

THE POLITICAL EVOLUTION OF THE NICOLAE CEAUSESCU REGIME IN RELATION TO THE LAW AND THE FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract: The Ceausescu regime began with a brief period of relative liberalization, marked by an increase in the quality of life and the elimination of potential political rivals. After the consolidation of his position, a forced industrialization phase followed. Simultaneously with the economic progress, the cult of the personality of President Nicolae Ceausescu is amplified. Setting up his dictatorship and paying foreign loans through massive exports have brought Romania to the brink of disaster. The supreme leader maintained his authority with the help of the security forces, massively involved in the surveillance of the population. Limiting people's rights to well-being, suppressing the freedom of expression (criticism of party ideology), censorship of the press, coercion and prohibition of any form of independent political activity are only a few aspects that marked the lives of Romanians in the latter years of communism.

Keywords: Nicolae Ceaușescu, communism, repression, human rights, cult of personality.

In any country, legislation is the main tool for managing society's problems. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948, is a pivotal document promoting the universal recognition and application of fundamental rights and freedoms¹. The notion of "human rights" encompasses a wider range of applicability due to its universal character. Compared to civil rights, which fall within the limits of a country's law, human rights are valid all over the world without being able to be changed, regardless of the form of government, nationality or religion of that state.

The first stage of the Ceausescu regime (1965–1971) is marked by the emergence of a modern, less restrictive ideology. The tendency to improve social life has not completely eradicated political repression, but has increased the hope of freedom and boosted confidence in the leadership of the country. From the position of secretary general of the Communist Party, gained in 1965, Nicolae Ceausescu will continue the strategy of increasing autonomy from the USSR,

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¹ The European Convention on Human Rights, the Council of Europe.

started by the previous political regime. Even if the separation from Moscow was somewhat formal, the intentions of de-Sovietization have improved the image of the Romanian leader internationally. Romanian diplomacy promoted internationally a policy based on the principles of full equality of rights, respect for sovereignty and national independence, non-interference in internal affairs, mutual benefit, non-use of force or threat of violence, the right of every people to master their own destiny. Public international law respected the principles of foreign policy of the Romanian state. Also, a new concept of solving conflicting laws has emerged in private international law. In his last years, Ceausescu's fame in solving international problems has been shaken by his own internal politics. Failure to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, as well as the methods used for constraining the population by the security organs will lead to the isolation of Romania.

General aspects

During the Ninth Congress of the Romanian Communist Party (April 19–24, 1965), the debates focused on foreign policy issues, the industrialization of the country and the development of the Romanian society. Ceausescu issued a number of proposals, of which we mention: the building of factories in the underdeveloped regions; increasing pensions and wages to improve living standards; construction of 300,000 apartments from state funds; measures to protect the health of the population; increasing the length of compulsory education and providing free textbooks so that the training of young people meets the requirements of the national economy; drawing up projects through which villages can benefit from schools, dispensaries, cultural centres, public transport, sewage, electrification and water supply; intensifying exchanges with scientists from other countries to improve education and scientific research². The new leader considered that the shortcomings in the past required a special analysis and new organizational reforms. Problem solving was attributed to central institutions whose work was to be based on the principle of democratic centralism, as stated in Marxist-Leninist texts. Also, it was decided to revise the Constitution in order to implement these political commitments.

In drafting the Constitution in 1965, the Bucharest leadership will no longer take into account the Kremlin directives and will declare Romania: “a socialist republic, a state of workers in towns and villages, independent, sovereign and unitary, with inalienable and indivisible territory”³. Practically, the new legislative

² Ion Gheorghe Maurer, *Raport asupra directivelor Congresului al IX-lea al Partidului Comunist Român privind Planul de dezvoltare a economiei naționale pe perioada 1966–1970*, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1966, pp. 32–92.

³ Article 1, Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Romania, republished in 1965, Official Bulletin of RSR, no. 1 of 21 August 1965.

regulations canceled the introductory chapter of the Constitution of 1952. In that paragraph it was mentioned the total dependence of Romania on the Soviet Union, both in foreign policy issues and in ensuring the independence and sovereignty of the country⁴.

The administrative-territorial reorganization and the formation of counties in February 1968, motivated by the logic of the separation from the Soviet authority, also aimed at a more careful monitoring of the areas where the Hungarian population predominated. In this context, the Hungarian Autonomous Region, a model imposed by the Soviets, disappeared along with the Stalin Region. To alleviate the concerns of the Hungarian minority, Ceausescu explained that the new territorial organization will help to improve the distribution of the productive forces and raise the standard of living for all citizens, regardless of their nationality. He has guaranteed that the authorities in the localities with cohabiting nationalities will implement the constitutional provisions on the use of the mother tongue in the state administration, in schools and cultural institutions⁵.

Through his progressive actions, Ceausescu has generally pursued the seizure of supreme power in Romania and his recognition as a world leader. But to become strong, it was not enough just to control and eliminate political rivals, he also needed the support and sympathy of the people, but also rapid economic growth. Modernizing the country and raising living standards was a priority in this respect. This directive was mentioned in Article 13 of the Constitution itself: "All state activity aims at the continuous increase of the material and cultural welfare of the people, the assurance of human freedom and dignity, as well as the multilateral assertion of the human personality". Food supply, housing construction, investments in the economy, return to the traditional education system, and the recognition of communist atrocities against political opponents during the Gheorghiu Dej period, created an atmosphere of normality in Romania.

After the Theses of July 1971, emphasis was placed on promoting Marxist-Leninist policy and asserting the personality of the principal leader. Acclaimed with slogans such as "Ceausescu-Romania Party" or "Ceausescu-PCR", the people's leader gets to be fully identified with the Party. The nation's ovations encouraged and opened his way to absolute power⁶.

