Suciu, Reportaj cu sufletul la gură, pp. 249–50. Certainly the authorities were again slow to clear up the confusion and the military seems to have found it diplomatic to continue the pretence of high casualty figures. See Mary Battiata, 'Death toll doubts raised in Romania: estimate said to be excessive, The Washington Post, 28 December 1989, pp. A.1, A.26, where Petre Boroșoiu comes into conflict with the military authorities when he questions whether the bodies were of slain demonstrators.

33. Amit Roy, 'Death toll put under 10,000', The Sunday Times, 31 December 1989, A.13; Mary Battiata, 'Death toll doubts raised in Romania: estimates said to be excessive', The Washington Post, 28 December 1989, p. A.1. On 3 January 1990 in a news conference Vasile Ionel, whilst giving no figures for deaths, said that 450 army personal had been wounded, thus, indicating that the death toll would be far smaller than first suspected. Michael Hornsby, 'Kremlin reluctantly "backed uprising", The Times, 4 January 1990, p. 8. And by the end of the month, at the trial of Bobu, Dinca, Postelnicu and Mănescu, a figure of 689 dead and 1,200 wounded was mentioned. Mihai Sturdza, 'How dead is Ceaușescu's secret police force?', Report on Eastern Europe, 1:15, 13 April 1990, p. 29. In the foreign journalist's mitigation it may be said that estimates of death tolls are notoriously difficult, especially, when news coverage is limited and a political advantage can be gained from maintaining confusion. The true death count after the crushing of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 remains unknown, and Iraqi casualties during the Gulf War also seem to have been initially grossly exaggerated.

34. Indeed, most do not seem to have arrived until 23 December 1989. For some early news reports see those from Michael Sheridan of The Independent cited in chapter two.

35. The reports from the TASS correspondents are cited in chapter one. As far as the reporting of casualties is concerned both Budapest and Warsaw Radio reported a death toll of around twenty in Bucharest on the night of the 22/23 December with the Hungarians also noting thirty–two had died in Cluj. BBC EE/0647, i, 23 December 1989. Indeed, it is noticeable that, apart from the overall death toll, the greatest inflation occurred with the casualties from Timișoara. Thus, the Bulgarian BTA at the same time was reporting 4,700 dead in Timișoara alone, BBC EE/0647, i, 23 December 1989.

36. For Castex's views see Patrick Marnham, 'Look how the medium massages the message', The Independent, 23 April 1991, p. 15.

37. Editorial, 'Balkan Caligula', The Times, 19 December 1989, p. 15. The identification of dictators with Caligula seems to have been popular at this time. See the contemporaneous story about Noreiga, David Gardner, 'A pock-marked Caligula still a hard man to nail', Financial Times, 21 December 1989, p. 6.


39. Harvey Morris, 'How old Nic became prince of darkness', The Independent, 6 January 1990, p. 15. Amongst a number of articles making reference to Dracula
in association with Ceaușescu note Roger Boyes ‘Ceaușescu mythology flourishes in Dracula’s domain’, The Times, 10 January 1990, p. 6, and Michael Simmons, ‘Dracula’s stake in the new Romania’, The Guardian, 6 August 1990, p. 19. The association seem to have been high universal. Simmons reports that a Soviet journalist in Komsomolskaya Pravda spoke of Dracula-Ceaușescu as a single entity and Claude Fischler, ‘Dracula ou le communisme impensable’, Le Monde, 3 January 1991, p. 2, coins the term ‘draculisation’ when describing Ceaușescu in a variety of terms including ‘paranoic dracula’, ‘tyrant of the Balkans’ and ‘proletarian despot’. Note also the picture on the cover of Wagner Exit, which features an anti-Ceaușescu montage originally mounted on the side of a tank in Timișoara where the Romanian leader ‘supreme amongst vampires’ is depicted complete with fangs and horns.

The point is also graphically made in a conversation recorded by Andrei Codrescu with a family from Timișoara at the time of the revolution. ‘I could see that Ceaușescu had already become a creature of legend, a monster of the past, linked to other figures of dread in a history rich in them. Maria’s husband, Dincu, said that Ceaușescu often needed blood transfusions. To this purpose he selected healthy young boys from villages, had blood taken from them, and then had them killed. In Bucharest and in other cities the demonstrators shouted, “Down with the vampire!”

