

DECEMBER 1989 ROMANIAN REVOLUTION SEEN THROUGH THE SPEECHES OF ITS MAIN LEADERS

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Abstract: This year marks 25 years since the Romanian Revolution of 1989. During this time, the Romanian society passed through a transition period, with changes in all aspects, it has faced economic international crisis and a series of internal difficulties. Romania turmoil of the last quarter century must not, in any respect, be associated with that end of December 1989. Those days have witnessed a major event, historically speaking, not only for Romania and its people, but for the entire geopolitical world: Romanian Revolution of December 1989. The 25 years that have passed away since then, are not the responsibility of the Revolution or of her rightful perpetrators of those moments. That is the sole responsibility of those who manage at the time given the destiny of the country and its people. In December 1989, thousands of Romanian hearts began to beat a new rhythm. The course of history would be forever changed. But this would have not nod probably the already known outcome, if the courage of many had not been supported by the warm, mobilizing and sincere words of those who have inspired hope of victory throughout the country, despite the possible dangerous repercussions. Dreams and hopes of millions of Romanians became increasingly palpable, more realistic with every word uttered by the leaders of the Revolution in 1989.

Keywords: revolution, speeches, December 1989, leaders of 1989 Romanian Revolution, masses' influence

Ad hoc speeches of those days are an important factor in the outcome of the events. What was said, who said it and what it meant, this is what we present in this paper.

This year we are celebrating 25 years since the December 1989 Romanian Revolution. During this time, Romanian society has crossed transition periods, has faced changes at all levels, the effects of the international crisis as well as a whole series of internal difficulties. The recent political, social and economic transformations in Romania are closely connected with that end of December 1989, when the last days of the year witnessed a historic moment which proved crucial not only for Romania and its inhabitants, but also for the entire geopolitical area of Eastern

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Europe, namely *The December 1989 Romanian Revolution*. After this date we can contend that Romania has become a “turntable” of the intra-European connections and of those between Europe and neighbouring regions¹.

The *Revolution* and its rightful accomplishes at the time are not responsible for the 25 years that have passed since then. This quarter of a century, the present and undoubtedly the future of the country and the people represent the exclusive responsibility of the ones who run these destinies at this moment.

What happened in December '89 was the revolt of a minority. A dictatorship was to crumple, a dictatorship was not to be born. 1990 turns Romania into a prey thrown to hyenas. Never has plunder been more apparent. The nations' instinct of self-preservation tires in an order that is not re-established. The wealth of all the Romanians was rapidly transferred into the wealth of a few².

I would compare Romania with a train: the December 1989 revolutionaries are the ones who switched the direction, but the responsibility of operating the train falls to the one(s) in command of it.

Following December 1989, many things were said and written, the events were analysed and possibly thousands of theories, opinions, and suggestions were produced. Yet what can be more relevant than remembering the words uttered in the heat of those moments?

The spark that lit the redeeming fire of change started in Timișoara, when a few of the city's inhabitants gathered spontaneously to protest against the decision of relocating priest Lazlo Tokes. In the morning of 16th December there were a few people in front of the pastor's house; at noon, their number had risen to approximately 100, to reach almost one thousand in the evening; the decisive moment was when trams were stopped and traffic was blocked, so that the people who got out participated in the events that ensued³. That movement was followed by the beginning of the people's revolt in Bucharest on 21st December; the display of discontentment intensified and many other cities joined the revolutionary wave⁴. A group of revolutionaries constituted the National Salvation Front Council and proceeded to prepare an “Address to the country” – a document synthesising the programme of the Romanian Revolution⁵. With this document, the Revolution opened Romania's door to a new future. In the last years of communism, Romania

¹ Ion Iliescu, *Revoluție și reformă*, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 1994, p. 268.

² Claudiu Iordache, *Clasa nevrednică*, București, Editura IRINI, 1997.

³ Ioan Scurtu, *Revoluția Română din decembrie 1989 în context internațional*, Editura Redacției Publicațiilor pentru Străinătate, București, 2009, p. 182, 183.

⁴ Ion Calafeteanu (coord.), Gheorghe Neacșu, Daniela Osiac, Sebastian Rusu, *Revoluția română din decembrie 1989. Documente*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2009.

