ROMANIA'S UNFINISHED REVOLUTION[1]

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ROMANIA, A SPECIAL CASE AGAIN?

From the moment the megalomaniac "Great Leader" Nicolae Ceauşescu, who turned his onetime maverick country into the new basket case of Europe, was overthrown, Romania became a special case again. It has opted for neither the gradual transformation chosen by Poland and Hungary nor the "velvet" revolutions of Czechoslovakia and the now defunct German Democratic Republic; even in Bulgaria, the coup that toppled Todor Zhivkov was not violent. But in Romania, the popular uprising that led to Ceauşescu's overthrow on 22 December 1989 cost 1,033 lives, inflicted heavy suffering to a further 2,198 people, and damaged buildings, some of them historically significant.

Violence became common in the spontaneous demonstrations and counter-demonstrations sponsored by the regime that took place in Bucharest in January and February as well as in the ethnic clashes that rocked the Transylvanian city of Tîrgu-Mureş in March. In June 1990, gangs of miners from the Jiu Valley, who had previously raided Bucharest twice chanting "We are working, not thinking," descended on the capital again to "protect" the country's president. Their attacks on demonstrating students, critical intellectuals, and politicians, were clearly targeted at discouraging the country's parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition and dealt a heavy blow to the international prestige of the new Romanian leadership and to the country's reputation as a whole.

This violent aspect of Romania's post-Ceauşescu developments was from the very beginning not a spontaneous part of the revolutionary process but an element consciously introduced by various players to achieve specific goals. In circumstances that have not yet been fully elucidated, peaceful demonstrators in Timişoara in December 1990 had turned violent. Violence was used against soldiers sent to defend what they were told was not the governing regime but the fatherland itself. The security forces used coercion to ignite the popular upheaval. The dress rehearsal for the Timişoara uprising, conducted two years earlier in Braşov, had demonstrated that without violence introduced from the outside the population would not reach the metaphysical threshold of violence by itself. Romania's history is marked by violent, anarchical eruptions of peasant wrath once the proverbial patience of its people is strained beyond endurance.[2]

Yet there is something strange about the violence that occurred during the Romanian

revolution of December 1989. Of the 1,033 people killed, only 144 (including the 97 Timişoara victims) died prior to the ouster of Nicolae and Elena Ceauşescu from the party headquarters. By noon on 22 December, 727 persons had been wounded, but after Ceauşescu was removed, 889 more died and 1,471 more were wounded. Since the Ceauşescus were unable from their imprisonment to communicate with their followers in order to issue orders, increasing numbers of Romanians now question the official version of the takeover. The question they raise is: who, if not Ceauşescu, was responsible for killing and wounding the victims of the December revolution? Whose interests were served by the violent and random shootings which started six hours after Ceauşescu's departure from his palace?

These questions have been raised not only by the student demonstrators in the square outside Bucharest University, who protested for several weeks starting on 21 April 1990, but also by participants in the popular uprising[3] as well as independent journalists and intellectuals.[4] They are of the opinion that those who seized power with the 22 December coup d'état simulated civil war in order to establish their own "revolutionary" legitimacy. The arguments cited to support this theory cannot be easily dismissed. For one, the shooting could not have been ordered or coordinated by Ceauşescu who was trapped in the Communist Party (RCP) headquarters prior to his arrest and subsequent execution in a military barracks outside the capital. Second, the shooting was directed against all but those who ousted Ceauşescu: the Central Committee building, from which the new leadership addressed the population, showed not a single bullet scar, whereas surrounding buildings were heavily damaged. Radio and television transmissions were not interrupted, as they would be later, in June 1990 during the alleged "fascist coup" aimed against the newly elected Iliescu-Roman leadership. If, as Romania's new leaders allege, urban guerrillas loyal to Ceauşescu had attempted to liberate the dictator, they easily could have knocked out strategic buildings, especially the television station relaying Romania's tele-revolution to the networks of the world.