“And you heard about the blood banks?” one of the children, a twelve-year-old boy, asked gravely. I had, but I let him tell it anyway. “Ceaușescu ordered his men to smash the blood banks during the fighting so that the wounded would not get emergency aid,” the boy said.

“They poisoned the water!” added Maria.

“He’s Dracula!” they said, almost at once.

They compared Vlad Dracula, . . . , and Ceaușescu for a long time. “Dracula was better. He was just a man who helped the peasants!” They agreed that Dracula was by far the better man. They crossed themselves.’

Codrescu, The hole in the flag, p. 71.


41. This is the view of Octavian Paler who has suggested that the exaggeration of the terrorist threat had two consequences: ‘on the one hand, the revolution was masked, interrupted, as many people stayed at home; whilst on the other hand, the authors of this masking got out of it the moral capital of having resisted the terrorists’. Cited in Calinescu & Tismaneanu, ‘The 1989 revolution’, p. 45 n.12.

42. For such stories see Harvey Morris & Imre Karacs, ‘Romanian leaders living in fear’, The Independent, 30 December 1989, p. 1.

43. For the term ‘Operetta War’ see Ratesh, Romania: the entangled revolution, pp. 61–64.

44. The myth of the Securitate is cut down to size by Jonathan Eyal’s appreciation: ‘It hardly needs stressing that a country which ultimately proved unable to distribute a loaf of fresh bread could hardly control a network of more than 5 million informers and keep track of millions of telephone lines with any degree of efficiency’. Eyal, ‘Why Romania could not avoid bloodshed’, p. 150. Anecdotal evidence also suggests this view more or less tallies with reality. Feelings of shame and guilt at prior acquiescence are noted in Michael Simmons, ‘Treading on eggshells’, The Guardian, 12 January 1990, p. 23.

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46. Arendt, *On revolution*, pp. 28–35. This is a simplification of Arendt’s argument in which she distinguishes between a quest for liberty (the removal of oppression) and one for freedom (a desire to constitute these liberties). The Romanian language does not distinguish between these two words but this study would argue that whilst ‘liberation’ may have been initially to the fore ‘freedom’ became the ultimate goal for most of the revolutionaries.

Appendix I

Although no official list of the 145 members of the national CNSF ever seems to have been published as far as can be ascertained the following 131 all seem to have belonged to the new body at one time or another during its short life between the 22 December 1989 and 1 February 1990. During this period the membership was not static with a number of prominent figures resigning and others being co-opted especially with the changes in the composition of the local NSF councils at this time and the county representatives listed below are those who headed the local bodies at the time of the formation of the national PCNU. Those marked * in the following list were the members of the CNSF nominated to serve on the national PCNU.