⁵ Gheorghe Neacșu, Daniela Osiac, *Crestomație-Revoluție*, Editura Institutului Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989, București, 2013, p. 11.

had experienced such protests, but lacking the strength to become a significant movement, such as the case of Braşov in 1987, or Iaşi, on 14th December 1989.

It is said that a revolution is a change of heart. In December 1989 the heart of a few thousand Romanians started to beat to a new rhythm. The lethargy and flatness they were used to started to evaporate and, beating in unison, the hearts of several daring people from Timișoara moved an entire Romania. The course of history was to be altered irreversibly. However, all this would probably not have had the result already known, had the courage of the many not been supported by the warm, sincere, rallying words of those who, ignoring the danger of any repercussion, animated the hope of victory for the entire country. The dreams and hopes of millions of Romanians were to become more and more palpable and reasonable with every word spoken by the leaders of the December 1989 Revolution.

The explosion triggered by the outset of the Revolution in 1989 undoubtedly led to a release of chaos on the streets. Liberation, or desire of it, fear, courage, adrenaline were all released and led to vandalism as well. Here's why, on 20th December, from the balcony of the Opera House in Timișoara, Lorin Fortuna was appealing adamantly and weightily to a "fight without violence". "We ask that you do not break shop windows any more, do not cause fights, do not attack the army". In order to give events a peaceful course, Lorin Fortuna required that any factory, big or small, should appoint its representatives for the Romanian Democratic Front. It was one of the first glimmers of democracy: *equality of representation*. Throughout the moments he addressed the crowd, Lorin Fortuna also appealed to the priests who "have so far sold themselves to the regime" to join "the people". Urging the priests to follow LazloTokes's example, Lorin Fortuna requests that word be sent to the Cathedral that if they want to join the people, they should "ring the bells"⁶. Moreover, one of the demands Lorin Fortuna fervently repeated to the crowd was "the release of prisoners"⁷. Being in the middle of the city that gave the wakeup call, during his 20th December 1989 speech, Lorin Fortuna experienced a moment of intuition and, in the light of the fact that an order had been given for the closure of borders, he states that "there may be some who will claim that what is happening in Timișoara has been organised by some interventionists. To them we say that's not true. We did all this here"⁸. The ones who found the courage to protest and request a change in December 1989 were aware of the possible consequences in case of failure. However, their desire for freedom was stronger. It is what arises from the words used by Lorin Fortuna: "take care of my family should anything happen to me, take care of the other people's families as well".

⁶ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-preotii-romani-sa-ia-exemplu-de-la-laszlo-tokes/>, min 2.23

⁷ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-tara-are-la-putere-filozofi-dar-ce-folos-ca-n-piata-nu-se-gasesc-cartofi/>, min 8.17

⁸ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-preotii-romani-sa-ia-exemplu-de-la-laszlo-tokes/> min 17.43

On 21st December 1989, it was the same Lorin Fortuna that read out the proclamation of the Romanian Democratic Front⁹, explaining both the role and the goal of this newly established political body in the following way:

There are many who may not have heard, so we are going to read out again the proclamation of the Romanian Democratic Front constituted in Timișoara (ovations). One. The Romanian Democratic Front is a political organisation – so far they've said not to politics, now you are the ones who will decide! (ovations) – constituted in Timișoara to establish a dialogue with the Romanian government with a view to bringing about democracy in the country. As far as the Romanian Democratic Front is concerned, the establishment of this dialogue depends upon president Nicolae Ceaușescu's resignation (ovations). We're proposing the following demands as a foundation for our future talks with the government: One. Organising free elections (ovations). Two. Freedom of speech, of the media, radio and television. (ovations) Three. The immediate opening of state borders (ovations). Romania's enrolment among states which observe and guarantee basic human rights (ovations). Five. The immediate liberation of all prisoners and political dissidents in Romania (ovations). Revitalising the national economy (ovations). Seven. Reforming the educational system in a democratic spirit (ovations). Eight. The right to free public assembly (ovations). Nine. True freedom for religious cults (ovations). Ten. Improving health care and food service (ovations). As far as the events in Timișoara are concerned. One. We strongly demand that the ones who ordered soldiers to fire at the people be brought to account (ovations, shout: murderers!). Two. We demand the deceased be returned to their families, in order to be buried according to tradition, in national mourning (ovations). Three. We demand the immediate release of all those arrested in the aftermath of the demonstration (ovations). Four. We demand the cessation of all future retaliations against the protesters in Timișoara (ovations). Five. We ask the local authorities to acknowledge the action committee of the Romanian Democratic Front established in Timișoara and initiate a direct dialogue (ovations). Six. We thank the staff of the National Theatre in Timișoara for all their help (ovations). The Romanian Democratic Front appeals to the whole country with the following: One. We ask the entire Romanian people to join our rightful fight for a democratic country (ovations). Two. Create Romanian Democratic Front committees in all the cities, factories and institutions, in order for it to coordinate the action of national democratisation (ovations). Three. Reclaim your constitutional rights peacefully and without violence (ovations). Four. Go on national strike starting today, 21st December 1989, until final victory, with the exception of vital domains, whose work cannot be interrupted (ovations). Five. The Romanian Democratic Front would like to thank all those who have been, are and will be with us (ovations)¹⁰.