The political career of the supreme leader gains momentum starting in 1974, when he became president of Romania. Until the collapse of communism, Ceausescu's image was ever present, appearing on any office wall, in all institutions, on television or on huge billboards. Economic progress and the cult of

⁴ Gheorghe Sbârnă, *Constituțiile României, Studii, Institutul Revoluției Române din Decembrie 1989*, Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing, 2012, pp. 227–228.

⁵ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul desăvârșirii construcției socialiste*, Vol. 3, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1969, p. 19.

⁶ Cezar Avram, Ioan Bitoleanu, Roxana Radu, Ion Vlad, Elena Paraschiv, *Introducere în istoria dreptului*, Bucharest, Fundația România de Măine Publishing, 2007, p. 224.

personality will help somewhat customize the prestige of the Romanian leader in international relations.

Romania's rapid industrialization plan transformed the former exploitation of the worker (bourgeois practice) into forced labor. Compulsory work involved a large proportion of the population: schoolchildren had the duty to collect scrap metal, empty bottles and paper waste; high school students, students and teachers were forced to work "voluntarily" (later referred to as patriotic work); they were regularly sent to the countryside for seasonal agricultural work, where they sometimes co-operated with workers who were out of production for the same purpose; employees of all categories were forced to sweep the streets during the warm season and to clear the snow in the cold season; the soldiers, whose military training stage was turned into cheap and efficient labor force, were working on the homeland's construction projects (eg Transfăgărășean, Casa Poporului)⁷. Over the years, industrial workers had become an active factor in the resistance to the regime. They were the ones who initiated the great protest movements in the Jiu Valley (1977), the Brașov uprising (1987), the strike from the Nicolina workshops in Iași (1987) and the revolution in December 1989.

On June 8, 1979, the US Embassy in Bucharest sent a secret report to the US State Department analyzing the vulnerability of the Ceausescu regime. The declassified document states the following: "Ceausescu has shown that he has the necessary flexibility to solve some pressing problems that require a quick response; his rhetoric tries to convince the population that any achievement is for the good of the country and for future generations; he represents the order and discipline which he maintains with the help of a repressive apparatus ready at any time to constrain the opposition; by the way he became the sole decision-maker and the way in which he succeeded in consolidating his power, he can be considered the undisputable master of the whole party and an unparalleled personality by the extent and intensity of the cult that he benefited from; he is an extremely capable and pragmatic politician who knows how to withdraw when necessary to defuse potentially explosive situations (for example, Jiu Valley); he attributes to himself the role of the enlightened but absolute despot; those who cross him are not killed or dishonored, in order not to create martyrs; he prefers to offer them honorary jobs to bring them to obedience, and then promote them in important positions; he is honest, works hard, is omnipresent and passionate about what he does; he could be a reformer without disturbing the Soviet power; to demonstrate that justice can be had, he created a mechanism by which ordinary citizens could directly address petitions to remedy dissatisfaction; isolated from the Romanian reality and insensitive to change, he may not successfully face the future destabilizing forces or any major events"⁸. Also, the report states that the president's disappearance

⁷ Pavel Câmpeanu, *Ceausescu, anii numărătorii inverse*, Iași, Polirom Publishing, 2002, pp. 261–262.

⁸ For details, see Department of State, Washington D.C., INR/IL Historical Files, Box 11, Bucharest, Secret, available at history.state.gov; Roger Channel, 213. Telegram From the Embassy in

from natural causes would not lead to destabilization and would not create problems for his successor. Elena Ceausescu, despite the indisputable influence, could not inherit the leadership because she was despised by almost all party leaders. Among the potential leaders, Ion Iliescu and Gheorghe Pană (mayor of Bucharest) had the highest chances to lead the country. Until 1979 there were no opposition groups against the regime, either in the country or abroad, only Radio Free Europe could be considered a possible destabilizing force. Although Ceausescu controlled everything with the help of the Securitate, it was clear from the declassified documents that he had the greatest trust in the army. Ilie Verdet (prime minister) and Stefan Andrei (foreign minister), his councilors, considered that controls should be maintained until economic development was achieved.

Unfortunately, the oil crisis, which has reduced the efficiency of the Romanian refineries, the excess of uncompetitive steel production on the international market and the rise in the dollar have brought the country into default. Supported by the army and the securitate, Ceausescu will become towards the end of the 1980s a ruthless dictator. The radical decision to export much of the production, in order to obtain the necessary foreign currency, has dramatically affected the domestic market. Although the market was such, for those with the right connections, many things could be obtained from the black market. The lack of basic products has accentuated the phenomenon of corruption and speculation. For example, with a pack of foreign cigarettes (Kent), obtained from black market peddlers, many medical issues could be solved, and with some extra money, certain products set aside by shop workers were not difficult to obtain. Concerning the food supply, Sibiu County was an exception for as long as it was headed by Nicu Ceausescu. Many people went to Sibiu to buy basic food. Winter was the most difficult season for everyone.

Electricity had become insufficient for the needs of the population because it was allocated to large industries. As the towns and villages of the country were engulfed in the nightly blackouts, especially during the winter, the discomfort in the homes was the main concern. People were beginning to realize that the state is asking far more than it offers. So it was that the workers who aided the Party to come to power, were the ones who sanctioned it. Applying the guiding formula, "long and frequent breaks, the key to great successes", laziness began to be seen as a virtue. As long as the salary was assured, the urge "time passes, pay day comes" became more and more visible in the Romanian economy, whose poor quality products had begun to be refused by the importing countries. Somewhat more motivated were the workers that had the prospect of a promotion. With a productive but insufficient economy for the Romanians, the workplace became the main source where the needs for the shortages in the households of the people were stolen. These facts were visible and known to many people, but bribery erased any

trace. For the young generation of the “Golden Age”, the compulsory military service, even if it was not a pleasure, meant maturing. Although there were many abuses in military units, during the short training period the youngsters were given life lessons, before being sent into labor detachments, as needed by the economy. Personality was suppressed by internal regulations that had to be accepted to avoid punishment. The phrase “the order must be executed, not commented” meant obedience, while the phrase “in the army one does not steal, it complements” teaches you that anything could be procured for a cost. If we relate to those times, the favors and appropriation of certain goods have become habits even by the leaders. People could no longer be expected to be law abiding since the state guaranteed rights and freedoms that were not respected.