Andrescsu, Gabriel; (Bucharest) scientific researcher*
Baciu, Marian; worker IMBG
Badini, Florin; (Bucharest) economist*
Berceanu, Radu; (Dolj) engineer, President Dolj PCNU *
Birladeanu, Alex.; (Bucharest) academician*
Blaga, Ion; (Bucharest) Professor Academy of Economic Studies*
Blandiana, Ana; (Bucharest) poet
Borza, Octavian; (Alba) engineer, President Alba PCNU *
Botnaru, Sorin; (Bucharest) sociologist, President Bucharest PCNU *
Bozintan, Constantin; (Bihor) project engineer, President Bihor PCNU *
Brat, Mircea; (Galați) steel worker*
Brucan, Silviu; (Bucharest) professor and diplomat
Bucurescu, Valeriu
Buracu, Octavian; (Cluj) geologist, President Cluj PCNU *
Burdan, Romulus; (Gorj) miner Jiu Valley*
Buruiană, Florin; (Neamț) engineer, President Neamț PCNU *
Caramitru, Ion; (Bucharest) actor*
Cățich, Liviu; (Bucharest) designer*
Călinescu, Ștefan; (Bucharest) economist*
Celac, Mariana; (Bucharest) architect*
Chețan, Mihai; (Hunedoara) engineer, President Hunedoara PCNU *
Chirilă, Visarion; (Argeș) engineer, President Argeș PCNU *
Chirița, Dan; (Bucharest) engineer*
Chiru, Vladimir; (Teleorman) technician, President agricultural collective*
Cîntu, Cristina; (Bucharest) student*
Cîrzan, Constantin
Cornea, Doina; (Cluj) professor
Curcă, Petre; (Botoșani) professor, President Botoșani PCNU *
Damian, Ascanio; (Bucharest) architect*
Dănescu, Barbu; (Constanța) chief port pilot, President Constanța PCNU *
Desliu, Dan; (Bucharest) writer*
Dinescu, Mircea; (Bucharest) writer*
Dobre, Petre; (Ialomița) President agricultural cooperative*
Domokos, Geza; editor
Drăcea, Simion; (Mehedinți) design engineer, President Mehedinți PCNU *
Drăgănescu, Mihai; (Bucharest) academician*
Dumitrescu, Emil; (Bucharest) engineer, Vice-Admirial*
Dumitrescu, Mihai; (Vilcea) officer, President Vilcea PCNU *
Enache, Marian; (Vaslui) lawyer, President Vaslui PCNU *
Filipescu, Radu; (Bucharest) electrical engineer*
Gâlea, Dan; (Iași) engineer Iași Politechnic, President Iași PCNU *
Grădinaru, Nicolae; (Olt) lawyer, President Olt PCNU *
Gușe, Ștefan; (Bucharest) army general
Haraga, Dorel; (Bucharest) electromechanec*
Hausl, Hugo; (Bucharest) editor Neuer Weg*
Hăuică, Dan; (Bucharest) art critic*
Iacobescu, Mihai; (Suceava) Professor, President Suceava PCNU *
Iliescu, Cristian; (Bucharest) die castor applied art coopperative*
Iliescu, Ion; (Bucharest) hydraulic engineer/editor*
Ionescu, Cezimir; (Bucharest) engineer*
Ionescu, Constantin; (Bucharest) Professor Academy of Economic Studies*
Ionescu, Magdalena
Iorga, Eugenia; (Bucharest) Professor*
Ipsas, Mihai
Ivanovich Constantin; worker
Jerbas, Paul; (Bucharest) officer*
Király, Károly; (Tîrgu Mureş) economist*
Lixandroiu, Viorel; (Bucharest) printer*
Lupoi, Mihai; (Bucharest) army captain
Manea, Ștefan; (Bucharest) worker Turbomecanica*
Manole, Gheorghe; (Bucharest) doctor*
Marcu, Ion; (Timiș) worker*
Martian, Dan; (Bucharest) university lecturer
Mazilu, Dumitru; (Bucharest) lawyer
Măgureanu, Virgil; (Bucharest) university lecturer*
Mănălă, Toader; (Sălaj) officer, President Sălaj PCNU *
Mânescu, Corneliu; (Bucharest) diplomat*
Mierlă, Marian; student
Militaru, Nicolae; (Bucharest) general*
Minulescu, Ion; (Bucharest) worker*
Moisil, Pamfil; (Bistrița-Năsăud) engineer President Bistrița-Năsăud PCNU *
Montanu, Mihai; (Bucharest) engineer*
Munteanu, Aurelian Dragoş; (Bucharest) editor
Nagy, Carol; (Bucharest) sub-engineer*
Neaşca, Vasile; (Bucharest) student/electrician*
Negrută, Paul; (Bucharest) economist*
Nicolaescu, Sergiu; (Bucharest) film director*