There is little doubt now that the so-called terrorists, who shot innocent citizens summoned to the streets by the media to save the revolution, had effectively convinced both Romanians and outsiders of the need to proceed with a quick elimination of the Ceauşescus. When the street shooting ended immediately after their execution, hardly anyone would have suspected that the reason was not that Ceauşescu's last supporters had given up, but that there was no longer any need to continue the "terrorist" game. Moreover, once the new leaders successfully filled the political void which they had created themselves by physically eliminating Ceauşescu, they were anxious to put an end to the clearly anti-communist popular uprising which now collided with their own, less radical, political goals.

DELUSION AND DISINFORMATION

Speculation in both Romanian and Western papers that Ceauşescu's ouster was the result of a coup d'état engineered by the strongmen of the Front for National Salvation (FNS), members of a long-standing conspiracy, dates back to the first days of the revolution.

Politically motivated violence is only one facet of the "original sin" with which Romania's post-Ceauşescu leadership has been charged; the others are delusion and disinformation. According to this thinking, the men wielding the real power within the FNS, Chairman Ion Iliescu, Prime Minister Petre Roman, Defense Minister Nicolae Militaru, and the gray eminence Silviu Brucan, pretended to represent the spontaneous eruption of the popular revolution, and base their claim to political legitimacy on their alleged opposition to Ceauşescu's dictatorial regime. Far from having emerged from the grassroots revolutionary fervor to fill the political void, they were the leaders of several factions of opposition to Ceauşescu within the army, the security services, and the Communist Party, who had conspired against the Great Leader for decades. They made no effort to topple Ceauşescu earlier because they believed that the time was not ripe for a popular uprising, the vital precondition for a successful military coup. Moreover, external conditions for such a move in both the East and the West were not favorable until the 1980s.

The anti-Ceauşescu plotters did not seek to change the communist, albeit reformed, system. Removing Ceauşescu implied a change of elites within the RCP, with the so-called internationalist fraction replacing the ruling national communists. This change of elites was also meant to bring about a change in policy, especially Romania's relations with the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. By provoking and then profiting from the popular uprising, the internationalist faction of the RCP, which had been ousted from power in December 1961, managed to eliminate the national-communist faction led by Ceauşescu since 1965. Apart from insisting on their quasi-aristocratic communist extraction, this new elite, made up of better educated, pro-Soviet internationalists, contrasted sharply with Ceauşescu's chosen made up mainly of nationalistic, boorish, semi-educated, "upstarts from Scorniceşti" (Ceauşescu's birthplace), who lacked a prewar "red pedigree." By stating in a recent sensational interview with the daily Adevărul[5] that he had opposed Ceauşescu from the latter's climb to power, Silviu Brucan made it clear that his principled opposition was aimed at Ceauşescu's personality, political affiliation, and party line, and not at his actual performance as the leader of the party.

The efforts of the new leadership to base their political legitimacy on their alleged long-time opposition to Ceauşescu was not altogether convincing. The only exception is Silviu Brucan, a former pro-Soviet Stalinist turned pro-Soviet reformist, who had openly challenged the Romanian dictator by signing the "Letter of the Six" in March 1989. By contrast, neither the chairman of the Front for National Salvation, Ion Iliescu, nor Prime Minister Petre Roman has any claim to open opposition to the Ceauşescu regime. But both Iliescu and Roman were acceptable to the internationalists as well as the nationalists, the old nomenklatura and its offspring, and to the Ceauşescu apparat. Furthermore, they both have been busy building constituencies among the technical intelligentsia, writers, and artists.

Ion Iliescu has adroitly combined the inherited image of his prewar communist origins with the acquired fame of a brilliant career which carried him swiftly upward in the RCP hierarchy. After a stint as chairman of the Communist Youth organization in the 1960s, Iliescu was appointed secretary for ideology and propaganda in the Central

Committee. He now claims to have challenged Ceauşescu from that position over the so-called mini-cultural revolution inaugurated in July 1971. Despite being relieved from that job, Iliescu continued as an alternate member of the RCP Central Committee's Political Executive Committee until 1980. Between 1971 and 1979, he worked as party secretary in charge of propaganda in Timiş county and as first secretary in Iaşi county. Until 1984, the year he failed to get re-elected to the Central Committee, Iliescu held ministerial rank as head of the Council of Water Management. Since 1984, he has been the director of the Scientific Publishing House in Bucharest. It was not until September 1987 that Iliescu published an article in the literary weekly, România Literară,[6] cautiously pleading for a restructuring of Romanian society along the lines of Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost and perestroika. In this period, rumors, perhaps originating from his supporters[7], began to spread that Iliescu had been a friend of the Soviet leader's as a student in the Soviet Union. Regardless of whether this information is true, the fact remains that at a time when Soviet pressure on the anti-reformist East European leaders was increasing, Iliescu sent out signals that he might be Gorbachev's choice to succeed Ceauşescu.