For example, a personal car could only be used every other Sunday, but even so the trips were limited by the meager state-supplied portion of gasoline. Those who wanted to save on gasoline used the means of public transport which, for some reason, were not known for economic reasons, were insufficient for the number of passengers. The buses were so packed that many young people risked their lives traveling by hanging on the doors in order not to be late at work or at school.

Romania had become the country of aberrations based on “scientific reasons”. The regime’s specialists, physicians and researchers were calculating how much Romanians had the right to eat, so that they did not exceed a certain number of calories. Portion became the unit of measure of quality of life. The population was being subjected to an inhuman and degrading treatment. No one had the right to own basic foods in their own home above the limit of family consumption set for a period of one month.

Under the Criminal Code, storing food was considered a crime and was sentenced to imprisonment from 6 months to 5 years⁹. Taking responsibility for the slaughter of their own animal¹⁰, which was sometimes a source of family food, obligatory patriotic labor, the demolition of houses and churches, travel restrictions abroad, closure of the TV program at 22 o’clock or censorship of the press are experiences that no one ever wants repeated. During the dictatorship, the limitation of domestic consumption was the only way the regime covered its losses.

Many famous members of the party have probably regretted that they have failed to adopt a positive attitude towards the only historical moment when Ceausescu was criticized for the first time before the nation. Constantin Pârvulescu, founding member of the PCR, had the courage to face the dictator during the Plenary of the 12th Congress of the PCR in November 1979, attended by delegates from other countries. The President of Romania was accused of preparing his party re-election, instead of solving the shortcomings and problems in

⁹ Article 1, Decree no. 306 of 9 October 1981, Issuer: State Council, Official Bulletin no. 77 of 8 October 1981.

¹⁰ Decree no. 94 of 28 March 1983 with regard to the declaration of animals, the alienation and the cutting of cattle and horses, published in the Official Bulletin no. 19 of 29 March 1983.

the country¹¹. Even if the room stood still for the moment, Congress participants showed that they were just puppets acting on the command of the propaganda apparatus.

The applause and the ovation for the “beloved leader” resulted in the exit of Parvulescu from the political scene and the maintenance of the dictatorial authority for another 10 years.

To be sure he does not lose the privilege of having the ultimate power, the dictator has promoted in the upper hierarchy of the party and the state, communists from the younger generations, but also relatives. In the Communist Party there was an undefined conglomerate, made up of former illegal, career and pragmatic communists. The dictator needed people who executed orders, not collaborators, that is why around him were young people without a political background who were willing to do anything for a promotion. This is where the hostile attitude towards Ceausescu was born. The dismissal of prestigious activists has generally created a state of insecurity that has led to obedience and fear. Security, Militia, and Prosecution have become the most important governance tools. The hatred of these repressive organs was quite visible in December 1989 and in the years to come. The army was the only institution in which the people believed, so in the days of the Revolution there was a chant “The Army is with us!”. We can not say the same about some military commanders who have created panic among the people. Eventually, the generalization of protests was understood by all the repressive forces that canceled any violent intervention. Ceausescu has been challenged and betrayed by those he promoted to defend his authoritarian policy. He renounced the “most favored nation clause” that was conditioned precisely by what the Romanian people lacked, respect for fundamental rights and freedoms. In talks with Mikhail Gorbachev, he even admitted that he limited certain rights in order not to endanger socialism¹², although Article 2 of the Constitution stated that “the entire power in the Socialist Republic of Romania belongs to the people, free and masterful of his fate”. Even if the state guarantees compliance with the laws, the rules have always been imposed by the dictator. The Moscow meeting with the Soviet leader on December 5, 1989, remained in history only as a desperate negotiation of economic and political cooperation by which the Romanian president tried to save communism in Europe and at the same time to maintain the dictatorial power in the country. His personal authority was more important than the needs of the oppressed people. In Romania, as Gorbachev and other important leaders have appreciated, many promises had been made real. The great merit still belongs to the Romanian people: diligent, obedient, manipulated by communist

¹¹ For details, see *Film document. Congresul XII, Pârvulescu vs Ceaușescu*, available at www.youtube.com., accessed at 10.04.2018.

¹² For details, see Lavinia Betea, *Ultima întâlnire dintre Nicolae Ceaușescu și Mihail Gorbaciov, 4 decembrie 1989, Stenograma întâlnirii cu Gorbaciov*, in “Jurnal Național” from December 10, 2008.

propaganda and silenced by the terror of the repressive forces. The cult of personality and the thirst for power are the main factors that have diminished the president's rationale.

Party and state organs

The Romanian Communist Party was the leading political force of the entire society, that guided the work of central and local state institutions. The Party Congress, considered the supreme council of the RCP, had the following tasks: to debate and take decisions on the activity reports of the Central Committee of the Party and the Central Revision Committee; adopt and amend the status of the party; determine the trajectory of the party's foreign and domestic policy; elected the Party Central Committee, the Secretary General of the RCP and the Central Revision Commission. In the interval between congresses, the Central Committee of the Communist Party (RCP) had the role of leading the entire party activity. The Central Revision Commission checks: budgeting, party management, and how the party's central bodies solve the demands, letters and referrals of the working people¹³. The Party's base organizations were made up of factories, car and tractor stations, state farms, agricultural production cooperatives, military units, institutions, schools, higher education institutes, and any establishment in villages or city districts that included at least 3 party members or communist youth members. The leadership of the political work in the Army of the Socialist Republic of Romania was carried out by the Central Committee of the RCP.