Niţa, Valeriu; (Bucharest) engineer*
Orbán, Arpad; (Covasna) economist, President Covasna PCNU *
Paşcu, Ioan-Mircea; (Bucharest) economist/political-scientist*
Pataki, Emeric; (Harghita) lawyer, President Harghita PCNU *
Petrescu, Dan; (Iaşi) writer*
Pintilie, Mihai; (Bucharest) engineer, Vice-President Bucharest Sector 5 PCNU *
Plătică-Vidovici, Ilie; (Galaţi) officer, President Galaţi PCNU *
Pleșu, Andrei; (Bucharest) writer*
Popa, Gheorghe; (Bacău) actor, President Bacău PCNU *
Popa, Gheorghe; (Maramureș) officer, President Maramureş PCNU *
Popa, Ion; (Bucharest) worker*
Popadan, Nicolae; (Satu Mare) technician, President Satu Mare PCNU *
Popescu, Barbu; (Tulcea) engineer, President Tulcea PCNU *
Popescu, Ion; (Giurgiu) lawyer, President Giurgiu PCNU *
Popescu, Mircea Dan; (Bucharest) lawyer*
Preda, Nicu; (Brăila) design sub-engineer, President Brăila PCNU *
Predescu, Dan; (Bucharest) doctor*
Radu, Nicolae; (Bucharest) lawyer*
Raicu, Romeo; (Bucharest) engineer*
Rădulescu, Iordă; (Bucharest) officer*
Roșcovan, Alexandru; (Timiș) lawyer, President Timiș PCNU *
Roman, Petre; (Bucharest) university professor*
Rus, Vasile; (Hunedoara) steel worker*
Ruse, Corneliu-Constantin; (Prahova) engineer, President Prahova PCNU *
Sava, Constantin; (Ialomița) officer, President Ialomița PCNU *
Scrieciu, Ioan; (Mureș) lawyer, President Mureș PCNU *
Secărescu, Vasile; (Bucharest) sociologist*
Severin, Adrian; (Bucharest) lawyer*
Silaghi, Radu; (Bucharest) worker*
Sîn, Mihai Bujor; (Bucharest) economist*
Sirbu, Adrian; (Bucharest) director*
Stănculescu, Victor-Atanasie; (Bucharest) general*
Stoica, Emil; (Brășov) university assistant, President Brașov PCNU *
Stoiciu, Ioan Liviu; (Vrancea) writer, President Vrancea PCNU *
Stăpănu, Timotei; (Teleorman) professor, President Teleorman PCNU *
Știrbu, Paul; (Buzău) engineer, President Buzău PCNU *
Tărăcila, Doru-Ioan; (Călărași) lawyer, President Călărași PCNU *
Teodoriu, Bujor-Bogdan; (Bucharest) economist*
Tökö, Lázló; (Timiș) pastor*
Tocaci, Oliviu; (Bucharest) lawyer*
Tomuș, Mircea; (Sibiu) writer, President Sibiu PCNU *
Tvitzceclis, Constantin; (Dâmbovița) engineer, President Dâmbovița PCNU *
Vanca, Artemiu; (Gorj) engineer, President Gorj PCNU *
Vlad, Ovidiu
Vlădulescu, Dumitru; (Caraș-Severin) artist, President Caraș-Severin PCNU *
Văsceanu, Lazăr; (Bucharest) university lecturer, Prorector Bucharest University*
Voicilă, Valentin; (Arad) actor, President Arad PCNU *
Voicu, Mihai; (Bucharest) actor, President Bucharest Sector 3 PCNU *
Voiculescu, Gelu-Voican; (Bucharest) geological engineer*
Voineă, Gheorghe; (Bucharest) general*
Zosim, Vasile; (Bucharest) worker*
To this list of names can also probably be added the following:
Chițac, Mihai;
Mânzatu, Ion.

The sources used for the membership of the Council are as following: the initial names read on the radio on 22 December 1989 and given in Monitorul Oficial al României, 1:1, 22 December 1989, p. 2; the speakers at the 18 January meeting of the CNSF listed in BBC EE/0667, B/7-10:30, 20 January 1990, Bucharest Home Service, 2000 gmt, 18 January 1990; those mentioned in the report of the 23 January 1990 meeting of the CNSF given in Monitorul Oficial al României, 2:15 25 January 1990, p. 3 and the list of members of the CNSF seconded to the PCNU given in Sesiunile Consiliului Provizoriu de Uniune dated 9 February 1990, Monitorul Oficial al României, (Sesiuni C.P.U.N.), 1:1, 16 February 1990, pp. 15–16.
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