Prime Minister Petre Roman was also acceptable to both the old, internationalist and the new, national-communist elites. Far from having been an opponent of the Ceauşescu regime, he was known to have been very close to Ceauşescu's family, especially, it was rumored, to his daughter Zoia. The son of Valter Roman, a fighter in the Spanish International Brigades who had spent several years working in the Comintern's Moscow headquarters, Petre Roman is a characteristic representative of the Romanian red set's offspring who, among other privileges, pursued their studies at universities in the West.[8] The government formed by Roman following the May 1990 elections included several "young people from communist high-life"[9] who appear to have been involved in some kind of anti-Ceauşescu plotting.

REWRITING RECENT HISTORY

Prior to the May 1990 elections, Romania's new power elite desperately defended the myth of its alleged revolutionary origin against anyone publicly suggesting that what actually happened in December 1989 was a coup d'état by Ceauşescu's opponents who provoked and then manipulated a genuine popular uprising. "If we had staged a coup," the then powerful Silviu Brucan said, "would we not have been proud of it?" And, "how could anyone have plotted against the dictator," he continued, under the scrutiny of Ceauşescu's omnipotent Securitate? Refuting Brucan's contention is rather simple: before the elections, the FNS claimed to represent the spontaneous popular revolution. The victory, ran the official pre-election myth, had been won against the granite-hard opposition of Ceauşescu's party, military, and security apparat by the "competent dissidents" of the Front for National Salvation. These official apologists were, and still are, particularly incensed at those analysts who point to Soviet involvement in the takeover.

After the May 20 elections, which gave the FNS and President Iliescu a much-coveted electoral legitimacy, the heterogeneous coalition of disgruntled and pro-Soviet members of

the party, army, and security forces cast out by Ceauşescu began to crumble. Although the revelations and accusations coming from the activists, who for one reason or another were not kept on from the old regime or who have since been ousted from power, should be analyzed carefully, they do corroborate a number of facts about the nature and structure of the ruling FNS. Ana Blandiana, a dissident in both the Ceauşescu and post-Ceauşescu eras, published an article[10] last August analyzing the layers of successive lies so characteristic of the constantly rewritten history of postwar Romania, emphasizing the fact that in the few months since the December 1989 "revolution," a greater number of versions of that sequence of events have been published than in the past 46 years about the August 1944 coup d'état.

In an interview with Silviu Brucan and General Militaru, the magazine Adevarul[11] published their sensational revelations about a cobweb of conspiracies that had existed for decades prior to December 1989, when some of its plotters were carried to the top of the political pyramid. These "revelations" should be taken with a pinch of salt because the two malcontents, Brucan and Militaru, had been expelled from the post-revolutionary leadership prior to the interview, in a struggle for power within the Front for National Salvation. Brucan was relieved as head of the Front's foreign policy department and Iliescu's principal advisor, and Militaru was replaced as defense minister by Victor Stănculescu, Ceauşescu's first deputy of defense. Other members of the military conspiracy, such as Constanta-based Admiral Nicolae Radu and General Stefan Kostyal, who frequently boasted of their real or imaginary role in a number of plots to overthrow Ceauşescu, were clearly frustrated when they were not invited into the new power structure.