Involvement of the young generation in the construction of socialism and communism was coordinated by the Party through the Union of Communist Youth – a revolutionary organization of working youth in towns and villages¹⁴. Guidance for schoolchildren ages 9 to 14 was attributed to the Pioneer Organization. This institution had the role of stimulating: pupils' preoccupation with learning, widening the knowledge horizon in all areas, enhancing school discipline and training work habits¹⁵. At the Central Committee of the PCR plenary, on November 2–3, 1976, according to Ceausescu's instructions, the establishment of the "Homeland Hawks" Organization was planned to include children aged between 4 and 7 years in the communist education process. Pioneers and schoolchildren were involved in various activities: visits to economic units; meetings with workers, technicians, engineers, innovators and inventors; engaging in technical or knowledge creation competitions, attending exhibitions, attending radio and TV shows on the subject of science and technology. In order to increase the level of

¹³ *Congresul al X-lea al Partidului Comunist Român. 6–12 august 1969*, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, pp. 725–734.

¹⁴ *Statutul Partidului Comunist Român*, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1965, pp. 69–91.

¹⁵ *Statutul unităților și detașamentelor de pionieri din Republica Socialistă România*, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1967, p. 5.

consciousness and social-political responsibility, it was considered necessary to involve children in patriotic labor specific to their power and age¹⁶.

The supreme bodies of state power in Romania were the Great National Assembly (MAN) and the State Council.

According to Art. 42 of the Romanian Constitution, the Great National Assembly was the supreme organ and the only legislative body of the country, under the subordination and control of which the other state organs operated. The Assembly has quite complex attributions: adopting and amending the Constitution; regulating the electoral system; adopting the plan for the development of the national economy and establishing the state budget; the organization of the Council of Ministers, ministries and other central state bodies; the organization of the judiciary and the Prosecutor's Office; establishing the rules of organization and functioning of the popular councils; the administrative organization of the territory; ratification and denunciation of international treaties; election and revocation of the President of the Socialist Republic of Romania; the election and revocation of the State Council, the election and revocation of the Council of Ministers; the election and revocation of the Supreme Court and the Prosecutor General, the control of the activity of the RSR president; control of the Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court, and popular counseling; proclaiming the state of necessity; declaration of state of war in the event of an external armed aggression¹⁷. The Grand National Assembly passed laws and resolutions only by the majority vote of the deputies, and a 2/3 vote of the total number of deputies was needed to adopt and amend the Constitution. Deputies enjoyed immunity. They could be detained and arrested without the Assembly's approval only in case of a flagrant offense.

The State Council was the supreme body of the state power, with permanent activity, subordinated to Great National Assembly Main attributions: setting the election date for deputies; determining how to organize and conduct referendums; the appointment and dismissal of the Prime Minister; the appointment and revocation of the Council of Ministers when the Grand National Assembly could not convene; granting amnesty; law enforcement, declaring partial or general mobilization, in case of emergency or war; issuing laws and decrees; establishing military ranks; awarding decorations and titles of honor. The President of R.S.R. had the capacity to chair the State Council, and, if necessary, the meetings of the Council of Ministers.

In Article 77 of the Constitution of 1965, republished in 1986, the Council of Ministers was the supreme body of the state administration, having the following tasks: establishing general measures for the accomplishment of the internal and external state policy; organization and enforcement of the laws; coordinating and

¹⁶ *Plenara Consiliului Național al Organizației Pionierilor. 5 februarie 1976. Organizația Pionierilor*, pp. 12–26.

¹⁷ Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Romania, republished, Article 43, Issuer: Great National Assembly, Official Bulletin no. 65, dated 29.10.1986.

controlling the work of the ministries and other central bodies of the state administration; elaboration of the draft of the national economic and social development plan; establishment of enterprises, economic organizations and state institutions of republican interest; ensuring public order, defending the interests of the state and protecting citizens' rights; general organization of the armed forces; supporting mass and public activities; the leadership and control of the popular councils. On the territory state power was represented by popular councils. According to Article 101, in the Socialist Republic of Romania, justice was exercised by the Supreme Court, the county courts, the military courts and tribunals. The courts applied criminal penalties to prosecute and re-educate criminals. The Prosecutor's Office was responsible for overseeing the work of criminal prosecution bodies and enforcement bodies, to defend "socialist order, citizens' rights and interests".

Consolidation of the Ceaușescu regime

It should be stressed that in Romania, the ascension to dictatorship was primarily favored by legislation, which had become a political tool for educating and suppressing the population. The way power was exercised in relation to citizens and their rights in most cases was in contradiction with constitutional provisions. Although the Constitution by its legal force is considered superior to other laws, the country's leader has only taken into account his own beliefs which he has systematically imposed through various orders and decrees.

Although there was no opposition party, however, some distinguished members of the communist elite, more or less visible, were unhappy with the new leader. Ceausescu, a good strategist in the art of manipulation, proved to be superior to his political opponents. He managed to silence them in general by compromising them. Under the pretext of deviations from socialist morals, some of the political rivals were gradually eliminated from the governing structures or even from the party, while others received new functions in less important areas. There were exceptions. Even though Emil Bodnaras and Prime Minister Gheorghe Maurer were part of the elite of the old regime, Ceausescu always kept them close because of their devotion, but also because they were good advisers when certain cadres had to be changed¹⁸. They were the main supporters who helped him take over Dej's power and then the position of President of the State Council after Chivu Stoica resigned in the debates of the National Conference of the Romanian Communist Party in December 1967. After the fall of the dictatorship, Maurer declared that he proposed Ceausescu instead of Dej, because he seemed the most

¹⁸ Lavinia Betea, *op. cit.*, pp. 121–123.

suites to face the Soviet power, which is hardly believable¹⁹. Ceausescu already held the real power in the party through the Heads of Regions whom he himself had appointed in office. Aware of this, he who was to be rewarded with the post of prime minister, presented the election of the new secretary general without taking into respecting the procedures²⁰.