⁹ Vezi Daniela Osiac, *Revoluția din Decembrie 1989. Mesaj pentru România. Proclamații, apeluri, manifeste ale Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989*, Editura Institutului Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989, București, 2010.

¹⁰ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/26/timisoara-21-decembrie-1989-proclamatia-fdr/>, min 5.16

At a certain time, possibly to enhance morale and sketch a positive picture of the strength for change that characterised the people present in the public square, Lorin Fortuna called on a man who was gifted at sifting words through the consciousness of his own soul. Writer Claudiu Iordache urges people present in the square to show “the courage of this moment”¹¹, as they were the deputies of the whole nation’s hopes: “This is how the strength of a nation lives! At this moment you are speaking on behalf of the entire people”¹². Eleonora Petrovici, a doctor in Caransebeş, who addressed the crowd on 20th December from the balcony of the Opera House in Timișoara, overwhelmed by the thrill of the moment, appeals to the people to stay calm in spite of the atrocities she says she knows about: “dead, wounded, sufferers”¹³. Benco Unipan, representing the Serb minority, was to say that he was the “personification of Ceaușescu’s Justice”. A graduate of the Faculty of Physics and employee of Electromotor, he was the son of a Serbian priest who, together with the Romanian priest in their natal village, had made sure that all holidays were celebrated, even according to both calendars. Thus, drawing a parallel between the Romanian priest and his father, he appeals to the people to show the same unity in removing Ceaușescu from power. “Dole Ceaușescu! (Down with Ceaușescu!)”¹⁴ After several spoken interventions and appeals to calm, unity and release of prisoners, Ioan Beni Oprea also addressed the people, promoting the idea of dialogue and clearly asserting a rejection of violence. He emphasises that if a change is desired, it must be obtained through peaceful means and not through hatred or murder: “We do not want to build a society on dead corpses! Brothers, we will never solve anything if we want others to die! (unclear) We’ll not solve this if we respond with hatred to hatred!”¹⁵

In turn, on the balcony of the Opera House in Timișoara people described the way in which events unfolded in other cities of the country, where the cry for freedom uttered by the citizens of Timișoara amplified like a viral echo. What’s more, deputies of those fighting for Nicolae Ceaușescu’s fall from power started to arrive in Timișoara, to express their immediate support for the historic movement born in the heart of Timișoara. Teodor Purice represented the Jiu Valley in the Balcony. He advises those present in the Square to distrust the false promises of the Communist Party leaders in Bucharest as “They will promise anything and deliver nothing! Everything will remain the same!”¹⁶. A student representative arrived

¹¹ <http://claudiuiordache.wordpress.com/>

¹² <http://claudiuiordache.wordpress.com/>

¹³ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-preotii-romani-sa-ia-exemplu-de-la-laszlo-tokes> min 13.18

¹⁴ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-preotii-romani-sa-ia-exemplu-de-la-laszlo-tokes> min 19.35

¹⁵ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-tara-are-la-putere-filozofi-dar-ce-folos-ca-n-piata-nu-se-gasesc-cartofi/>, min 1.36

¹⁶ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-preotii-romani-sa-ia-exemplu-de-la-laszlo-tokes>, min 23.42

from Bucharest, Cristian Lițoiu, and he addressed the people assuring them that there is solidarity in the capital city, too:

I have over 400 friends in Bucharest – students, boys and girls, neighbours – who are going to set fire to car tyres around the House of the Republic this evening at 6 (ovations) (unclear) a House of the Republic which now is still white, but by tomorrow morning will turn black! (shout: black!, ovations). We are brothers, we are brothers (yes!). All the best to you all! Freedom!¹⁷

Regarding the Patriotic Guards sent from Oltenia to Timișoara to re-establish order, Vasile Blendea said: “Towns such as Caracal, Slatina and others, and counties such as Olt, realised that we sacrificed ourselves for the wellbeing of the entire country and dispatched their echelons from the East Railway Station. They were lied to, do not condemn them!”¹⁸

In an attempt to counteract the effect of events in Timișoara, Nicolae Ceaușescu orders a great assembly in the Square between the Central Committee Headquarters and the Royal Palace. As well as recalling past moments of supreme glory in his time as the country leader – such as the speech of August 1968 – Nicolae Ceaușescu announces to the people present in the square a few measures meant to improve living conditions, which he says will be implemented starting with 1st January 1990:

I would like to inform you all about an important decision taken today by the Executive Political Committee, regarding the standard of living of the working people. This morning we have decided that, starting with 1st January, minimal pay will be increased, in the course of the next year, from 2000 lei to 2200 lei. Over 1,500,000 working people will benefit from this important pay rise. Starting with 1st January we will also increase children allowances, between 30 and 50 lei, according to the number of children in a family and the salary of the working people, which constitutes a substantial aid for approximately 4,400,000 children of our country. What’s more ... (whistling and vituperation can be heard) ... we’ll introduce birth benefits of 1,000 lei for all women, starting with their first child, while for women giving birth to two or more children, the benefit will be 2,000 lei for every child, which also represents a strong incentive, an assistance for the mothers, the women of our country. We have come to a decision to increase minimum pension payments from 800 to 900 lei. We have also resolved to increase successor pensions by 100 lei. At the same time, we’ll enhance social security allowance from approximately 500 to 800 lei, thus ensuring good, appropriate working and living conditions for all the citizens of our country. These measures prove determinately that, as the economy develops, we do everything to ensure a continuous rise in the material and spiritual

¹⁷ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-preotii-romani-sa-ia-exemplu-de-la-laszlo-tokes> min 18.24

¹⁸ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/26/timisoara-21-decembrie-1989-copilul-libertatii-avram-iancu-sintem-toti/>, min 11.36

standards of living of the people, according to the resolutions of the Party's Congress"¹⁹.

Nevertheless, all these did not have the expected result. The crowd rebelled against the communist leader in Bucharest. After less than 24 hours, on 22nd December 1989, Nicolae and Elena Ceaușescu were forced to run away by helicopter, from the roof of the Central Committee building.

The moment entry and taking over control of the Romanian Television was accomplished, the highway was open to changing the fate of an entire country. At the beginning of the televised programme, Ion Caramitru summarises their progress to the Television building: "Brothers! Brothers! With the help of God, we are now inside the TV studios. We managed to get here behind tanks, together with the army, students and people you can see and thousands and thousands of Romanians and other nationalities who led us here."²⁰ Standing by him, Mircea Dinescu addresses "the heroic Romanian people"²¹ asking that they remember God and pointing out that the army is by their side. Announcing they are going to retire and prepare the new provisional governing body, Ion Iliescu specified: "We'll create provisional structures to grant our functioning as a society, to prepare free elections, to plan a life in which the people is in actual fact the decision factor, the leader of public life." He also addresses the population repeatedly, appealing to calm and lucidity:

We are appealing at the same time to the entire population of the country to manifest the lucidity and social discipline necessary to set everything in order. Because we were pushed into chaos and disarray by Ceaușescu's psychotic clique! In these moments our nation must prove mature enough to be able to organise ourselves on a democratic basis"²².