PLOTTERS VS. PLOTTERS: THE PROBLEM OF CREDIBILITY

It is clear that anti-Ceauşescu schemes were invented both within the army and the Securitate throughout his leadership. In hindsight, much evidence points to the Stefan Gheorghiu Party Academy as the source of the master plan that brought the present leaders to power, with Leonte Răutu as mastermind. A prewar communist who spent World War II in the Soviet Union as a radio journalist, Răutu returned to Romania in the wake of the occupying Soviet forces. He became one of the most powerful agitprop activists and retained a significant amount of power even after the Romanian Communist Party adopted its national-communist policies in April 1964. It was at the party academy and under Răutu's patronage that Virgil Măgureanu emerged as one of the most powerful figures in post-1989 Romania. Măgureanu was appointed head of the reorganized counter-espionage organization, the Romanian Information Service (SRI). Whereas Răutu was without doubt in close contact with other Romanian Comintern residents in Moscow, such as Petre Roman's father, Silviu Brucan, and Alexandru Bârladeanu, Ion Iliescu most likely collaborated closely with Răutu at the RCP Central Committee's agitprop section. According to Radu, Iliescu joined "the movement" in 1972. In 1985, he said, "a number of young people from the communist high-life" joined the Securitate group, the anti-Ceauşescu faction sponsored by Rautu and centered around Iliescu and Magureanu. In his opinion, they were now formed Roman's new government of technocrats.

As could be expected, Brucan, Militaru, and Radu were primarily interested in calling attention to the plans and protagonists of their military conspiracies. The most prominent conspirators within the army were the late Ion Ioniţa, minister of defense in 1966-76, and his close collaborators Stefan Kostyal and Nicolae Militaru. The earliest plans to depose Ceauşescu were discussed in 1976 by Ioniţa and then chief of staff of the Romanian army, Ion Gheorghe. Most of the generals involved in anti-Ceauşescu intrigues had been trained in the Soviet Union. They had concluded that an army coup could succeed only if it triggered a popular upheaval at the same time. Such a possibility was unrealistic during the 1960s and 1970s, and all concrete action was put off. The plotting resumed in 1983, perhaps not coincidentally while Iurii Andropov, the former KGB chief and CPSU Central Committee Secretary in charge of relations with friendly socialist countries, was in power. It was then that Silviu Brucan, for many years a teacher of Marxism-Leninism at the party academy, and doing research in the West came into contact with the military conspirators. He acted as liaison between the "Securitate group" and the pro-Soviet generals.

Brucan, Militaru, and Radu expressed their dissatisfaction with the representatives of the "Securitate group" after the first meeting with the military conspirators in 1984. They accused Măgureanu and Iliescu of attempting to monopolize relations with the Securitate and of dragging their feet when asked to act concretely. When the members of the military conspiracy consequently approached two high-ranking army officers,[12] several Securitate troop commanders, and an influential party official, they decided to act on their own. An independent coup set to take place during the Ceauşescus' October 1984 visit to West Germany never materialized because Ceauşescu got wind of it. Several military officers were arrested, exiled outside the capital, and, it was rumored, executed. Virgil Măgureanu, Radu claims, publicly expressed his satisfaction with the failure of the military coup, prompting Radu's speculation that "he had planned something for the future" himself.[13] Originally Ceauşescu's overthrow had been set for 30-31 December 1989, Radu said,[14] when "what was planned actually began, days earlier, on 21 December during a rally organized by Ceauşescu."[15] The popular uprising that started in Timişoara on 16 December made all other plans invalid.

Despite the fact that more has been written about the Timişoara events than any other aspect of the 1989 revolution, the real story is far from having been told. To a large degree, this is because the role played in Timişoara and Bucharest by Victor Stănculescu, the most powerful political figure both during the Ceauşescu era and after, is far from clear. It should also not be overlooked that in July 1989 Stănculescu spent his vacation as a guest of Hungary's minister of defense. Hungary played a role as yet unclear in the events leading to Ceauşescu's overthrow. Evidence now available seems to point to the Iliescu-Măgureanu group grabbed power by striking a deal with some in the active military and security establishments while availing itself of the support of the older, pro-Soviet army generals whom Ceauşescu had forced into retirement. From this perspective, the political message of the Brucan-Militaru-Radu revelations is clear: it was the retired, pro-Soviet army generals who deserved credit for the dictator's overthrow. The trio claim that it was only after retired General Militaru took command of the Romanian armed forces on 22

December 1989 that the army changed sides in favor of the "revolution."[16] Silviu Brucan boasted of having detected and exposed the Securitate and army traitors, most importantly Securitate Chief Iulian Vlad and General Stefan Guşă, who had infiltrated the military command on 22 December. He blamed the post-revolutionary leadership for having "practically obstructed a radical solution of the apparat of repression." According to Nicolae Radu, "the Revolution was won by the Securitate, not by the young people who died on the streets." Beyond the long-standing nationalist-internationalist contradiction, the antagonism between the army and the Securitate, which had been exacerbated under Ceauşescu, was as acute as ever.