The most appropriate leader at the time seemed to be Gheorghe Apostol, as former Alternate Member of the Political Bureau, Alexandru Bârlădeanu declared. The version that Dej would have indicated Apostle as the successor is supported only by Apostol²¹. On the "chessboard" Ceausescu was supposed to always be the winner, no matter who was the best. Maurer was a foreign policy ace, but very naive on internal politics.

Although through his vote he could tilt the balance in favor of Apostol, he rushed to announce the victory of a leader whom he considered brave but lacking in experience. Perhaps he thought he would indirectly have all the power through manipulation, but the cunning of Ceausescu confused his plan. In the end, the prime minister was an intelligent servant, who only wanted to keep his position. An argument in this regard would be that he has contributed substantially to the strengthening of the Ceausescu regime and has never shown a hostile position. Jean Maurer declared that his father had "prepared mass meetings and urged the people to show total adherence to the leader to give him strength and credibility in international negotiations, an idea that led to the development of the personality cult"²². These issues are confirmed by former Foreign Minister Ștefan Andrei: "Maurer's ideas were the basis of the cult of personality". Thankfully, the supreme leader offered him a most generous retirement pension. After the new political power withdrew all the privileges he had enjoyed until 1989, the former prime minister accused the dictator of directing the accident that brought him out of the political scene²³. Perhaps he wanted to look like a victim of the regime that rewarded him.

While some Communist leaders enjoyed advantages, others were marginalized or even lost their lives under suspicious circumstances. Many past events are known from the testimonies of former dignitaries²⁴.

¹⁹ Dennis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist*, third edition revised and added, Bucharest, Fundația Academia Civică Publishing, 2010, p. 162.

²⁰ For details, see Alexandru Cenușoiu, interview with Alexandru Bârlădeanu "N-am aplaudat și n-am contestat" alegerea lui Ceaușescu, available at <http://www.romania-actualitati.ro>, accessed at 25.05.2018.

²¹ Pavel Câmpeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

²² For details, see Stelian Tănase, *Documentar. București strict secret. Ultimul spectacol Maurer*, available at <https://www.dailymotion.com>, accessed at 5.04.2018.

²³ For details, see Lavinia Betea, *Cine-a "organizat" accidentul lui Maurer: sovieticii sau Ceaușescu?*, available at <http://adevarul.ro>, accessed at 14.05.2018.

²⁴ Lavinia Betea, *Zvonurile "epocii de aur"*, in "jurnalul.ro", available at <http://betea.ro>, accessed at 14.05.2018.

Vasile Patilineț, the organizer of Pătrașcanu's rehabilitation, named as ambassador to Turkey, lost his life in a dubious road accident²⁵. Ceausescu sent Virgil Trofin, former minister of mines, to a farm in Călărași-Ialomița, where he died of a heart attack²⁶. The death of the secretary responsible for propaganda, Petre Enache, the suicide of Chivu Stoica and even General Vasile Milea (December 1989) also generated a series of interpretations.

There was no opposition to the dictatorial policy in the party's leadership, because Ceausescu knew how to turn his comrades into simple performers. The people he promoted in senior management positions without going through certain stages were so grateful that they felt obliged to defend him even without being asked. For the old activists, losing their position did not mean punishment, because the dictator merely wanted to bring them to obedience. They were kept on the sidelines for a few months scrounging for a living grant from party suppliers, then they received an office of no importance in the province, and after a year or two they were reintegrated into senior and advanced positions in the hierarchy, without any further comments on the causes of their disgrace²⁷. Execution of orders and obedience prolonged the dictator's rule, but above all, the suffering of the Romanian people. The most uncomfortable rivals, considered as potential successors, were excluded from the party and assigned insignificant functions. If Gheorghe Apostol no longer represented a real danger, we can not say the same about Alexandru Drăghici in his capacity as Interior Minister. In order to replace Drăghici, the provisions of Article 13 (b) of the Statute of the PCR were argued, namely: "a party member can have only one political leadership function, requiring permanent activity, either in party organs, or in the state organs"²⁸. Witness of events, Stefan Andrei said the following: "Ceausescu took Drăghici's Interior, making him think that it is better to work for the party as a sort of second prime secretary"²⁹. Even if he continued to oversee the security issues as a member of the Party Secretariat, deprived of power, the former head of the Interior had no decisional influence. Ceausescu took advantage of this opportunity and publicly condemned the abuses of the Securitate³⁰. A first step was the reopening of the case of former Justice Minister, Lucrețiu Patrașcanu, whom he had not even been sympathetic to in the past.

The judges who signed Patrascanu's sentence were led by Colonel Ilie Moisescu, appointed at the suggestion of Ceaușescu and Bodnăraș³¹. Under these

²⁵ Gheorghe Apostol claimed that drugs were put in his whisky.

²⁶ Alexandru Bărlădeanu claimed that a quarrel took place between Ceausescu and Trofin.

²⁷ Florica Gheorghe (coord.), *Membrii CC al PCR. 1945–1989. Dicționar*, Bucharest, Enciclopedic Publishing, 2004, p. 47, available at <http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/2004%20-%20Membrii%20CC.pdf>.

²⁸ *Statutul Partidului Comunist Român*, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1965, p. 33.

²⁹ Lavinia Beta, *Stăpânul secretelor lui Ceaușescu*, Bucharest, Adevărul Holding Publishing, 2011, p. 137.

³⁰ Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, pp. 171–173.

³¹ Pavel Câmpeanu, *op. cit.*, pp. 227–252.

circumstances, Ceaușescu sought to discredit and even silence the names of his allies who were involved in the acts of cruelty.