Petre Mihai Băcanu, recently released from prison, also conveys an inspiring message to the population of Romania: "Two hours ago, when I got out of prison, the first gesture I made was to kiss the Romanian earth. Maybe I will have the chance to tell you more, the only thing I ask of you now is to understand everything that is happening in our country, to proceed unexcitedly, because everything we have been fighting for has come true"²³. Teodor Brateș kept public opinion informed about the events in Sibiu, interjecting anytime new elements appeared:

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pm53beoUZ4Q>

²⁰ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/tvr-in-decembrie-1989/>, min 2.08

²¹ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/tvr-in-decembrie-1989/> min 3.05

²² <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-preotii-romani-sa-ia-exemplu-de-la-laszlo-tokes>, min 10.04

²³ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/12/08/tvr-22-decembrie-1989-petre-mihai-bacanu/>, min 00.16.

The Securitate (secret police) continue to shoot the army! Armoured vehicles on their way to the County Hospital (woman: Târgu Mureş, as well!) According to our informers, there, in Sibiu, the army is being shot at from within the County Hospital! Urgent action is required. We do not need talks (man: Not these sterile talks!) The army ought to come into action, to defend the people and our brothers in the army!²⁴

As a matter of fact, news regarding the situation in almost all the cities was being broadcast as soon as information was provided.

Information kept coming about all sorts of sabotages, such as the water supply in Bucharest and other cities being contaminated, or, as George Marinescu announced, bombs being placed on the TV station premises: “we have just been informed that a bomb was found in the basement of the television station. Fortunately, it was defused by specialists, by engineers. Similar deadly charges may still exist. Not only inside this institution, not only in the radio station, maybe in other places as well”²⁵. Sergiu Nicolaescu, reminding the people that no one and nothing can ever take away the honour of being a Romanian, makes an appeal to all the inhabitants of Bucharest and other places as well, to join those who have lit the fire of liberty so that it isn’t extinguished:

We are first of all Romanians and no one, absolutely no one can ever take us out of this Romanian skin we possess! I am first and foremost appealing to the working class! I am asking the workers in factories and industries to stop work. If you do not stop work immediately, if you do not come here, in the former Stalin Square, if you do not come here to the television building, and join us, you should know that what you see now will die out! I do not want all this to be a flash in the pan. I want you to come here in droves!²⁶

Gelu Voican Voiculescu, making an appeal for the release of all political prisoners, introduces another aspect into discussion: the fact that the entire world is watching Romania and, consequently, the Romanians must prove capable of self-governing: “At this moment the eyes of the world are watching us. We must show that we are responsible, that we are a peace-loving nation who acknowledges hierarchy and legality! Verifying and sentencing all those who acted against us all these years!”²⁷.

²⁴ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/08/24/timisoara-20-decembrie-1989-preotii-romani-sa-ia-exemplu-de-la-laszlo-tokes>, min 10.04.

²⁵ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/12/12/tvr-22-decembrie-1989-george-marinescu-bomba-in-subsolul-televiziunii/> 00.05 .

²⁶ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2009/04/30/sergiu-nicolaescu-iesiti-in-strada-romani/>, min 00.10.

²⁷ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2011/04/18/gelu-voican-voiculescu-gindul-meu-se-indreapta-spre-cei-disimulati-sub-infractiuni-de-drept-comun-sa-se-revizuiasca-situatiile-judiciare-tvr-decembrie-1989-video/min> 00.05.

Dumitru Mazilu, defender of people's rights, also speaks to the nation, and appeals to non-violence but, at the same time, urges the path be followed until the end, until freedom is regained:

Thousands and thousands of children, thousands and thousands of the country's sons have died, have been assassinated! Let's all rise for freedom, to defend our country! Let's be strong and march up the end, but be united, without violence. Let's not permit the murderers resume their key positions in the country! Let's defend the TV and radio stations, let's defend the country's command centres! They belong to the country and no other body than the country, Romania! Long live Romania!²⁸

He also demands the peasants be respected, the educational system be reorganised, "foreign and domestic politics serve the people's interests," and asks that the Romanians regain the dignity and pride of inhabiting these lands: "Man should be respected! We should be the ones to enjoy the dignity of inhabiting this land! Let's be proud, be proud of being Romanians!"²⁹.