THE SOVIET CONNECTION

After Mikhail Gorbachev's advent to power, pressure on Ceauşescu to speak out in favor of and embrace the new Soviet policies of perestroika, glasnost, and the new Soviet thinking in foreign policy increased sharply and visibly. During his May 1987 visit to Romania, Gorbachev portrayed himself as an ally of the suffering people and a supporter of the new elites in the party and the state bureaucracy and an opponent of the Brezhnev-type stagnation symbolized by the Ceauşescu group. When the violent street demonstrations erupted in Brasov on 15 November 1987, the CPSU Central Committee Secretary Yegor Ligachev publicly declared that the Soviet Union would not intervene on Ceauşescu's side.

Despite the unusual reticence displayed by Brucan, Militaru, and Radu on the Soviet Union's role, they do not deny the fact that Soviet officials had prior information about the plans to topple Ceauşescu and, while not opposed to them, were wary of supporting the military conspirators in "the way they had been asked."[17] They denied the conspirators' requests for direct deliveries of weapons, although they were prepared to sell the arms to Romania through third parties and for hard currency. According to Brucan, despite the fact that "the Soviets, Mr. Gorbachev included, knew almost everything about this conspiracy...they were predominantly interested in their own plans." After attending "political talks focused on the resistance movement in Romania," which all the unnamed participants from the Kremlin "regarded with sympathy," the Soviets promised Brucan that they would safeguard his personal security. A Bucharest-based Pravda correspondent visited Brucan regularly, signaling the Soviet Union's interest in him.

Under Gorbachev's direction, the Soviet leadership had prepared for an intervention which would not be carried out solely by Moscow forces. Several days prior to Ceauşescu's fall, a Warsaw Pact coordinating committee was formed in Hungary. The "responsibility" for the coup, according to a Soviet analyst,[18] was to "extend beyond the Warsaw Pact"; furthermore, several Western states, most prominently France, signalled their agreement and even support.[19]

On 23 December, when a serious, though still mysterious, conflict had already emerged within the heterogeneous group that had toppled Ceauşescu, a call to the Soviet Union for military assistance was sent out over Romanian radio and television, later to be

identified as having come directly from Iliescu. The Soviet intervention did not materialize, however, because it was vetoed by General Stefan Guşă, the army chief of staff. He was immediately sacked when the insurrection had been brought under control. Following the execution of the supreme commander of the Romanian army, control of the armed forces was placed in the hands of a military council, which included Iliescu and Nicolae Militaru, appointed defense minister after the fall of the Ceauşescu regime.

THE MAY 1990 ELECTIONS: FREE, BUT NOT FAIR

The survival of communist authoritarianism in post-revolutionary Romania makes it an exception among the states of Eastern Europe. Long after Ceauşescu's fall, Iliescu expressed his continuing belief in the "values of communism"[20] and, even worse, declared that he had a concept of democracy in "the context of a totalitarian regime...with an enlightened despot."[21] On the eve of the May elections, the main opposition parties and the extra-parliamentary opposition demonstrated in Bucharest University square, branding the Iliescu-Roman leadership neo-communist. Under pressure from the Romanian people, who were back in the streets demanding an end to communism, the new leaders[22] claimed that the Romanian Communist Party had died with Ceauşescu. With an eye to the upcoming elections, in which Brucan had predicted earlier[23] that the RCP would win less than 5 percent of the vote, the new leaders who had intended to emulate Gorbachev's reforms, changed their public stance quickly, announcing: "there is none of this reform communism nonsense in Romania."[24]