The results of the investigation were aimed more at serving the interests of the new leader, who was to be regarded as a defender of justice, truth and especially of the individual's freedom. The whole blame for the acts of terror was attributed to Gheorghiu Dej. Alexandru Drăghici, considered responsible for the abuses that he encouraged and organized against party activists³², was degraded and removed from all party and state functions. After a short time he will be appointed director of the IAS Buftea, where he retires. Without anyone being tried and punished for any legal set-up or political crime, the final conclusion was the post-mortem rehabilitation of Pătrășcanu and those accused in this process³³.

Arrested during the Groza government, peasant leader Corneliu Coposu said: "Pătrășcanu had a patriotic and honest feeling of communism, but it does not atone for his deeds. He participated in the dissolution of political parties, the dethroning of the king, the isolation of all opposition leaders and the submission of Romania to the Soviets"³⁴.

From the information made public by the CNSAS, we find that many Securitate officers involved in repressive activities (considered useless at that time) were put in reserve, while the regime's cronies were preserved and even decorated. An example in this respect is Gheorghe Pintilie, commander of the General Directorate of People's Security in the Dej regime, decorated in May 1971 by Ceausescu. Several aspects of the past tried to clarify after many years the great defeated Gheorghe Apostol: "Dej negotiated the rescue of Pătrășcanu with the agents of Moscow, but he did not succeed because Pintilie (nicknamed Pantiusa) went to prison and shot personally the former minister"³⁵.

The rehabilitation of the Pătrășcanu group had a major impact especially on the population, thanks to the fact that the results of the investigation were made public. After this event, the courts approved many requests for legal rehabilitation by former political prisoners. Also, in order to strengthen the personal power, Ceausescu even rehabilitated and integrated in the new governing structures communist dignitaries marginalized by the Dej regime.

In the following years, arrests and court cases have fallen to a minimum threshold, and brutal use of force has been replaced by informative surveillance. The informants were recruited from state institutions, hospitals, factories, schools, churches and even housing buildings. Former Legionnaires and all those who in the

³² Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Cuvântare la adunarea activului de partid al municipiului București. 26 aprilie 1968*, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1968, pp. 19–22.

³³ Lavinia Betea, *Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. Moartea unui lider comunist*, Bucharest, Curtea Veche Publishing, 2011, pp. 434–435.

³⁴ Tudor Călin Zarojanu, *Viața lui Corneliu Coposu*, The 2nd revised edition, Bucharest, Mașina de scris Publishing, 2005, p. 32.

³⁵ Interview with Gheorghe Apostol in *Atlas TV* (31.03.2013), available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...>, accessed at 25.02.2018.

past have been politically imprisoned would be more closely guarded, even if they were no longer a danger. Hostile to the regime were considered the citizens visiting the embassies in Bucharest, members of the religious denominations (punished for refusing military service and holding clandestine religious materials) and those who were friends with foreigners (suspected of espionage or evasion).

Most of the information received from informants was about criticizing Ceausescu or the illegal listening of Western radio stations. Considering that the state guaranteed the right to opinion and freedom of expression, there could not be a massive punishment of the culprits, because the wave of dissatisfaction in Romania could later be exploited by the West. To limit this phenomenon, in most cases, warning became the most effective method of the Securitate. The culprits were told that they are being prosecuted and will suffer if they do not refrain from acting against the party's policy³⁶.

After the fall of communism, a number of historians, sociologists and political analysts demonstrated that the crackdown continued throughout the Ceaușist regime. Coercive measures have evolved depending on the domestic and external political context. Legislation continued to be a political instrument by which force institutions, under various stakes, sanctioned regime opponents³⁷. The news of Radio Free Europe and America's Voice, which most Romanians did not avoid listening to, reported every time the country's abuses. Abstaining from drastic retaliation did not rule out exceptions. The dissents have not been sanctioned with assassinations as in Gheorghiu Dej's time. In general, the regime's critics were brought before the tribunal for common law offenses. Some well-known dissidents, such as Doina Cornea, Mircea Dinescu, Paul Goma, or Andrei Pleșu, were harassed, assaulted, and even subjected to house arrest. There have also been special cases, such as dissident Gheorghe Ursu, pursued for acts considered hostile to the communist regime but arrested under the motivation of having foreign currency. Informed on by colleagues at Securitate because he was hiding an intimate journal that was not even politically related, engineer Ursu died in November 1985 after two months of torture³⁸.

The emergence of a political opposition at the beginning of the Ceaușist reign seemed unreasonable.

Ceausescu became a worldwide recognised statesman thanks to the triumph of August 21, 1968, when he publicly condemned the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. In addition, through this attitude, he created a strong sense of national unity and a general mobilization of the masses against attempts by Russia

³⁶ Florica Dobre (coord.) and Elis Neagoe Pleșa, Liviu Pleșa (authors), *Securitatea. Structuri/Cadre, Obiective și Metode. 1967–1989*, Vol. II, Bucharest, Enciclopedic Publishing, 2006, pp. 18–25, available at <http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/publicatii/Securitatea%20vol%202.pdf>.

³⁷ Cezar Avram et al., *op. cit.*, p. 227.

³⁸ IICCMER, Judecarea pe fond a dosarului Gheorghe Ursu. 10.05.2017, available at <https://www.iiccr.ro>.

to invade the country. The visit of General Charles de Gaulle in Romania in May 1968 and the return of Richard Nixon to Bucharest in August 1969, this time as President of the United States, further strengthened the image of the Romanian leader³⁹.

The confidence he enjoyed eliminated any obstacle to absolute power. Although he did not hesitate to oppose Soviet foreign policy, the leader of Romania would not abandon the Warsaw Pact nor abandon the Marxist-Leninist ideology.

On August 6, 1969, a few days after Nixon's visit, the X-th Congress's work brought new changes. At Maurer's proposal, Ceausescu was promoted from the position of secretary general of the CC of the RCP, as secretary general of the RCP. Through numerous visits in the country, the party leader had consolidated his position in advance, setting up as well the stage for eliminating the "old guard". Gheorghe Apostol will lose all leading positions due to the criticism of Constantin Dăscălescu, and Constantin Pârvulescu is dismissed from the position of president of the Central Revision Commission⁴⁰. Political reforms will continue in the coming years. The discipline imposed on the party and the limitation of the power of political adversaries helped the state and society's control mechanisms become operational.