Following the examples of Timișoara, and, later Bucharest, people in all the cities and towns of Romania came out into the streets and the leaders who rose from their ranks tried and, obviously, managed to keep alive the fire of revolt and the hope in a different future with the help of words. Although there are no good-quality audio recordings from all over the country or, at least, none have surfaced yet, the leaders' words and their role have crossed the barrier of time. There was a similar pattern everywhere: the crowds of people were informed about what was going on in Timișoara or Bucharest, they sang songs or recited poems that had been prohibited for a long time, short messages of support, motivation, hope were transmitted from the leaders to the people and vice versa – slogans, chants – some of which we recollect here:

It's now or never! Throw out the communist boot! Don't you have a mother or a father? You've killed innocent children! The army is with us! Throw away your party cards! Murderers! Children murderers! Today it's Timișoara, tomorrow the whole country! That's who the Romanians are! That's Old Nicu falling down! This is Ceaușescu's doom/ Spending Christmas in a tomb! Ceaușescu, who are you?/ Murderer from Scornicești! Ceaușescu be a boyar/ You should do like Honeker! Ceaușescu great boyar/ Should leave just as Honeker! Ceaușescu don't forget/ We want your retirement! Ceaușescu don't forget/ Your future is set! Ceaușescu keep in mind/ We'll make shoes from your behind! Ceaușescu, that's the case:/ Romania's not your place! Ceaușescu and his missis / Romania have turned to pieces! The cobbler is no more! For Christmas we've got our portion of

²⁸ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/2008/12/16/tvr-22-decembrie-1989-dumitru-mazilu-la-cc-1/>, min 00.12

²⁹ <http://mariusmioc.wordpress.com/tag/daniel-mazilu/> min 00.01

freedom! On New Year' Eve in each home/ On the table there's a carrion!
 Awaken, Romanian! (song) Justice! No violence! Union Hora (song) Hoot!!
 Yesterday was Timișoara, today is the whole country! The Heroes' Hymn (song)
 To Jilava! Down with the illiterate dame! Down with the butcher! Down with
 Ceaușescu! Down with censorship! Down with the cobbler! Down with
 communism! Down with the murderer! Down with the dictator! Down with
 dictatorship! Down with the Communist Party! Freedom! We fight, we die/ but
 free we wanna be! Death to the murderer! The workers and the students! We die,
 we die/ and free we're gonna be! You've killed our innocent children! We are the
 people, down with the dictator! We are not afraid,/ Ceaușescu is gonna fall! We
 are not leaving! We are not going away,/ The dead want us to stay! We're not
 fascists! We're not hooligans! Do not be afraid, Ceaușescu's gonna fall! Do not be
 afraid! Ole, ole, ole, Ceaușescu is no more! Peace be with you, our dead! The
 Romanian is no coward! Romanians, come with us! They're shooting! Soldiers,
 soldiers, you are our brothers! We are ready to die! We were soldiers once and
 didn't shoot our brothers! You have children, too! You are hungry, too! The Olt
 rascal fled to Teheran! Timișoara, Timișoara! Timișoara, don't forget, – city – is
 by your side! Timișoara's bleeding/ Bucharest is weeping! Timișoara – blood!
 Long live Timișoara! Victory! Come with us! Come along! Who are you
 defending? We'll die and be free! We want free elections! We demand
 resignation! Down with Ceaușescu! We want democracy! We want a democratic
 government! We want food! We want land!³⁰

The ad- hoc speeches of those days brought back sunrise above Romania and the participants' wishes and hopes were also for a serene Romania. All these support and emphasise the fact that the December 1989 Revolution is an autonomous event in Romanian history and must be treated as such. It is a consequence of the preceding course of history and is not responsible for managing the evolution of the country in later years. Steered by their leaders, the revolutionaries offered Romania a gift, a hand, a chance. What the subsequent generations did with them is strictly the responsibility of those who governed and although the people who lit and kept alive the revolutionary flame of December 1989 are present among the rulers of today, their past actions must be treated differently from what is happening at various levels nowadays. Whether the change that occurred after December 1989 is a good one or not, is a completely different discussion. Nonetheless, from all that was said during the events 25 years ago, we think we can infer that the majority of those expressing points of view were very brave people who sensed the opportunity for change and dared to dream of a different Romania – freer, stronger, more democratic.

³⁰ <http://www.eroiinumor.ro/respect89/2009/12/31/sloganuri-decembrie-1989/>, apud Daniela Osiac, *Regăsirea Libertății*, Editura Institutului Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989, București, pp. 31-33.