Although the communist label has been removed from the totalitarian structures inherited from Ceauşescu, the new leadership has left these structures virtually unchanged. Some of the highest and most exposed nomenklatura cadres have remained in office. Along with the old party and state apparatus, the Front immediately took over the former party cells in economic enterprises and institutions. It was obvious from the beginning that the new leaders did not want to estrange the roughly 3.8 million former party members and their families. There would be no witch hunt, no painful probing into the consciences of party members, no vengeance. The new leadership even tried to promote the myth that both the army and the Securitate had sided with the insurgents in December 1989. This policy bore fruit at the polls. Romania was described by a Bucharest newspaper on the eve of the May 20 presidential and parliamentary elections as "Gorbachev's dream, the confirmation of communist rule in free elections" come true.[25] The self-styled Front for National Salvation won 66.31 and 67.02 percent of the vote, respectively, in each house of the new parliament, and the Front's chairman, Ion Iliescu, scored a landslide victory with 86 percent of the vote.

The voting behavior of the Romanians on election day, commemorated in the Orthodox religious calendar as "Sunday of the Blind," was not as incomprehensible as it might appear at first. Octavian Paler of the independent daily România Liberă, correctly predicted as early as 25 January 1990 that "the elections will be faked even if the ballots are counted properly." The electoral process itself, monitored by hundreds of officially

sanctioned observers from both West and East and followed by about 1,500 international journalists, was judged "faulty, but not faked." The cheating had taken place long before the arrival of the observers: the FNS had the advantages of the popularity of the revolution and of being established in the government. In the eyes of most citizens who had participated in Romania's tele-revolution, Iliescu appeared as the incarnation of the liberation from Ceauşescu. To this, the population added the benefits which the new rulers had had time to bestow on it. Despite the fact that any government succeeding Ceauşescu's would eventually have to prove itself by implementing the measures demanded and promised--freedom of movement inside Romania, freedom to travel abroad, freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of the press, greater autonomy for students, artists, and intellectuals, equal rights for ethnic minorities, freedom to establish trade unions--the electoral benefit of the doubt went entirely to the Front.

The new leadership rescinded some of the most hated policies of the Ceauşescu era. Food exports were temporarily halted and imports of food and other consumer goods, severely curtailed by Ceauşescu's excessive policy of austerity since 1980 to repay the country's foreign debt, were reinstated. Salaries and pensions were raised, bonuses paid out ahead of schedule, work norms lowered, and the work week shortened. Peasants were allowed to lease, although not own, sell, or inherit, small plots of land, and lured with promises of privatization of land if they voted for the FNS. A law allowing some operation of private small enterprises was passed. All these measures, aimed exclusively at winning the elections "on a wave of lemons, meat and gas,"[26] unfortunately quickly proved disastrous for the overall economic situation. Production of most goods as well as exports fell dramatically, labor productivity decreased sharply, while the budget deficit, inflation, and unemployment rose rapidly. This irresponsible economic policy of the new Romanian leadership has made it even more difficult to put an end to the economic chaos caused by 45 years of communist mismanagement.

Prior to the elections, only the opposition parties pointed to the inevitably negative consequences of squandering resources solely to bribe the electorate, and their position cost the opposition votes. The opposition's call for economic reforms was vehemently rejected by the FNS, whose adherents did not hesitate to use the communists' classic anti-market and anti-Western slogans. "We don't want to lift the barriers to private enterprise until after the elections," a prominent spokesman of the Front said a few days after Ceauşescu's overthrow. "It is a matter of focus: you cannot improve material life quickly and at the same time institute deep economic reforms."[27] Immediately after the elections, however, the new government of "technocrats" reversed its anti-reformist stand and advocated a set of reforms even more radical than those proposed by the National Liberal and National Peasant Parties.

The election campaign was free, but by no means fair. The newly established political parties were unable to match the organization and funds which the FNS had appropriated from the dormant Romanian Communist Party. They were prevented from establishing themselves in the countryside, and their candidates were physically attacked if

they attempted to campaign in rural areas. Distribution of opposition and independent newspapers and political pamphlets was obstructed. No other candidates except FNS candidates were allowed into factories or onto collective farms to address workers and peasants directly. Theoretically, equal access to radio and television was granted to all 72 political parties participating in the elections, but in reality, the FNS candidates' campaigns and speeches at electoral rallies around the country received extensive and preferential coverage.