In June 1971, Nicolae Ceausescu went on a tour of Asia (China, Vietnam, Mongolia, North Korea). The delegation also included Ion Iliescu as first secretary of C.C. of U.T.C. and Minister for Youth Affairs. Due to the disagreement with the North Korean model, he will lose all his functions when returning to the country⁴¹. Over time, Iliescu will be gradually marginalized, but in the end he will become the most long-lived and lucky rival (preferred by the Russians and agreed to by the Americans for the highest position in the state). Impressed by the results of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the grandiose reception in North Korea, Ceausescu decided to revitalize ideological and propaganda activity. The onset of "cultural revolution" will have a much greater effect on the cult of personality. Liberal reforms are starting to stagnate and were soon replaced by ideological reforms. In a meeting on July 6, 1971, to be more convincing, the head of state declared that the goal of party policy is to create the material and spiritual welfare of the masses. In this respect, he proposed a series of measures: promoting Marxist-Leninist policy in all fields; attracting the masses to the elaboration and implementation of party and state policy with artistic brigades and other forms of agitation; eliminating negative phenomena at work by boosting the critical and self-critical spirit; the participation of all citizens in patriotic work; political and ideological formation of pupils and students; increasing atheist propaganda and organizing actions to combat mysticism; the propagation of ideology through the press and radio and television stations; limiting the broadcast of detective and

³⁹ Pavel Câmpeanu, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

⁴⁰ For details, see Lavinia Betea, *Congresul al X-lea al PCR: început dezastru*, available at <http://adevarul.ro>, accessed at 20.03.2018.

⁴¹ Florica Gheorghe (coord.), *Membrii CC al PCR. 1945–1989. Dicționar*, Bucharest, Enciclopedic Publishing, 2004, p. 44, available at <http://www.cnsas.ro/documente/2004%20-%20Membrii%20CC.pdf>.

adventure movies that contain scenes of violence and highlight the bourgeois way of life⁴². Through these directives unanimously approved by the Executive Committee of the CC of the RCP, a new policy was adopted that will put the population in a broad process of indoctrination. Also during the talks with the party activists, the leader also reminded that imported goods meant compliance to foreigners and distrust in the workers', technicians and scientists' own forces. It was precisely this misconception that led to the limitation of acquisitions from abroad and the refusal of other external advantages (the most favored nation's clause). The development of the country with the help of domestic production, which was largely destined for export, as well as the outdated technology, would lead to starving the population and to the huge economic crisis in Romania in the 80's. The permanent party control over the implementation of the "June Theses" created a wave of dissatisfaction especially among intellectuals. Censorship and later self-censorship attempted to stop the currents of opinions contrary to the dictatorial policy. Even though the anticeausescu criticism intensified over time, the Romanian dissent failed to cause the regime to fall. The party's propaganda has always taken care to create around the "beloved leader" a strong sense of admiration manifested through slogans, ovations and applause. The country will become famous especially through the cult of exaggerated personality.

The power of the Romanian leader reached maximum levels in 1974, when he became the first president of Romania. Sensing that he no longer has the power to decide, Gheorghe Maurer requests the approval of his pension application. In the CC Plenary Meeting of March 25-26, 1974, Ceausescu readily accepts his resignation as President of the Council of Ministers, but invites him to participate in the next few years with the governing bodies to contribute to the development of Romania⁴³. Even if he did not agree with the forced industrialization plan, Maurer will continue to appear in political life, but as a mere spectator. The Plenary's work ended with the appointment of the country's president.

Elected in the new position, Ceausescu received, as a gift from Ștefan Voitec (president of the Grand National Assembly) a scepter as a symbol of the sovereign authority of the people, of the presidential power and of the supreme commander of the Armed Forces. In order to stimulate rapid industrialization, the country's president decided to lower the age at which young people could be promoted to senior management positions, as well as the application of a new wage policy that would give a number of benefits to the workers⁴⁴. Also, people receiving orders, state distinctions or the title of "Socialist Labor Hero" benefited from: cash

⁴² Nicolae Ceaușescu, *Propuneri de măsuri pentru îmbunătățirea activității politico-ideologice, de educare marxist-leninistă a membrilor de partid, a tuturor oamenilor muncii. Expunere*, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1971, pp. 1–49.

⁴³ Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul desăvârșirii construcției socialiste*, Vol. 9, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1974, p. 1123.

⁴⁴ See Law no. 57 of October 29, 1974.

rewards; priority at receiving credits for the construction or purchase of personal property dwellings; additional leave; priority for obtaining an apartment from the state housing reserve⁴⁵. The State Award, granted every two years, on the eve of August 23, had the highest value (between 20,000 and 50,000 lei and a gold medal)⁴⁶. Promotion opportunities and material rewards offered by the state have attracted many scientists, academics, career bureaucrats and professionals who have speeded up the process of modernizing Romania. If we take into account the sacrifice of the people, we can say that the external loans have made it possible to achieve the objectives. The great economic achievements are based on the patriotic effort of young people, the dedication of the army and the involvement of the working people in all fields of activity.

The success of Romania's modernization was preceded by another success, the payment of external debts whose price of this time meant the suppression of the living standards of the population and the tragic end of the Ceausescu couple.

After 1980, as the social and economic climate deteriorated, Romania's foreign policy became increasingly visible in contradiction with the internal one. However, the accumulated power allowed the president to overcome any challenge. A cautious and good tactician, he tried to avoid Dej's mistakes, replacing violent repression with general preventative surveillance. In most cases, potential opponents were investigated, then discouraged by warning. If home arrest was a milder way of sanction, we can not say the same thing about psychiatry that had become a real weapon of repression. Although psychiatric illness is a strictly medical problem, establishing the diagnosis or returning the patient to normal life depended in most cases on prosecutors⁴⁷.