Moreover, the FNS, with its analysts, ideologues, and propagandists with decades of experience under the communists, had a thorough knowledge of the social structure and psycho-political profile of the population. The Front's electoral strategy was focused on the large group of former party members and their families and at state employees, capitalizing on their fears of losing their modest privileges and of being punished if any of the opposition parties won. The FNS propagandists aroused and manipulated the average citizen's reluctance to take risks and of losing the modest improvement in his or her living conditions brought by the revolution. Instead of the "golden future" promised for decades by Ceauşescu, people merely wanted "an acceptable present."[28]

Romanians have come to understand, Silviu Brucan wrote in a pertinent analysis of Romanian society on the eve of the elections, that the Front represents a necessary evil in a destabilizing context."[29] This instability was subtly suggested by FNS propaganda as something to be expected if the foreigners, i. e., the opposition leaders who had spent decades in exile, were to win the elections. While Ion Iliescu was presented by the Front's propaganda and the partisan media as "the president for your tranquillity," the opposition parties were accused of fomenting unrest.

The opposition parties, unable to adopt a common strategy, were easily outmaneuvered by the Front. The opposition's early demand that members of the Ceauşescu nomenklatura[30] be made ineligible for office was countered by the Front's demand that no one who had been out of the country for ten years[31] could run for office. After both clauses were dropped from the proposed electoral law, the anti-communist focus shifted away from the opposition parties, whose credibility had suffered a severe blow, to the extraparliamentary opposition, now the "Civic Alliance" established in November 1990.

LACKING LEGITIMACY, LACKING STABILITY

Following the May elections, there was some hope that Iliescu and the FNS would use their immense new confidence and power to make a fresh start toward genuine democracy. Unfortunately, they missed this historic chance. It is obvious now that the new leadership is the main source of instability in Romania. Following the FNS's and Iliescu's victory in the elections, changes in the nucleus of power were inevitable, since according to the electoral law, president-elect Iliescu would have to resign from the FNS. Tension began to grow between the president and Prime Minister Petre Roman, who has had some difficulty instilling confidence as the Front's "national leader." Roman has attempted to

project himself as a reform-minded, liberal politician capable of eliciting foreign support for Romania. President Iliescu, meanwhile, continued to court the sector of the Romanian electorate most fearful of economic and social hardships inherent in the "shock therapy" of the transition to a market economy and democracy. Silviu Brucan, still influential, has openly turned against Iliescu to support Roman.

Antagonism has also been brewing between President Iliescu, whose popularity has continued to fall since the elections, and the enigmatic Defense Minister Victor Stănculescu, the only member of the provisional government who remained in office following the elections. Iliescu's calling in of the miners was presented as an emergency measure prompted by the unwillingness of both the police and army to defend public order against an alleged fascist coup d'état. Further, when violence broke out in June 1990, Stănculescu was out of the country at a meeting of Warsaw Pact defense ministers, and General Vasile Ionel, chief of staff of the Romanian army, acted as his deputy. Ionel, one of the army's anti-Ceauşescu plotters, is known to have reservations about Stănculescu. Members of the army conspiracy are voicing demands to put Stănculescu and others on trial.

There have also been persistent rumors about Stănculescu's intention to overthrow President Iliescu. A meeting between Stănculescu and King Michael I of Romania at the latter's Swiss home have fuelled speculation about a possible army takeover that would restore King Michael to the throne. These rumors were largely responsible for the government's nervous expulsion of King Michael and the royal family from Bucharest in December 1990, after they ostensibly returned to Bucharest to attend religious services at the Church of Curtea de Argeş housing his ancestral crypt.

Despite Stănculescu's sullied reputation, the loser after the violence involving the miners was President Iliescu, whose domestic and international prestige was gravely affected by the incident.[32] And yet, despite his flagging popularity, Iliescu has been able to boost his position vis-à-vis the head of government and the minister of defense. The draft constitution enhances his executive prerogatives by allowing him to preside over sessions of parliament at which matters of major importance are under debate, and he is now the head of the army and president of the Defense Council.

Iliescu no longer attempts to hide the close links between his regime and the Ceauşescu nomenklatura. The legal action conducted against the members of Ceauşescu's Political Executive Committee and Iulian Vlad, the former chief of the Securitate, is a farce. Most of the old Ceauşescu nomenklatura were granted generous pensions, and some supporters have even re-entered politics. The Romanian Communist Party, now the Socialist Workers' Party, has joined forces with one of the post-Ceauşescu pseudo-parties to re-emerge on the political scene. The shadow coalition between Iliescu's regime and the increasingly vocal supporters of the Ceauşescu order was openly acknowledged when Ion Iliescu warmly greeted Eugen Barbu of the blatantly chauvinistic, pro-Ceauşescu weekly România Mare, at ceremonies on 1 December 1990, the newly declared national holiday.

Social tensions are again on the rise because the social contract initiated last December was canceled by the new government after the elections. Its policy of breaking up the new national solidarity by pitting workers against intellectuals, ethnic minorities against the national majority, Orthodox Christians against Catholics, and so forth, may make Romania ungovernable. As long as the rule of lies prevails over the rule of law, the post-revolutionary leaders will not be able to find a genuine national consensus at home or to win the confidence of the international community abroad.

NOTES

1. For more details, see the author's book, Die unvollendete Revolution: Rumänien zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie (The unfinished revolution: Romania between dictatorship and democracy) (Munich: Piper, 1990). For more recent events, see "Rumänien zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie," Osteuropa (September 1990), p. 793ff; and "Die Wahlen in Rumänien" (The Romanian elections), Südosteuropa (July-August 1990), pp. 405-28.

2. "Jacqueries" taking place in the Romanian countryside in 1888 and 1907 were savagely suppressed and cost thousands of lives.

3. Florin Iaru, 22, no. 17, (11 May 1990).

4. Nicolae Radu, Nu, no. 4, (11 September 1990).

5. 23 August 1990.

6. 3 September 1990.

7. Ion Iliescu, in an interview granted to Radio Free Europe (Munich) on 8 October 1990.

8. Roman received his Ph.D. from the University of Toulouse.

9. Nicolae Radu in Nu, no. 4, 11 August 1990.

10. România Literară, no. 35, 30 August 1990.

11. 23 August 1990.

12. General Gomoiu, deputy minister of defense, and Popa, deputy chief of staff.

13. Contrast, no. 21 (August 1990).

14. România Liberă, 14 June 1990.

15. Nicolae Radu in Nu, no. 4 (11 August 1990). Rumors abounded that a coup d'état had been planned against Ceauşescu during the customary New Year's celebration when the presidential couple would receive groups of popular singers and dancers and dance the hora themselves.

16. Adevărul, 23 August 1990.

17. Nicolae Radu in Nu, no. 4 (11 August 1990).

18. Vikenty Mateev, Izvestia. Conversation with The Christian Science Monitor, 27 December 1990.

19. Lothar Rühl in Die Welt, 2 January 1990.

20. Figaro Magazine, 8 January 1990.

21. Pămîntul Liber, 21 April 1990, quoting Dreptatea, 26 April 1990.

22. Iliescu, on 22 December 1990, in his first address to the Romanian people, called them "comrades."

23. Le Monde, 29 December 1989.

24. Financial Times, 29 December 1990.

25. Zigzag, no. 17 (23 May 1990).

26. Silviu Brucan, in The Daily Telegraph, 29 December 1989.

27. Financial Times, 29 December 1989.

28. Mircea Dinescu, Libération, 22 May 1990.

29. Le Monde, 18 April 1990.

30. This demand, if enacted into law, would have prevented Iliescu from running for office as the FNS candidate.

31. This law would have barred both Radu Câmpeanu of the National Liberal Party and Ion Raţiu of the National Peasant Party from running.

32. According to a poll conducted on 23 August 1990 by DPA, the popularity of the president, elected with almost 87 percent of the vote, had declined to 67.5 percent.