Because he could not rely only on the repressive forces or the dignitaries around him, the dictator took care to promote his relatives in decision-making positions. The peak of the regime's power would be reached with the promotion of Elena Ceausescu at the top of the political hierarchy. However, we must bear in mind that the two spouses have not remained at primary school level. Some statements show that they took lessons in private and were even conscientious students. "Teachers were coming home, preparing her for chemistry, and him for politics", as Suzana Andreas, a former manager of the Ceausescu household, remembers⁴⁸. Nicolae Ceausescu first studied at the "Mihail Frunze" Military Academy in Moscow, then obtained the baccalaureate diploma from the "Zoia Kosmodemianskaia" Medium School, and at the bachelor's examination he

⁴⁵ Decree no. 190 of the State Council published in the Official Bulletin, no. 65 of 9 July 1977, pp. 12–15.

⁴⁶ Florica Gheorghe (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁴⁷ See Decree no. 313/1980 on the assistance of psychiatric patients.

⁴⁸ *Viața normală a cuplului Ceaușescu povestită de "femeia din casă"*, Suzana Andreias, administratorul palatelor lui Ceaușescu, in "Revista Armonia – Saltim Media", available at <https://saltmin.com>, accessed at 21.02.2018.

presented the thesis entitled “Some Problems of Industrial Development in Romania in the 19th Century”. Even if others wrote the work, the ideas were Ceausescu’s, Paul Niculescu-Mizil claims in his book “A Lived History”⁴⁹. About the “world-famous scientist”, passed through all forms of education, Mizil states, “After being promoted to the upper party leadership, the entire coordination of cadre policy has been concentrated in her hands. She was primarily informed about the materials coming from party organizations, the Ministry of Interior and Security, about people with responsible work”. Even though the authenticity of the two spouses’ diplomas still poses questions, however, Elena Ceausescu has gone through all stages to get to the hierarchy. The most important function held by the dictator’s wife was the first Deputy Prime Minister of the Government from March 1980 to December 1989.

Prepared to become a successor, Nicu Ceaușescu, the youngest son of the presidential couple, is appointed Minister for Youth Affairs in 1983, and between October 1987 and December 1989 he will lead the county of Sibiu. Among the president’s brothers, Ilie Ceaușescu held the most important position in the state. As Deputy Minister of Defense, he tried to form a new government during the events of December 1989.

In the last years of the Ceausescu dictatorship, more and more “opinion leaders” have begun to emerge.

Foolhardiness or courage, in some circles, besides the famous jokes about Ceausescu, there were also political discussions. There were rumors in the public space that the dictator was seriously ill or was about to withdraw from the political scene. At the 14th Congress in November 1989, contrary to expectations, Nicolae Ceaușescu was re-elected as General Secretary of the PCR. As domestic disaster and external isolation grew visible, while communist regimes in Europe collapsed, the Romanian president preferred to hold a long, tedious and worthless speech. He presented plans for the future, praised the achievements in Romania and criticized the socialist states and capitalism, without offering solutions to the oppressed people who in recent years simply felt the need for freedom. The project presented at the Congress was just disappointing. It was only in 2010 that the conditions for reducing the working week within rational limits will be met. Also, according to scientific assessments, the needs of adequate food consumption and rational life needs were to be met at the same date⁵⁰. That’s all Ceausescu could offer to those who are still regretting him to this day, another 20 years of illusions, after which progress would culminate with well-being and happiness, also offered by the

⁴⁹ Radu Eremia, Laurențiu Ungureanu, *Apostolii Epocii de Aur. Analfabeții cu diplome din ceaușism. Câtă școală aveau comuniștii?*, in “Adevărul Moldova”, available at <http://adevarul.ro>, accessed at 3.03.2018.

⁵⁰ *Programul-Directivă al Congresului al XIV-lea al PCR cu privire la dezvoltarea economico-socială a României în Cincinalul 1991–1995 și orientările de perspectivă până în anii 2000–2010*, Bucharest, Politic Publishing, 1989, pp. 44–45.

portion. Even those appointed in high-ranking decision-making positions, mostly young, have found that their needs and aspirations no longer corresponded to the authoritarian policy imposed by the regime. While the population was afraid to show dissatisfaction for fear of repression, at the top of the hierarchy conspirators consisted of people from the Party (ideological group), the Army (military group), and the Securitate group. Although these groups wanted to work together to remove Ceausescu, conflicting opinions would make them act independently⁵¹. As noted by political analyst Pavel Câmpeanu, a former RCP activist, the spontaneous rebellion of the people had a predominantly anti-ceausist, not anti-communist character. If the Army and the Security passed over to the people, even before Elena and Nicolae Ceaușescu were killed, the question arises as to why there was a need for the diversionist actions that led to the loss of many lives during the revolution of December 1989. There could be only one explanation, the splitting of the three groups that did not agree on the division of power, because the people's rioting confused all calculations. As it was observed in the following years, the group best prepared in advance to take over the power was the one who assured the success of the Romanian revolution, but also the one that later destroyed the country's economy. Years of great accomplishments, free health care, day-to-day safety and work, respect, solidarity, but above all the social order that provided a peaceful and conflict-free life are elements that still remain in people's consciousness long after the collapse of communism. If we consider the negative phenomena of the present, we can understand why more and more people look nostalgically in the past and even regret Ceaușescu. The views on the Ceaușist regime are different, apart from appreciations or disappointments, there are voices who rightly condemn it. It is a fact that we are living now and we have what was missing in the past, respectively the freedom to decide the way we have to follow.

⁵¹ Ion Bucur, *Cartea represiunii 1989*, Bucharest, IRRD Publishing, 2012, pp. 12–13.